

Grace to you and peace from Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and has made us kings and priests to God. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. It is certain.

Revelation 5:1–14 (NKJV)

1 And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?”

3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

5 But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”

6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

12 saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

14 Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

Who is Worthy? Behold the Lamb!

1. The Lamb takes the scroll and breaks its seals
2. The Church sings a new song: “Worthy is the Lamb!”

In the name of the Lamb who was slain and has begun His reign, dear fellow partners in the tribulation, the kingdom, and the patience,

Classified information can only reach the level of “top secret,” if it meets approval of the president. The president has been vested with the authority to have the final say in disclosing information to the public. He has also been vested with the authority as Commander and Chief to execute top secret orders.

In the right hand of authority and power lies the most classified information of all – top secret. The scroll contains seven seals – A symbol of the perfect knowledge and final execution of God’s will. Front and back, this scroll contains the end fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation. It possesses the executive orders that come from God’s throne ... orders against Satan ... against false teaching ... against all those who oppose the redemption of God’s people and the truth of His testimony. Within lies the Church’s eternal destiny and hope of our salvation.

The mighty angel rightly proclaims with a great voice: “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?”

1. The Lamb takes the scroll and breaks its seals

Without anyone to open this scroll, this is quite a terrifying thought. If no one breaks the seals then the final fulfillment of Christ’s kingdom remains top secret, unknown to us. Without the scroll, Christ’s resurrection victory is sealed in the tomb. We are left in a haze of terrorism and school shootings wondering what the future of God’s people will be?

Who is worthy? Who has the authority to take what is held in God’s right hand of power and to break its seals?

The world works hard to open this scroll. Just grab the phone book and you will find someone nearby to read your palm or show the cards of your future.

Churches try to open this scroll. Just turn on your television and you can find a pastor who is promoting a certain candidate, a certain political platform, a certain opinion about the future.

We, too, have those moments where we find ourselves trying to open this scroll; or rather to rewrite it. These are the moments where we allow personal desires replace faith and obedience to God’s will. Perhaps this is in regard the relationship we should be having within a marriage; perhaps this is in regard to the relationship we should not be having outside of marriage. Perhaps this is a refusal to carry out today’s tasks because we think that things are not fair, or doing so with a bad attitude because we wish things were different.

3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. John weeps. We weep too. We weep because in heaven and on earth there is not one of us who has gained right hand status at the throne of God. With such a laundry list of daily sins against us, what will our end be?

v.6 Then I looked... Don't weep. Instead look. Look to the Old Testament prophecies that promised salvation: *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people. (Genesis 49:10). ... There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. ... Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious.*" (Isaiah 11:1,10). Stop your tears. The Lion of David's descent has prevailed.

But notice – it is not the Lion that stands before us. God's victory isn't revealed in terms of ferocity. Behold the Lamb. The Greek is vivid here. The sense of verse 6 reads: "Behold a Lamb – as though He has been slaughtered – has stood up and remains standing." This Lamb has been sacrificed; yet He lives; He stands tall. We heard this last week when Jesus said: "I am the Living One; I was dead and behold, I am alive forevermore."

When no one in heaven or earth was found worthy, He appears – not the roaring Lion, but the resurrected Lamb. Jesus is worthy because He has taken our unworthiness. ... because He was subject to our temptations yet doing no wrong ... He is worthy because He remained innocent, because He never resisted the path that God had set Him on. He is worthy, because He accepted death and yet lives. Peter addresses the assembly at Jerusalem: *[He was] delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. (Acts 2:23)*

With seven horns He stands before us all powerful having overcome every evil; with seven eyes He sees you at every moment, in every situation, in every struggle, in every fear – His Spirit fills the earth. He came ... and took the scroll from the right hand of God! He alone is worthy. The seals are broken. The top secret plans of God are being made transparent. And what is do you see? A Lamb standing, One worthy to open the scroll, One worthy to be your Savior. You see the blood shed from His cross which has redeemed You to God. You see your part in God's kingdom, where He rules you and you serve Him.

As Daniel prophecied: *Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:14)*

Who is Worthy? Behold the Lamb!

2. The Church sings a new song: Worthy is the Lamb!

Experts and agencies work tirelessly, trying to keep this information confidential, trying to predict the enemies next move. But as history proves, no matter how many agencies we have monitoring national security, Pearl Harbor still happens; 9/11 still shocks us; The next move by North Korea just cannot be predicted with any certainty.

God has no such uncertainty. He doesn't wonder about North Korea's next move and how it will affect His kingdom. The Lamb breaks the seals and makes the final plan perfectly transparent. In fact, He wants these things proclaimed for all to hear. And so the Church sings a new song: Worthy is the Lamb!

There are at first two groups surrounding the throne and the Lamb: the four living beings, and the twenty-four elders. Numbers are always significant in this vision. We see other references to the number four such as "the four winds" or "the four corners of the earth." We understand the number four as an reference to the created world. Ezekiel had a vision with similar references. He referred to these beings as "cherubim." These "cherubim" represent God's work in governing and carrying out judgment against His creation.

The twenty-four elders make up another group that worships the Lamb. The number twelve is symbolic of the Church. Hence the 12 tribes of Israel; the 12 apostles. Here we have 12 + 12 – a combination of the Old and New Testament Church. The term "elders" is a term of honor and signifies an office. We learn earlier in chapter 4 that these elders sit on thrones and have crowns; that is, they have ruling authority in the kingdom.

And where is this ruling authority revealed? ... *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17).* When Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God, He said: "repent, and believe the good news." The authority of God's kingdom comes in the ministry of the Spirit: a message of repentance and forgiveness. Where the true gospel is being proclaimed, there the Lamb stands. The 24 elders are those who hold the authority of Christ, the authority of the gospel. *[You] have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."* We see this also in Peter's epistle: *you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1 Peter 2:9)*

So the scene unfolds with these two groups praising the Lamb: the beings directing all creation to praise and serve the Lamb; and the power of the gospel directing the Church

to praise the Lamb. Creation and the Church combine to surround the Lamb and sing a new song.

The word for redemption used here in verse 9 indicates property being purchased. It suggests ownership. This is how we became a part of Christ's victory.

All our worship is centered here – in the victory of the Lamb. This is why in place of the Gloria in Excelsis this season we are singing: Worthy is Christ the Lamb ... This is the Feast of Victory!

But this song is more than music. "Worthy is the Lamb! For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood." This song does not come out of the red hymnal. The new song is drawn from the red blood that was shed to pay our redemption price.

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. The Lord has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations. (Psalm 98:1–2)

This is our reign on earth – we sing a new song before all the world; we proclaim the Lamb who alone is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing! The kingdom appears not in the shape of a Lion, but in the slaying of the Lamb. We reign on earth by proclaiming this victory found in the cross and the living Christ. We conquer nations, tear down strongholds, give all glory to God by spreading the good news of the resurrection. As John writes: *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. (1 John 5:4)*

This is the song which we sing in the face of persecution: when we are made fun of for not joining in; when we choose what is right and lose a promotion; when we choose not to pray or worship with those who don't share a confession of the truth.

This is the song we sing in the face of the worst tragedy; when the outward appearance of the world seems so out of control; when our own life is a mess of confusion and pain. Our new song declares the Lamb worthy because He has redeemed us from all these sorrows.

In chapters to come God's final executive order is unrolled. The top secret order is made known – against sin; against Satan; against all false teaching; against the AntiChrist; against the nations and political powers that oppose the Lamb; against the world of unbelievers who follow the way of destruction. He may not reveal what North Korea's next move will be; what your next test will be. Rather He reveals something much more valuable – in the midst of all the chaos, The Church Triumphs. The Lamb is Worthy.

For this reason, in the end every creature in heaven and on earth will bow to the one who is worthy. For us, we do so now.

14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

Indeed, let us bow down, every Sunday, every day. Amen!