

# Worthy Is the Lamb Who Was Slain!

Revelation 5:11–14

The setting of the part of Revelation that we are going through is *heaven*. Because of the finished work of Christ, the door of heaven now stands open, and the apostle John has been invited to come up. He sees a throne in heaven. This is the throne of God, the pure Spirit. Surrounding the throne are four living creatures who “do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.’”

The right hand of the one seated on the throne holds a scroll, sealed with seven wax seals, in the manner of ancient legal documents. The question is asked, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” Initially, no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or even to look at it, which was a cause of great dismay and grief for the apostle. He wept much because of this. But then one of the elders says to him, “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.” John looks for the Lion of Judah, but when he looks he sees “a Lamb as though it had been slain.” Here is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, now revealed as a Lamb—the fulfillment of all the Old Testament sacrifices.

In Old Testament times, when a man sinned, he would offer a lamb. The priest would have him confess his sins over the lamb; then the lamb would be slain by the slitting of its throat, and its blood collected in a bowl and sprinkled on the horns of the altar. The sins of the penitent would be passed over because of the shedding of the lamb’s blood, which prefigured the shedding of the blood of “the Lamb of God who *takes away* the sins of the world”—our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is the superiority of the Gospel: our sins are not merely covered or passed over, but actually *removed*—taken away by the blood of the sinless Lamb.

As our text opens today, the echo of the song of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, falling down before the Lamb, rings in our ears. It is a “new” song: “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, and have made us kings and priests to our God” (v. 9).

Here is the song that the redeemed will sing throughout eternity future: the *Song of the Lamb*. The Lord’s people, the beneficiaries of his saving work, will never tire of singing this song. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain! Amen! “Let those refuse to sing, who never knew our God; but children of the heavenly King may speak their joys abroad.”<sup>1</sup>

I have three points this afternoon: (1) Jesus is the Lamb; (2) he was slain; (3) he is worthy of worship both now and in eternity. First,

## 1. Jesus is the Lamb.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Were\\_Marching\\_to\\_Zion/](https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Were_Marching_to_Zion/)

In Genesis 22, the LORD appeared to Abraham and said, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

Imagine the mental anguish that this revelation from the Lord would have triggered! Here was Abraham, who at an advanced age had been promised that of the fruit of his own body he—childless!—would become “the father of many nations.” A godly father loves his son, but in this case, here was the father whose human seed would include the promised Messiah. Yet Abraham obeyed—instantly. He and his son set out, taking wood for the burnt offering. He took that wood and “laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.” As they traveled, Isaac spoke to his father and said, “My father!” And Abraham answered, and said, “Here I am, my son.” Then he said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” Even though he didn’t yet know how that was going to happen, he was assured that the Lord would provide. He understood that with the eye of faith. Christian, “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

When they reached their destination and set up an altar, Abraham bound Isaac and laid him—his only son—upon the altar. And he stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. When he was about to plunge the knife into his son’s heart, the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” He answered, “Here I am.” And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or harm him; for now I know that you fear God.” Then Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram—a male sheep—caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering in place of his son.

Here, in the first book of the Bible, we have an example of substitutionary atonement. The Lamb that the LORD would ultimately provide was his only Son, Jesus Christ! Jesus is the Lamb, the atonement for the sins of the world.

Later, when the LORD’s people were enslaved in the land of Egypt, the LORD instructed Moses: “On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household” (Ex. 12:3). The lamb must be without blemish, a male of the first year, according to the LORD’s instructions. At the precise time that God appointed, the people were to take that lamb, each one according to the size of his family, and “kill the passover” (Ex. 12:21).

Later, as the LORD gave Moses instructions about Israel’s regular worship, he was instructed about the daily offerings that were to be offered every day, day after day. God said, “This is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs of the first year,

day by day continually. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. With the one lamb shall be one-tenth of an ephah of flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering. And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; and you shall offer with it the grain offering and the drink offering, as in the morning, for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations” (Ex. 29:38ff.). The offering of a lamb was to be a regular feature of Israel’s worship, day after day, year after year—good times and bad, feast or famine, war and peace. These sacrificial lambs were to be offered up by the priests. The lambs were to be provided through the people’s tithes and offerings. All Israel would have a part in supplying these lambs. Whenever the people traveled to the central sanctuary, they would encounter this reenactment of the eventual sacrifice of Christ. They would see the lambs being slaughtered. They would smell the smells of the burnt offerings. Day by day, this rhythm of worship would go on. It was inescapable. It was drilled into their national psyche. It was part of what it meant to be a part of the covenant people. Each lamb that was offered was accepted by God as an installment of his people’s worship. This was what distinguished Israel as the people of God. Each lamb pointed forward to the Lamb that ultimately would take away the sin of the world.

In the book of Leviticus there were lambs for sin offerings, lambs for burnt offerings, lambs for trespass offerings. The daily offering of lambs was a regular feature of Israel’s worship.

When a woman gave birth, her husband was to bring a kid of a goat for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, both of the first year, for a burnt offering (Lev. 12:6).

If a man had leprosy, and was cleansed of the disease, on the eighth day he was to take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and one log of oil (Lev. 14:10). Then the priest was to present the man who was to be made clean before the Lord, at the door of the tabernacle. The priest was to take one male lamb and offer it as a trespass offering, and the log of oil, and wave them as a wave offering before the Lord. Then he would kill the lamb in the holy place; for it was most holy. The priest would take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.

In Isaiah 53 we read, concerning the Christ who was to come, that “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a *lamb* to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” This is the text that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when Philip ran up to him and was invited into his chariot, and pointed him to Christ.

In John chapter 1 there is the record of the ministry of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. As he preached in the wilderness, and the people came to him, one day he lifted up his eyes and saw Jesus on the edge of the crowd. Suddenly he called out and said, “Behold! The *Lamb* of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’” There can be no misunderstanding. Jesus is the Lamb—the fulfillment of all the hundreds and thousands of lambs that were sacrificed under the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup>

“Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain could give the guilty conscience peace or wash away the stain.”<sup>3</sup>

Yes, Jesus is the Lamb. There can be no doubt about it. Secondly,

## **2. He was slain.**

Here is the testimony of John the apostle in our text this afternoon: “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, 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!’” (Rev. 5:12).

Yes, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.” The word for “slain” means *to slaughter*, of the killing of a person by *violence*.

With all the wars that the U.S. is financing around the world we know something of this violence. Images of slaughter fill our news reports—yet the slaughter, not only of soldiers but of innocents as well—goes on. Where is the leader who will rise up and condemn this violence?

The word translated “slain” can even mean *to butcher or murder someone*.<sup>4</sup>

In 2 Kings 10, Jehu wrote letters, and sent them to Samaria, to the rulers and elders, and to the guardians of Ahab’s children, challenging them to “choose the best and most worthy of your master’s sons and set him on his father’s throne. Then fight for your master’s house.” When the letter arrived, the men took the princes and *slaughtered* all seventy of them. They put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu in Jezreel (v. 7). This is what we would call cruel and unusual treatment. Here were seventy children and young people summarily slaughtered without trial, without being convicted of a crime. It was murder—the taking of innocent human life. It was slaughter.

There is another instance. In Jeremiah 52 we read of how the armies of the Chaldeans pursued King Zedekiah and overtook him in the plains of Jericho. They

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<sup>2</sup> By my calculation, 1,065,800 lambs would have been offered as the regular morning and evening sacrifice from 1500 BC–30 AD (not counting the 70 years of the captivity, when worship did not take place). This number does not include lambs offered for sin offerings and voluntary burnt offerings.

<sup>3</sup> Isaac Watts ([https://hymnary.org/text/not\\_all\\_the\\_blood\\_of\\_beasts](https://hymnary.org/text/not_all_the_blood_of_beasts))

<sup>4</sup> Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich lexicon: σφάζω (Logos Bible Software)

seized him and brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he pronounced judgment on him. There at Riblah the king of Babylon *slaughtered* Zedekiah's sons before his eyes, and also killed all the officials of Judah. Then he put out Zedekiah's eyes, bound him with bronze shackles, and took him to Babylon, where he kept him in custody until his dying day. Imagine the cruelty, which was intentional, meant to rub in Zedekiah's face the message: "You are my vassal. I am stronger than you; don't you ever forget it." The last thing that Zedekiah ever saw with his eyes was the slaughter of his own sons. It was an image that would haunt him till his dying day.

*This* is the word that is used of Christ: "Worthy is the Lamb that was *slaughtered*." His was not a sterile, clinical death. It was a cruel death—to be nailed to a rude wooden cross, naked, raised up before a crowd crying out for your blood.

What would cause the God of heaven to order this for his Son?

What would impel the Son of God to willingly undertake this horrible mistreatment?

Indeed, nothing but love! "God so loved the world, that he gave."

If you are not inspired and stimulated to love him in return, then you are not born again. How can you hear this story and not be moved to love the Lord Jesus with every fiber of your being? Such love! Indeed, we love him because he first loved us.

This is "the Lamb slain—slaughtered—from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8).

The word "Lamb" is used 31 times in the New Testament. Of these 31 times, *twenty-seven* of them are in the book of Revelation! Clearly, Christ the Lamb of God is a prominent theme in this book. He is the fulfillment of all the lambs of the Old Testament era. Jesus is the Lamb, and he was slain. Thirdly,

### **3. He is worthy of worship both now and in eternity.**

Listen to our text again: "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, 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!' 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!' Then the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever."

Enough said!

Without the death of the Lamb, the Son of God, we would all be lost and perish forever. We would have no hope.

The death of Christ is the focal point of the gospel. It is the most important—the most significant—event in the history of the world.

God didn't have to do this. He did it out of *love*—the greatest love that anyone could ever imagine. The love of a mother or father who would rescue their child out of a burning building, being tragically burned in the process, cannot compare. The love of a man giving up his place in a lifeboat so that another can be saved cannot compare.

Here is the divine Son—the darling of heaven—coming from the pinnacle of glory to the depths of hell, in order to save hopeless, *unworthy* sinners, rebels who had spit in the face of the God of heaven.

There can be no greater love.

Here is love that ought to inspire our worship, that ought to impel us to commit our life, from hereon out, to his service.

Such love!

Let us love him in return, with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Amen!