

Revelation 5

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[0 : 00] Johnny Cash covered a song that was written by Trent Reznor. Trent Reznor is the lead singer of Nine Inch Nails, and I'm not suggesting that you should be listening to Nine Inch Nails, so don't get them out of shape or worried.

But Trent Reznor had written this song. It was called Hurt. And essentially the song was about nihilism, the meaninglessness of life. The lyrics say, You can have it all, my empire of dirt. I will let you down, I will make you hurt. And Johnny Cash took this song and made a video about it, and it was actually, I think it was a Grammy-winning video, but it was a very, very, it was an award-winning video, and it's quite a stirring video when you look at it.

Johnny Cash is older, he's towards the end of his life, and he's sitting, one of the scenes he's sitting before this huge feast, and it's something that you might expect a king to be sitting at, and he's pouring out wine on the table, and his hand is shaking because age has set in, and there are different scenes from his earlier life, some of his accomplishments and things that he had done. But then Johnny Cash puts a spin on the video, on the song. See, the song was about, it's sort of about achieving something in life, and then realizing how empty that is, how it only lets you down.

[1 : 35] And Johnny Cash, through this song and this video, said, yeah, Trent Reznor's got it right. I've achieved all of these great things, all of these great things that the world says are amazing, and that you should seek after.

I've achieved them too. And it's all meaningless. But I have the answer. At the climax of the song, it cuts to a scene of Christ being crucified, and what Johnny Cash was saying was, is that Trent Reznor is exactly right, and yet I have the answer.

It's Jesus Christ, and it's him crucified. Jesus Christ comes and brings hope to the hopeless. He comes and brings meaning to the meaninglessness of life.

And that's kind of what you see in this passage here today in Revelation 5. You're sort of given a glimpse, a window of what life would be like without Jesus Christ.

The hopelessness of humanity apart from Jesus Christ. And through that contrast, and through the satisfaction that Christ brings, you're able to see all the more beautifully that Christ brings hope to the hopeless.

[2 : 54] And so the first thing we see in our passage here today is the need for one who is worthy. You see that in verses 1-5. Then I saw at the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? There's this need for someone who is worthy.

This angel, this strong angel cries out, Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?

Perhaps you've read the book or seen the cartoon, The Sword and the Stone.

You know, there's the stone and there's the sword stuck in it. And only the rightful king, only the one who is the worthy king of England can come and pull the sword out. All these brave and strong knights, these mighty men come up and they pull on the sword.

And what happens? Nothing. They're not the rightful king. But then a little page boy called Wart, also known as Arthur, comes along and he takes the sword and he pulls it out because he is the rightful king.

[4 : 04] And that's sort of what you see in this passage is you need someone who's worthy, someone who is worthy to come and to open the scroll and break its seals. Revelation was written, it seems to be a good argument for Revelation being written about 95 A.D.

And during this time, John has been sent to Patmos. He has been exiled because of his faith. He's been sent to exile and God gives him this revelation.

Revelation. And in chapter 5, you have this scene of this need, the need for someone who is worthy to take this scroll. And heaven is searched and no one's found who is worthy.

And the earth is searched and no one has found who is worthy. And under the earth is searched and no one is able to open the scroll or to look into it.

But this scroll, this scroll here is, it's interesting because John, when you see this need, you're faced with this need, the need for someone who is worthy to open it, and when nobody's found, what does John do?

[5 : 19] John begins to weep. I'm not sure about you, but I cannot remember a time in my life when I began to cry because I couldn't read a book or because I couldn't read an article. What is the significance of this scroll?

What does this scroll mean? Why would John start weeping that no one was found worthy to open it? And we're not able to sort of go into all the difficulties and lay out everything that this scroll signifies and the seven seals, but we can get a sense of what this signifies when we look at chapters six and seven in the next two chapters where the seals are being opened and these various things happen.

And the first seal is open and I look to chapter six, verse two, and behold, a white horse and its rider had a bow and a crown was given to him and he came out conquering and to conquer.

And the second seal is open and its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth so that men would slay one another. So war is breaking out on the earth and the third seal involves measuring of food and oil and the fourth seal is they were given authority over a fourth of the earth to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence.

And then the fifth seal involves the people who had been slain for their testimony, the martyrs. And the sixth seal involves a great earthquake and then in the seventh seal the 144,000 of Israel are sealed.

[6 : 53] And I think we can summarize a good summary of what's taking place of these seven seals of the scroll is it signifies God's plan for the heavens and the earth, God's plan of judgment and redemption.

Because you're seeing God protecting his people and God judging wickedness at the same time. And so it sort of can be summarized as God's plans for the cosmos, God's plans for the heavens and the earth.

Who is worthy to open the seals and bring to pass God's plan of judgment and redemption? And so you see this need in verse 2. Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?

Heaven is searched and no one is found. The earth is searched and no one is worthy to bring God's plan to pass. Under the earth is searched and still no one is found who is worthy. Think about it for a moment.

Gabriel, Michael, angels in their glory and their splendor are not worthy to take the scroll and to break its seals.

[7 : 58] They're not worthy to bring to pass God's plan of judgment and redemption. David, Moses, Abraham, Caleb, Joshua, Elijah, none of these are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals.

No one was found worthy. The men of the earth with all their strength and their power and their military prowess and their intellect, the earth is searched and no one is found.

And under the earth is searched and still no one is found. There's this great search going out looking for someone who is worthy.

And despair begins to sit in, doesn't it? And John begins to weep. You see it in verse 4, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

And my friends, if this is where the passage ended, then we would have every reason to be weeping with Him because we would be without hope because there would be no one worthy to bring to pass God's plan of judgment and redemption.

[9 : 16] But then in verse 5, it says, weep no more. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that He can open the scroll and its seven seals.

Who is worthy to judge the nations? Who can defeat evil? Who is worthy to stand in the stead of sinners? Who can bridge the gap between a holy God and sinners deserving His just judgment and condemnation?

Weep no more. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered. He is the one who is worthy. Only Jesus Christ is worthy to execute God's divine plan for the heavens and

the earth.

This plan has been set in motion by Christ dying on the cross and by Christ raising to life again. But they're still waiting for its fullness to come.

They're still waiting for Him to come back and to right all the wrongs of this world. Who is worthy? Only Jesus Christ is worthy to bring to pass God's plan of judgment and redemption.

[10:29] The human condition is one of total hopelessness apart from Jesus Christ. There is no other name under heaven by which man must be saved.

But not only do we see this need for one who is worthy, we see the work of one who is worthy. We see that in verses 5-7 and again in verses 9-10. Verse 5 says, Weep no more, behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David is conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain with seven horns and with seven eyes. And continuing on through the passage, it talks about the work of Jesus Christ.

The work of one who is worthy. I've had the opportunity to meet many of you in this church and one of the things that we do when we're trying to get to know each other is we ask, well, what do you do?

You want to know a little something of what brought me to Aberdeen. I want to know sort of how you spend your time, what do you do? And by learning what somebody does, how they spend their time, what they enjoy doing, you can learn something about who they are.

[11:42] And the Bible so often does that when it describes to us who God is and who Jesus Christ is. It describes their work. It explains to us what they have done.

And that's what this passage is doing is it's describing something of the sufficiency of Christ through his work. What he has done, what he has accomplished. Verse 5 tells us that he is conquered. He's conquered so that he is able to break the scroll and to open its seven seals. But how did he accomplish this? How did he conquer?

Verse 6 says, And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain. Verse 9 says, Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Christ conquered by his death. He was victorious through his suffering, by his pain and his agony and his anguish on the cross and raising to life again.

[12:59] What an unlikely way to conquer. Who would have thought that the one who was worthy would have been victorious and would have conquered by death.

By being slain. Isn't the work of Christ the complete opposite of the way we expect and the way that we think about conquering and victory?

Christ conquered by coming the last of all men. He was victorious by his service. He was victorious by being obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

And when Christ says to you in the Gospels, when he says to you that he who would be the greatest among me must be the least among you, must be the servant of all, that's not a foreign concept to him.

Though he was king of kings and lord of lords, he had no place to lay his head. Though he owns the cattle on a thousand hills, he had to pray for daily bread.

[14:03] Though he is the one who is worthy of our worship and honor and glory. He was the one who was delivered up unto death, though he had lived this perfect life. But notice too that the titles being used about Christ to describe Christ in verse 5, it says, the lion of the tribe of Judah and the root of David.

These titles are connected to the promises of God. They're connected to things that God had promised to his people in the future, in the past, in the history of Israel, and were brought to completion and he's the fulfillment of them later.

You know, if you trace the history of Israel throughout the Bible, there are times where they were probably tempted to doubt that God would make good upon his promises.

Life didn't always seem to indicate that things were going to work out the way that God had promised. Perhaps, perhaps sometimes in your life you feel that way.

The Bible tells you that God seeks your good in all things. That God loves you, that God cares for you, that he cares for you where you are and what you're going through and your struggles, that he knows your ways, that he knows what you need before you ask for it.

[15:22] And you can be tempted to doubt because of the hard providences of life that God will make good upon his promises. promises. But here is Jesus Christ coming, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, in fulfillment of these promises that seemed almost too great to accomplish.

All the promises of God are yes and amen in Jesus Christ. And then this language though, in Revelation, you see this throughout the book of Revelation, there's connections to the Exodus. There's been a dissertation written back in the 80s about the Exodus themes in the book of Revelation and you see that in this passage as well. There are two particular places where it's reminiscent of the Exodus.

The first one is this language of the lamb in the Passover in verse 6. Between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain. It's language reminiscent of the Exodus. You remember the final plague that was brought upon Pharaoh in the house of Pharaoh? God promised that he was going to, God set it up where he was going to destroy the firstborn of the Egyptians but the Israelites were to take a lamb and to eat the lamb in readiness, ready to go and they were supposed to do it in all of these certain ways and they were going to slay the lamb and to put the blood on the door and when the angel of death would come through Egypt the angel of death would pass over them.

[17:02] The lamb was slain and the people of God were spared and that was the great event that caused Israel to be able to go out from Egypt.

But you also see in Exodus in verse 10 you see and you made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth and that's language similar to he's talking about them becoming a kingdom of priests.

What did God say to the Israelites in Exodus 19:6 when he was about to give them the Ten Commandments? He said if you are careful to obey my covenant if you do what I say then I will make you a kingdom of priests.

And what happens? Israel did it. They were perfect just like we are. No, they failed time and time and time again.

And yet Jesus Christ came and fulfilled the law of righteousness perfectly in every way and stood in the gap for his people and here that promise is being granted that you shall be a kingdom of priests and you will reign with him in eternity.

[18:22] And you've got to you've got to stop for a minute and think what is being said here because I think that sometimes in our affluence and in our safety we can sort of miss the gravity of what is being said here.

This is being written to a persecuted church. It's not the big Neronian persecution that's taken place but you think that was only 30 years ago from when this was being written and their leaders are being sent to exile at least John has been and these people are suffering at the hands of the authorities over them.

And here's this word coming to them saying you will reign no longer at the mercies of evil rulers or people who oppose the gospel but you will reign in eternity.

in the fullness of what Christ has achieved on your behalf. And so you see Christ's work being described here and my friends what's interesting is that he he conquered by his death.

He conquered through his suffering. He conquered he was victorious at his weakest moment. Crying out my God my God why have you forsaken me?

[19:51] And if your Savior if Jesus Christ was victorious at his weakest moment then you better believe that now that he is seated at the right hand of God the Father and no longer wearing a crown of thorns but wearing the crown of a king you better believe that there is nothing outside of his control that takes place in your life.

If your Savior was victorious at his absolutely weakest moment bearing the wrath of God then you can rest assured that your Savior will be victorious in anything else that shall come because he is seated in his rightful place ruling and reigning for all eternity.

Though providence can cast a dark shadow over the promises of God the people of God can rest assured through Jesus Christ that even death the most difficult the scariest thing that we face that

even death cannot separate the people of God from the promises of God promises of God are yes and amen in Jesus Christ and we see that in Christ's work the work of one who is worthy but finally we see the worship of one who is worthy and we see that in verses 7 through 14 the worship of one who is worthy there's got to be more those were the words of the NFL quarterback Tom Brady now Tom Brady I'm sorry I'm giving an American football illustration I think you'll survive through it but Tom Brady was being interviewed on 60 minutes and he had just won he had won three Super Bowls so he's got three Super Bowl rings that's that's the biggest that's the championship so he's won three Super Bowl rings he just signed a contract for 60 million dollars over the next 10 years I think that's about 3.6 million pounds a year and he was named most eligible bachelor in America and when he was asked sort of what were his thoughts on all of this I mean he's got wild success it's ridiculous I mean he is at the height of his career he's gotten everything that he ever hoped for and more and his reply was there's got to be more and the interviewer asks him I don't know the guy who was interviewing I don't know his name he asked him well do you have the answer he just said with a smile I wish I did you see the world the world holds out before you each and every day and says this this is where it's at this is worthy of your worship and your time and your devotion and then somebody else come along and say no no no no it's not that this is what's worthy of your worship and your devotion and this is where it's really at these people don't know what they're missing out and so this this is worthy of your devotion this will make you satisfied this will make you happy and you can pursue it to the end you can give your life to it and you're going to be standing there with

Tom Brady going there's got to be more but scripture the Bible holds before you today the opportunity to worship someone who is truly worthy the only one who is worthy of our devotion of everything that we are you see there's this there's this new song in verses 9 and 10 it says and they sang a new song saying worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth so they're singing this new song and they're singing about Christ's finished work they're singing about what Christ has done and one of the interesting things about about this song is is that it's heavenly worship it's perfect it's not what we come and attempt to do when we lisp and we try and we fumble with the sin that's in our hearts and the good that we want to do it's perfect heavenly worship and what is it about it's about facts it's about what

[24 : 54] Christ has done it's about his finished work worship is content driven it's about what Jesus Christ has done it's not just about emotions or feelings though those things are important it's about Jesus Christ and him crucified it's Jesus Christ fulfilled work it's about his gospel going forth victoriously to every tribe and language and people and nation worship is about facts and you see this content driven it's really it's a beautiful thing about Christianity isn't it's a beautiful thing about the Bible you see the Bible doesn't just say worship God the Bible says worship God because he created the heavens and the earth the Bible doesn't just say pray to God because just pray to God the Bible says pray to God because he cares for you and because he can act upon your behalf the Bible doesn't say didn't say to the

Israelites just obey it said obey God because he delivered you from Egypt the Bible doesn't just simply say worship Christ it says worship Christ because he is truly worthy because he was slain for sinners like you and like me worship Christ because of what he has done and so you you get this picture here in verses 11 through 13 it says then I looked and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders and the voice of many angels numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing and I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them saying to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever there's this scene this great throne room scene of thousands and thousands and myriads celebrating his goodness celebrating his redemptive work heaven

I don't know what you think about heaven but heaven is about worship when you think of heaven do you sort of think of floating on a cloud and getting to play the harp and you're really hoping that the thing about the wings is true is that sort of what you think of with heaven heaven heaven is about worship and when you come on Sunday and you worship God it's meant to be a little foretaste a glimpse of what heaven will be like do Sundays sometimes seem a little drab a little passe maybe

you wonder why do I keep coming my friends heaven is about worship or maybe you ask well why are there all these rules about the Sabbath why can't I do my job on the Sabbath think about it on Sunday you're supposed to put aside the work that you labor at by the sweat of your brow and you're supposed to put aside those cares that hinder you throughout the week and you get to sort of set aside everything that you do and all that you are worried about and worship and what is it like in heaven you get to heaven and that flesh that was so frustrating each and every day and that heart that was at war with you that you want to do that you do not and that what you do not want to do that I do that battle is over the frustration of life the fear of death the fear for your loved ones and all of those things you get to set them aside and you get to worship and celebrate the goodness and the glory of Christ and that's what we come and do on Sunday that's what we try to do on Sunday is to enjoy just a little tiny foretaste of what heaven will be like when we get to sort of set aside everything and the father walks every tear from our eyes and we get to see for the first time the fullness and the majesty and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ of our God the Father of God the Spirit of myriads and myriads and thousands and thousands of angels worshipping and people from every tongue and tribe and nation together celebrating Christ marveling basking in his glory and beauty and doesn't that change the way you look at worship gathering together with the people of God and so that's that we see the worship of one who is worthy the very son of God was slain for sinners if you're a

[30 : 20] Christian then the one who will have myriads and myriads of angels worshipping him offered himself up freely for you and this is expressed in language that is similar to the exodus remember the exodus they as we said before the exodus the firstborn of God's enemies at that time was slain and a lamb was slain on behalf of the people of God and the angel of death passed over them but at Calvary something even more amazing happened at Calvary God treated his own son as his enemy that he might be able to treat his enemies sinners like you and me as his own son at Calvary God treated his own son as his enemy that he might be able to treat sinners like you and me his enemies as his own son if you're not a

Christian here today you can you can walk out of this door and you can continue giving your life to any and everything that presents itself and you can sort of devote yourself to something and give yourself to it or you can resolve by God's grace that you are going to devote from this moment on every fiber of your body to the worship of the one who is truly worthy of all that you are because he will never leave you saying that's it there must be more he is the answer to the problem that we all face let's pray