

Revelation 5:6

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[0 : 00] We shall turn again to Revelation chapter 5 and the words of verse 6.

Revelation 5 and verse 6. Then I saw a lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.

Now this book consists of a great series of revelations, a series of missions, which God gave to the Apostle John.

It is a very visual book. In fact, the commonest statement in the book is, I saw.

And sometimes John says, I looked, and sometimes behold. But it's all about what John was allowed to see.

[1 : 20] I beheld, I looked, I saw. And what we have is this in upon mission. And that sequence starts in chapter 4 of Revelation.

In chapter 4 and verse 1 we see, After this I looked, and there before me a door standing open in heaven.

And in this first mission in Revelation 4, John sees a throne. And then the second mission we find in chapter 5 from verse 1 downwards.

I saw in the right hand of the throne a scroll. The vision of the scroll. And then the third vision in verse 6.

I saw a lamb standing in the center of the throne. So all the time John says to us, I saw.

[2 : 29] I saw a throne. I saw a scroll. And I saw the lamb in the center of the throne.

And I want to focus for a moment this morning on this great vision of the lamb in the center of the throne.

I want us to see this lamb in the center of the throne. And I want this vision of the lamb.

I want it to control and govern the way that we see the whole world and the whole of human history. Because this is the Christian standpoint.

This is where we look out from. We see everything else in the light of this lamb in the center of the throne.

[3 : 31] The vision brings before us one great fact. One great doctrine. The fact that the lamb stands at the heart of the sovereignty of God.

Right there in the very center of the throne is the lamb who has borne the sins of the world.

Now in John's mission, the throne fills everything. In John's mission, the throne dominates the whole book.

In John's mission, it dominates the whole history of the church and the whole history of the world.

That sovereignty, that divine supremacy, that divine control, It's at the center of everything.

It dominates absolutely everything. And yet, at the very heart of the sovereignty itself, there is the lamb.

[4 : 46] At the heart of what dominates, there is this lamb as if it had been slain. And sometimes to us, the idea of the sovereignty of God is perhaps an obstruction.

Perhaps it's just some theological tenet. Or perhaps it's simply something which is awe-inspiring, and even terrifying.

And John is saying to us, Ah, but at the heart of the sovereignty, there is the lamb. The sovereignty of God is a Christ-shaped sovereignty.

There is nothing in that sovereignty of God that goes against that face of God, which we have seen in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And is it not, in a way, a very simple thing? The lamb in the center of the throne. Jesus at the heart of the sovereignty.

[6 : 06] A divine dominion, which is utterly and totally Christ-shaped. And it doesn't matter which aspect of God's sovereignty we isolate and focus upon.

We find that in every single aspect of it, the same truth stands forth. The Lamb is at the center of it. We may think, for example, of God's foreordination. What an awesome thing that is. God has foreordained whatever comes to pass.

We think of God's terrible decree. Of those great doctrines of predestination.

Of election. Even that terrible mystery of reprobation. Are the sin, do they, cold?

[7 : 14] Are the sin simply awe-inspiring? Until I know that right at the heart of God's foreordination, right at the core of God's decree, there is Jesus.

Because he is at the heart of the triune God. And the decree is God's decree. It is the decree of Jesus himself.

Who made this plan? Who formulated this great decree? Whose stamp? Whose characteristics does it bear?

Whose personality is impressed upon it? It is Christ-shaped. And there I lose my fear.

There is nothing in divine foreordination, or in predestination, or in election, or in the mystery of reformation that goes against what God is in Jesus.

[8 : 32] at the heart, at the center of the throne, at the center of the decree. But if I think of the sovereignty of God in creation, the same thing is true.

God creates with total freedom. In fact, creation is a great expression of the sheer freedom of God. In the beginning, God created. And God stamped his own impress upon that creation in its every detail, every single element in that cosmos.

And equally, God stamped his own impress upon the great aggregate that we call the universe.

God is a great source. And yet, it's not simply the sovereignty of God in creation, but a sovereignty which has Jesus at its very heart.

[9 : 47] The love is the creator. The genes of the atoms and the sub-atomic particles and all those forces that are created in the sovereign freedom of the Lamb of God.

The reason that I know there are no booby-traps in the cosmos, that there is nothing at last malevolent in the physical, material universe, is that I know it was made by the Lamb, by this Christ, to stand at the very heart of the sovereignty.

And if the day comes when in the providence of God you work on the frontiers of human knowledge, on the frontiers of human science, and you sometimes hesitate about opening a particular door or pursuing a particular avenue of research for fear of what may be behind it, then you remind yourself there is nothing behind that door but what was created by the Lamb in the midst, in the center of the throne.

and so you go boldly forward because the Lamb is at the very heart of creation.

And if you think of the sovereignty of God and providence, it's in the same great theology before you. He's got the whole world in His hands.

[11 : 47] It's so marvelously important that in the structure of this book everything is dominated by chapter four by the throne.

And the book is going to tell sometimes a terrible story of plagues and famines and persecutions and bloodshed and disaster.

And yet all of these have to be seen in the light of the throne, in the light of the providence of God. Sometimes you ask and sometimes you tremble.

I wonder what's in the cup. I wonder what God has in store for me. I wonder what next God has to give in His providence.

But then I know that the Lamb is in the center of the throne and that at last He allocates my destiny and that He can't make an allocation that contradicts or goes back on what He said as to the way He felt about me the day He went to the cross.

[13 : 33] because the day He went to the cross He said this is how I feel about you and when today God gives me my providence He gives me a providence which is Christ shaped and which will endorse what He said when He went to the cross the cup today's cup tomorrow's cup it will say at last for the whole story is told this is how I feel about you and this is how much I love you I want you I want you not to look at the plagues other persecutions other disasters not first at the dragon and at the beast

I want you to look first at the land in the center of the throne I want you to look before the morning is over I want you to listen to hear something but first of all I want you to look this lamb in the center of the throne well there is the doctrine the prosaic doctrine that the lamb is at the heart of the sovereignty at the heart of God's foreordination at the heart of God's creation at the heart of God's providence there is the lamb and I want you to look at the great picture that John draws for us as he describes what he saw with his own eyes

I want us to look for a moment at the picture of the lamb I want you to note first of all that the lamb is a lion is it not such a great thing there you see verse 5 do not weep see the lion of the tribe of Judah see the lion and John turns to see the lion and John turned with trepidation and fear and he looks and there is a lamb the lamb is a lion the lion is a lamb the moment I take it from this point of view that when we look to see the lamb then we see the lion we see the majesty and we see the strength and we see the invincibility and we see that here is not one to trifle with the lamb with all the powers and all the features and all the attributes of the lion that's what we find in the center of the throne so important to know the might of the grace of

God to know that that love is not simply poignant that love is not simply pathetic but that love is irresistible as love as invincible as lion no one stands in his way I looked and I saw a lamb a lamb with all the attributes of a lion and there John tells us as if it had been slain a lamb having been slain and it's a very very vivid picture of a shrill image a very bold one which brings us to the very limits of our human taste and yet doesn't transgress the carnage of taste this is a lamb slaughtered a lamb with its throat cut that's what

John sees a lion like lamb with its throat cut in other words the reminders of the suffering the reminders of his death there in some way physically still visible in his person part of the fascination of the whole vision is that the throne fills the line of vision and at the center of the throne the lamb who mesmerizes draws attention so inescapably to himself you cannot but see the throne and you cannot but see the lamb and you cannot but see that he's been slaughtered you can never never forget what it cost him never forget how much he loved you never forget that he understands pain that he too has tasted death never a sovereign to whom you can say what do you know you can't understand our pain can't understand death because there he is a lamb having been slaughtered and yet a lamb that stands having been slaughtered standing those of you who recall the [20 : 44] Old Testament story of the day of atonement will remember that on that day of atonement when the high priest went to make atonement on Yom Kippur which I think in fact is this week possibly tomorrow that on that day the high priest wasn't allowed to sit in the holy of holies but he stood he was acting and the picture offered to us here is this that the lamb is still standing ever active in the service of his people that is in your service I saw a lion like lamb a lamb that had been slaughtered and a lamb who never sat down he slumbers not nor sleeps never for a single moment is he inattentive or inactive or caught off guard or off watch but ever vigilant ever active in all the manifold cares of this ministry as the sovereign of this cosmos as your prophet and priest and king the sheer boundless energy of this lamb who have been slaughtered stands and this lamb with the seven eyes this almighty and all comprehending intelligence who governs on an absolute fullness of information this tremendous alertness so that everything is within his vision all you needs every peril that threatens every possible embarrassment to you everything is seen by this lamb with the seven eyes and the horns those horns locked in combat locked in combat with the forces of evil locked in combat with all that is dark and all that is antimatter and all that is chaos and all that's disordered and all that's malevolent and all that's demonic in this world sometimes we think that we alone are fighting until we see this great fact of the lion like lamb with this magnificent intelligence with his boundless energy locked in mortal and invincible combat with all its presence there then is what

John wants you to see there is what God wants you to see and want you to look what do we see this morning we see all the anxieties of our own spheres we see all the anxieties on the national stage of economic and social and moral problems we see all the anxieties on the international stage and all the anxieties and all the causes for despondency and despair even in the life of the church of God and that sometimes all that we're seeing are to return and look and see the throne and see the center of the throne the lamb that's what we want to look at and then the vision goes on and we see the lamb taking the scroll you go back to the earlier part of the chapter

I saw in the right hand of the king a scroll was writing on both sides and the words it was full the whole counsel of God God's whole plan for the universe it was all there you see but it was sealed

there was no one to understand God's plan and there was no one fit to administer God's plan and the seer knew oh it must be such a wonderful plan because it's God's plan such a beautiful plan and he was longing for it to be opened this plan of God's longing to know it longing to see it unfold but no one was found worthy no one able to understand no one able to administer so what does he do oh he says

I wept and I wept and I wept because no one was found to understand or to administer and I want you to stand for a moment without man weeping with her own weeping because so often we weep we weep because we are mistaken we weep because we are wrong John's weeping was based on error no one was found worthy there was no one worthy that was John's mistake and that's why John wept and we weep because we don't know and because we don't understand because there was one worthy one of the elders comes and tells him that the lamb has been found worthy and so the lamb has taken the scroll that means that today he understands and he has taken it he has the scroll it's a scroll which in the last analysis he himself wrote a scroll that has all his love in it and all his wisdom and all his power in it and there's nothing in it that's dark there's nothing in it unintelligible because he who is

God in my nature he understands it and he does not delegate the opening of it to anyone but he takes the responsibility himself I will open the scroll and it means for me that I must go at his pace and I must follow his sequence and I must let him finish his story as he goes page after page through this great telly text this great scroll this scroll that he wrote this scroll that he understands this scroll that he reads this scroll which contains consists of his directions for all who serve how often do we see adverts headlines your destiny in their hands remember that great gathering at [29 : 42] Yalta in 1943 when all the men who mattered gathered to open the scroll!

Churchill Roosevelt paraplegic Stalin a monster our destiny in their hands and they believed it and yet the world didn't go in the direction that any single one of the three intended or anticipated he didn't go down

Churchill's road because much of Europe fell under a darker barbarism than even that of Nazism didn't go down Roosevelt's road didn't go down Stalin's road what would he say of his own impoverished humiliated nation today there was another scroll there was an alternative script the real script the lamb was in the midst of the throne and he would tell a story he would control the unfolding drama and how great it is today that our world is not in the heart of any man or group of men neither stoic nor democrat nor marxist but in the hands of

Jesus God's own son well I wanted you to see something and I want you to hear something I want you to hear great music because this vision is followed by the great threefold doxology the great chorus of praise see how it is in verse 8 and when he had taken it the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down each one and the harp and they were holding golden bowls and they sang a new song when they saw they sang and I wanted to hear them singing those living creatures the cherubim those august and sometimes terrifying servants of god and those twenty-four elders who represent the church of god well you know they had settled the throne they were so close to the throne and when they saw the lamb take the scroll they burst out in a great spontaneous song we have all the melody of those harps and all the beauty of the song and it's a new song it's a song that was fresh to them which they sang with spontaneous joy it's a song which was new it was novel it was original never sung before you know there is a song too at the close of chapter four but it's a different song although it's sung by the same people you are worthy this song then our lord and your god for you created all things that was the old song a song to god as creator but this is a new song because this song says you are worthy because you were slain and with your blood you purchased your redeemed men for god from every tribe and language and people and nation that's the new song the song of redemption you are worthy because you were slain the man there is another song verse it said 13 then

I looked and heard the voice of many angels numbering thousands upon thousands and ten thousands time ten thousand they encircled the throne on the living creatures you notice you see these angels aren't as close to the throne as the elders the angels aren't as near the throne as the church of god as the believers they encircled the throne and the elders but you know what kind song was this can you imagine an angel singing can you imagine ten angels singing can you imagine a thousand angels singing what have I hear ten thousand times ten thousand [36 : 15] I think that a hundred times ten thousand is a million angels ten thousand to the power ten thousand angels and they're singing and they're singing the new song the world is the lamb who

was slain they themselves it's so beautiful they themselves have no share in the blood they weren't redeemed by the blood of Jesus and yet they're so filled by the beauty of the lamb and by the sovereignty of the lamb and by the achievement of the lamb that they sing and they sing thou were slain those millions upon millions some of you might go home and work it out exciting what it is ten thousand times ten thousand all those angels singing this great song worthy is the lamb and then there's something else

I heard every creature in heaven I were listening still I want you to look and I want you to listen I want you to hear this this this music every creature that all joining in this great song all that is in that singing the furthest star is singing what's under your feet is singing there is absolutely nothing accepted from this every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and all that is in them I heard I heard them singing to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb they were all bursting forth in this great rain song I'm sure all of you remember

Ravel's ballet that great piece of music which starts so silently and then ends so dramatically in an overwhelming crescendo it begins as you recall with a solo clarinet and in the background the ominous sound of the kettle drum and then gradually there is the accumulation of volume as all the wind instruments come in and then the strings and then the brasses and then at last all the whole range of percussion and then just to the point where the volume is almost unbearable then as suddenly it stops and here it begins with the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders and then we have those millions upon millions of angels and then at last every creature and see how infectious it is the angels hear the elders and then all creation hears the elders and then at the close of the song at the end of the chapter the four living creatures said

Amen and the elders fell down and worshipped the church had nothing more to say but you know in Provence Ballero the music stops the young couple in the entanglements of a hopeless romance have gone to the top of the volcano to commit suicide the music reflects the noise of the within this volcano and then suddenly the dead collapse into it and the music's over the tragedy continues the song never ends the song is still there you see John heard it

I want you to ask why did John hear it was it because John lived in the first century no he heard it because he was in the spirit and if you listen today on the Lord's day just like John then you can hear just as much as you can see the lung in the center of the throne so you can hear this music if you listen what other noises do you hear in the world today listen carefully do you hear the cherubim do you hear the elders can you hear the angels can you hear the whole creation singing if you just listen and maybe more important still have you joined in instrument upon instrument voice upon voice section upon section of the orchestra can you say let that song be mine

[42 : 41] John today hears this great chorus he hears it from very close to the throne does he hear your voice your contribution the more important does Jesus himself hear it you say worthy is the lamb that was slain let's be sure that we all join in what I must do it there let's pray oh lord we ask that thy spirit would take thy word and drive it home to our hearts and bless it to us that we too may sing this new song and sing it always with fresh insight and fresh in his lesson for thy glory is saved our closing praise is psalm 72 we shall sing from verse 17 to the end the tune is ettingham his name forever shall endure three verses to god's praise his name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be last as did him and blessed all nations shall him come now blessed be the

Lord Lord our God the God of Israel for he he alone doth wondrous heart in!

God God God has God has God has has to God!

His glory his glory to all eternity His glory His His is to eternity fill filled Amen!
did thee Amen.