Lesson: Revelation 5:6-14; Time of Action: 96 A.D.; Place of Action: The Apostle John had his vision while on the Isle of Patmos

Golden Text: “Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 5:12).

I. INTRODUCTION. This week’s lesson takes us into the realm of heavenly worship of the Lamb of God. The word “worthy” is central to the heavenly activity as the inhabitants of the celestial city verbally proclaim the worth of the redeeming Lamb. All heaven worshiped Jesus, the Lamb of God. The reason they worship Him is that He is worthy. He is worthy of worship because He is God.

II. BACKGROUND FOR THE LESSON. While a prisoner on the Island of Patmos for his faith in Jesus Christ, the Apostle John was given some revelations about the present and the future. The Scriptures say that he was “in the Spirit” (see Revelation 1:10) when he saw a vision of the glorified Christ
(see Revelation 1:10-20) who gave him messages for the seven churches of Asia Minor. The messages were given for their spiritual welfare (see Revelation chapters 2-3). Once the messages were completed, John was spiritually taken to heaven where he would receive visions of what would take place in the future (see Revelation 4:1). In the vision he saw the throne of God surrounded by beings, including four beasts (or angels) and twenty-four elders, who gave Him continuous worship (see Revelation 4:2-11). John also noticed that in the right hand of the One on the throne was a “book” (see Revelation 5:1) or scroll, sealed with seven seals. Then an angel asked who was worthy to open the scroll, but no one in the whole universe was found worthy enough to open the scroll (see Revelation 5:2-3). John was very disappointed by this and he “wept much” (see Revelation 5:4). However, one of the twenty-four elders comforted him by saying that “the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David” (see Revelation 5:5) had “prevailed” or was victorious and was therefore worthy to open the scroll. This is where our lesson begins. Note: Christ is introduced in verse 5 as “the Lion of the tribe of Juda and “the Root of David.” These titles related to the credentials of the Messiah and also to the credentials needed to open the scroll. The tribe of Judah (see Genesis 49:9) was symbolized by the lion which pictures majesty, dignity, courage, and strength. In Jacob’s departing blessing upon the tribes of Israel, he saw the rule of the nation coming through the lineage of his son, Judah (see Genesis 49:8-12). Jesus Christ is the only Jew who can prove His lineage back to David (see Matthew 1:1-17), for all genealogical records of the Israelites were destroyed with the destruction of
Jerusalem in 70 A.D. As the “root of David” (see Revelation 5:5), Jesus will fulfill the Davidic covenant (see II Samuel 7:12-17) and the prophetic references referring to the Messiah (see Isaiah 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:5-6).

III. THE LAMB IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE (REVELATION 5:6-7)

A. The Lamb’s appearance (Revelation 5:6). In our first verse John said “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.” We are first introduced to the One who sat on the throne (God the Father), the twenty-four elders and the four beasts in chapter 4. The word “beasts” does not refer to savage monsters or animals, but rather to living creatures. The “four beasts” are identified in Ezekiel 4:5 as four living creatures. These living creatures are called cherubim in Ezekiel 10:20. They are celestial or angelic beings who guard and vindicate the righteousness of God (see Genesis 3:24; Exodus 26:1, 31; 36:8, 35) and the mercy of God (see Exodus 25:22; 37:9). In the holy of holies God’s glory dwelt between the cherubim, which were placed at both ends of the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant (see Psalms 80:1; Exodus 25:10-22). Some scholars think that the “four beasts” in Revelation chapter 4 are cherubim because of their similarities—each having four
faces: the face of a lion, an ox, a man and an eagle (see Ezekiel 1:10; Revelation 4:7). In Revelation 4:7 each cherub has some aspect of the nature of one of these animals: the lion reveals power; the ox strength; the man intelligence; and the eagle swiftness. However, they have one dissimilarity—the number of wings (see Ezekiel 1:6; Revelation 4:8). But the dissimilarity in the number of wings may indicate that these angels have power to appear in different forms for purposes of symbolic revelations.

According to Revelation 4:4, there were twenty-four “elders.” Note: The twenty-four elders appear to represent the church, all those who have been translated into heaven just before the tribulation. The very word “elder” has church significance (see I Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5). In Revelation 4:4, they are seen wearing crowns and dressed in white clothing. Crowns throughout the New Testament are exclusively identified as rewards for the faithful in the church (see I Corinthians 3:13-15; 9:24-25; Revelation 3:11). The Bible speaks of at least five rewards called crowns that will be given to believers. There’s the “crown of life” (see James 1:12), the “crown of rejoicing” (see I Thessalonians 2:19), the “crown of righteousness” (see II Timothy 4:8), the “crown of glory” (see I Peter 5:4), and the “incorruptible crown” (see I Corinthians 9:25). The elders’ white clothing represents righteousness. These elders are already glorified, crowned and enthroned before the Lamb opens the sealed book of judgments (see Revelation chapter 5), and before the end-time judgments are loosed upon the world (see Revelation chapters 6-18). This reaffirms that the Church will not experience the judicial wrath and
judgments of the tribulation (see John 5:4; Romans 5:9; I Thessalonians 1:10; 5:1-11; Revelation 3:10). John no doubt was expecting to see a mighty lion appear to represent the conquering Messiah, but instead, in the middle of this worship scene there “stood a Lamb.” Both characteristics of a lion and a lamb are combined in Jesus. In His first coming He took on the role of a lamb (see John 1:29) and at His second coming He will be a conqueror and rule as a lion (see Revelation 19:11-16). The fact that He “stood” in the midst implies the preparation for a task. In this case the “Lamb” was preparing for the task of unsealing the scroll (see Revelation 6:1). The Lamb looked “as it had been slain.” This describes the glorified Christ as bearing the marks and wounds of His crucifixion. This has to represent the resurrected Christ because the “Lamb” stood there, no longer dead (see Revelation 1:8). Note: Interestingly, even after Christ’s resurrection and ascension into heaven, He still had His crucifixion scars (see John 20:24-31). Ironically, the scars show how He has prevailed and overcome. The shameful death of the cross was for Jesus the means of victory over the powers of evil (see John 12:31-33; Colossians 2:14-15). When we see His scars in heaven, we will never forget the sacrificial work that He provided for our redemption. Along with the scars of crucifixion, the Lamb had “seven horns” which speak of strength (see I Kings 22:11; Zechariah 1:18-19) and authority (see Daniel 7:24; Revelation 13:1). Although Christ was seen as a “Lamb,” He is not weak. He has superior might to overcome all other powers because the presence of the “seven horns” signifies the perfection of strength in Him. The “Lamb” also had
“seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.” This phrase describes the Holy Spirit in His fullness (see Revelation 1:4; 4:5). In the Scriptures, the number 7 represents perfection or completion. The Holy Spirit whom Christ sent into the world sees all things, knows all things and is present everywhere in the universe because He is God (see John 16:7-11).

B. The Lamb’s role (Revelation 5:7). At this point John said “And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.” As the only One qualified to open the book or scroll, the Lamb took it out of the right hand of “him that sat upon the throne” who was God the Father. Taking the sealed scroll was the first step toward pouring out God’s judgment upon the world. Although every Member of the Trinity has been sinned against and therefore has the right to judge sinful mankind, God the Father “hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (see John 5:22). This “book” or scroll contains the prophetic judgments that are to come upon the earth. The opening or breaking of the seals of this “book” releases the judgments of the tribulation period upon the earth (see Revelation chapter 6). Therefore, the scroll’s message was not one of salvation, but judgment on those who had rejected salvation.

IV. THE WORSHIP AROUND THE THRONE (Revelation 5:8-14)

A. The worshipers: the beasts and the elders
(Revelation 5:8). John continued to say “And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.” As the “Lamb” or Christ held the scroll, “the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb.” The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down on their faces in worship before the Lamb (see Revelation 4:8-11). 

*Note:* We must understand that worship is always directed toward that which is being worshiped. Those who go to church and say, “I got nothing out of the worship” misunderstand worship. A person does not worship in order to get something out of it (although God may permit us to do so). The One being worshiped receives the benefit of worship, not the worshiper. In true worship, an individual recognizes the worth of God and responds by telling Him or showing Him that He is worthy. We must not think that worship is only reserved for certain days or under certain circumstances. Our praise and worship ought to extend to God at all times (see Psalms 34:1; 71:6). Worship ought to be as much a vital part of the Christian’s lifestyle as breathing. The four living creatures and the elders each had “harps.” These were actually lyres or small harps, and were used in Israel’s history to express adoration, praise, and thanksgiving (see Psalms 33:2; 98:5). They were used in our text for the same reasons. The four living creatures and the elders also had “golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.” The term “saints” is used in the New Testament for all Christians (see I Corinthians 1:2;
Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2). It always refers to a sanctified person, one who is saved and set apart to God for His possession and service. The “golden vials” or bowls, are “full of odours” or aromas. These aromas are said to be “the prayers of saints.” This probably refers to believers who are still on earth during the tribulation period. Remember, people will still come to Christ after the rapture, but will have to experience the tribulation period (see Revelation 7:4-15). They will be the ones offering prayers to God. Those who are caught up in the rapture will be in God’s presence. Prayers offered to God are referred to as sweet incense (see Psalms 141:2; Luke 1:9-10). **Note: In the context of our lesson, these prayers or petitions probably relate to the requests of believers on earth desiring that God’s name be vindicated, the wicked be judged, and the coming of Christ’s kingdom on earth (see Matthew 6:9-10; Revelation 6:10; 8:3-5).**

B. Their song (Revelation 9-10).

1. (vs. 9). Still referring to the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, in this verse John said “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” The elders and the living creatures sang “a new song,” one that had never been sung in heaven before. This song was in worship of Jesus Christ, the Lamb. It focused on His worthiness to open the “seals” of the scroll. He was worthy “to take the book, and to open the seals
thereof.” Note: The word “worthy” translates the Greek word “axios.” Its original meaning had to do with weight. In ancient times before standard coins became common, when a merchant and a buyer agreed upon a certain amount, standard weights were put on one side of a balance and a precious metal was considered “worthy” of the trade when its weight equaled the weight on the other side. In the same way, when it is said that Jesus is “worthy” to take the book, it means that He is equal to the honor. The Lamb was “worthy” to open the “seals” of “the book” or scroll to release its judgments on the earth for a couple of reasons. First, because He “wast slain” or killed. Christ is worthy to judge because He being God the Creator and the Messiah, suffered death on behalf of sinners (see Philippians 2:6-11). He is also worthy to open the book of judgments because he “hast redeemed us to God by thy (His) blood.” Since this phrase is in the Greek past tense, it refers to an event that has already happened at some specific time. Therefore, it must refer to Jesus’ crucifixion at Calvary. The Greek word for “redeemed” means “to purchase” or “to buy back.” The word “us” refers to believers. Christians have been purchased by Christ and delivered from sin. We have become the Lord’s property (see I Corinthians 6:19-20), and His inheritance (see Ephesians 1:18). The price that was paid for our redemption was the Lamb’s “blood,” the only thing that could cover the price (see I Peter 1:18-20). Christ has redeemed people “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” People from every ancestry, every language group, every race, and every nation who confess Jesus as Lord and Savior will be among the
“redeemed.” God truly does love the entire world (see John 3:16). Note: It has always been God’s intention to reveal His love and power to all mankind (see I Kings 8:60). God is not willing that any person should perish or be lost (see II Peter 3:9). The gospel of salvation is not limited to one culture, race, or country. Anyone who accepts Christ by faith can be saved (see Ephesians 2:8-9).

2. (vs. 10). In this verse the new song that the worshipers sang went on to say that Christ “hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” Through Christ’s redemption, believers become “unto our God kings and priests.” Like Melchizedek, believers are “priests and kings” (see Hebrews 7:1-2). God originally made Israel His “kingdom of priests” (see Exodus 19:6), but He later designated the Christian church as “a royal priesthood” (see I Peter 2:9). As “priests,” believers engage in spiritual work, doing such things as sharing truths from God’s Word, and praying on behalf of God’s people. All Christian believers are priests and therefore can also offer to God spiritual sacrifices (see I Peter 2:5) which may include praise (see Hebrews 13:15), material substances (see Philippians 4:15-18; Hebrews 13:16), and one’s total self (see Romans 12:1-2). Note: Our priesthood will continue through the millennial reign, but it is not mentioned as part of the new heaven and earth that follows (see Revelation 21:1). When sin and death have been erased, as it will be in the new heaven and new earth, a priesthood is no longer necessary. The new song also said “and we shall reign on the earth.” While on earth,
Jesus assured His disciples of this (see Matthew 19:28). As “kings,” believers will rule with Christ on earth during the millennium (see Revelation 20:6). The judgments that will result from Christ opening the seals of the scroll will lead to His millennial rule on earth. **Note:** The tribulation days will end with Christ’s kingdom coming to earth. Believers will reign with Christ on earth during His millennial (one thousand year) reign.

C. The worshipers: the angels (Revelation 5:11). In this verse John says “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” John saw a circle of worshipers getting wider and wider. He heard “the voice of many angels round about the throne.” They joined the four living creatures and the elders in praise. There are so many angels that they can’t be counted by humans. John said “the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” In the context of our lesson, these numbers should not be taken literally. John was really saying that there were so many angels around the throne that he couldn’t begin to count them. John used the numbers he did in order to communicate that they were innumerable. This confirms Daniel’s vision when he saw a myriad of angels ministering to the Ancient of Days (see Daniel 7:9-10). **Note:** Undoubtedly, angels were created individually by God since they do not procreate or reproduce (see Matthew 22:30). They are superior to humans and can look amazing in appearance, but they are not divine (see
Psalms 8:4-5; Hebrews 1:4-8), they are created beings. Hebrews 12:22 tells us that the “heavenly Jerusalem” to which believers have come has “an innumerable company of angels.” When Jesus was arrested, He said that His Father could easily send twelve legions of angels to deliver Him (see Matthew 26:53). A Roman legion of soldiers was between 3,000 and 6,000 men, so Jesus declared that God could send as many as 72,000 angels to rescue Him. In addition, it’s also possible that each child of God is assigned an angel since Jesus when speaking of His “little ones” said that “their angels” always have access to God (see Matthew 18:10; Hebrews 1:14).

D. The worship of the angels (Revelation 5:12). In this verse, John noted that these great numbers of angels were “Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” The great multitude of angels devoted themselves to adoring “the Lamb.” The twenty-four elders were singing a song of redemption (see verse 9), but the angels were uttering words of adoration. The angels couldn’t sing the same song that the elders sang, who represented the saved, because angels don’t experience salvation as humans do. They are not redeemed. However, they are fascinated observers of salvation (see I Peter 1:12). The angels praise the victorious “Lamb” at whose work they can only marvel. While the living creatures and elders sing the new song of redemption, the angels declared “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain” by mentioning seven of His attributes. First, Jesus is worthy
to receive “power.” This term speaks of Jesus’ ability or strength to perform. Even though Christ naturally possesses divine power, the angels here express His worthiness to use it. Second, Christ is worthy to receive “riches.” This refers to His worthiness to have all the wealth He has as a result of His finished work. Third, Jesus is worthy to receive “wisdom.” This refers not only to vast knowledge, but also the skill and discernment to use it well. Jesus has all the treasures of “wisdom” in Himself (see Colossians 2:3). Fourth, Christ is also worthy to receive “strength.” This speaks of raw might or force which is the basis for all of His mighty deeds. Fifth, Christ is worthy to receive “honor.” This term refers to the esteem or respect Christ deserves for who He is and His sacrificial work (see Philippians 2:8-10). Sixth, Christ was worthy to receive “glory.” This can speak of splendor and radiance, but also refers to Christ’s manifestation of God in His fullness (see John 1:14; 17:5, 24). Seventh, Christ is worthy to receive “blessing.” This term refers to being lauded and exalted. To “bless” Christ means to speak well of Him, giving Him the praise due Him.

E. The worshipers: every creature (Revelation 5:13). This verse says “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, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” Up to this point John had seen “the Lamb” receive praise from the living creatures, the elders, and an innumerable number of angels. Now joining in this praise was “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.” In other words, all of creation recognized Christ’s worth (see Psalms 103:22: Philippians 2:10). John also said that he heard every creature saying “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” This four-fold praise is known as a doxology: a declaration of praise to God, or a brief hymn expressing His power and glory. It was directed to both “him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” The word “him” refers to God the Father. The worship that was earlier directed to God (see Revelation 4:8-11) now was also directed to “the Lamb,” the Christ. This praise given by all creatures continued “for ever and ever.” It never stops! This glorious heavenly scene that John was blessed to witness should remind us that our God—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—is worthy of praise from everything He has created. That includes you and me!

F. Their worship (Revelation 5:14). Our final verse says “And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.” This praise session that John was blessed to witness ended just as it had started (see Revelation 4:9-10) with these “four beasts,” or living creatures shouting “Amen” which means “so be it” or “we firmly agree.” They were affirming or agreeing with the adoration shown by all of creation in the previous verse. In addition, “the four and twenty elders” repeated what they did when the praise service began (see Revelation 4:10), they “fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and
They all began by worshiping the One on the throne—God the Father (see Revelation 4:2, 8; 5:14), and now they are also worshiping the Lamb. **Note:** The term “worship” means to give worth to someone or something. When we worship God we are giving worth or value to a deserving God and Father of all (see Ephesians 4:6). This passage of Scripture reminds us that when we worship, we praise and submit ourselves to the one being worshiped. When we exalt the Person and work of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, we are worshiping.

**V. Conclusion.** While the symbolism we find in this chapter of Revelation can be difficult for us to understand, the message is clear. Christ, the Lamb will receive eternal worship, and He is worthy to receive it all. As believers, our eternal destiny is one of continual worship before the throne of God and the Lamb. Likewise, our lives today should be marked by continual worship of the Lamb who was slain. God’s people have the opportunity to express our satisfaction through praise. Today, believers express their worship of the Saviour through songs of praise and adoration. In the future, God’s people will join the hosts of heaven in a glorious song of worthiness to the Lamb of God.