November 8, 2026 - Look and Listen: A Call TO Endure (Revelation Series) "Scrolls and Lions and Lambs, Oh My!" - Revelation 5:1-14

Commentator Dan-ell Johnson invites us to put on "Revelation 5 glasses" to help us to see what we cannot see on our own. Scrolls, and Lions and Lambs, Oh My!
Revelation 5:1-14

It's best for chapter 4 and 5 to be read together, but Josh and I split them up over these two weeks so please go back and look at/listen to his sermon from last week. [Reminder. there's a good chance they read the entire Book of Revelation at once in the Early Church.] One of Josh's closing statements last week was an echo of something from Darrell Johnson: "When we 'go to worship' we are entering a service already in progress ... we step into a worship service that has been going on for a long time!" (Darrell Johnson in Discipleship on the Edge) so let's step into this amazing moment of worship!

Remember in chapter 4, John is first drawn through an open door into the very presence of God, and the throne of God is front and center. We're told numerous times in chapter 4 there is "One seated on the throne." But the only description we get of the "One who is seated" is the highly metaphorical — "like jasper and camelian" which is perfectly clear, right? In chapter 4, we get numerous pictures of what's going on around the "One who is seated on the throne;" there are rainbows and lightning and thunder, and 24 thrones with 24 elders dressed in white robes, casting their crowns before the throne, four living with lots of eyes — but we don't get a description of the "One [who is actually] seated on the throne." And then we get to chapter 5 (which is an artificial separation), where we are given more detail about WHO is on the throne.

It starts with just a "right hand" — a right hand with a scroll that's written on both sides, rolled up and sealed with, how many seals? 7. It was customary in those days for letters to be sealed with wax and stamped with the sender's identity. 7 seals suggest that what is written down is Of utmost importance and needs to be handled carefully. But what's written on it? Wouldn't you be disappointed if it was full Of charts and timetables?

Some would say it contains all the mysteries of God's plan of salvation; past, present and future. Some would say it's more of a revealing of what lies ahead. That makes more sense with what follows in chapter 6 — which we are skipping Over as we start to move more quickly through Revelation. What we CAN gather from the description John gives us, is that what IS written is something we all need to hear; long to hear and, hopefully, want to hear. But there's a problem.

I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?' (Revelation 5:2) The answer is devastating. Nobody is worthy; nobody is able. What we all need and long to hear is out of our reach. It's humbling to acknowledge what we're not able to do. It creates a sadness that runs deep, bringing us almost to the end of ourselves. But that's not all bad either. In fact, it seems like the sooner we acknowledge what we are incapable of, the sooner we're ready to get our eyes focused on the only One who is worthy and able to do ' 'more than we can ask or imagine." (Ephesians 3:20)

One of the 24 elders says to John, "Do not weep. Look. the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, conquered, so that He can open the scroll and its seven seals." (Revelation 5:5) This is familiar language from the Hebrew scriptures and other writings that pre-dated Jesus. Lions are powerful; dominant; unrivaled. We love reading about powerful lions on the plains of the Serengeti or in the forests of Namia. Of course, a lion is worthy to open the scroll and tear apart those seven seals! Have at it, Mr. Lion! Illis is a picture of power we're familiar with which is a big part of our problem. From Jeff Roner: "Look Again" (September 27, 2026) We think we know what power looks like. Power sits on thrones. Power commands armies. Power controls outcomes. Power makes things happen. Power gets people to comply. Power defeats enemies, rewards friends, protects what belongs to us, and makes certain that our will is done. We may disagree about who should possess power or how it should be used, but rarely do we question the definition itself. Then we meet Jesus, who keeps asking us to 100k again. TO use Danell Johnson's language, we need to keep on our "Revelation 5 glasses." "Then saw between lhe throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if had been slaughtered . (Revelation 5:6) Wait a minute, John?! I thought you saw a powerful lion?! Now you're telling me there's a lamb? The word used here actually means little lamb, AND it has been slaughtered! We love a good stmng lion on the throne ... but we don't really know what to do with a beat-up little lamb. And we don't know how to fit a lion and a beat-up lamb together — on the same throne; or for a lion to BE a lamb! This is too paradoxical for our minds to imagine on our own. One New Testament scholar says, "This is peåaps the most mind-wrenching 'tebillh of images' in lileratme_ The skyi in Ike system reserved for the hon has been fitted by the Lamb of God." (Eugene Boring in Revelation) John sees and shares a couple more details about the little slaughtered lamb: it's all-knowing — symbolized by the 7 eyes of wisdom; and it's all-powerful — symbolized by the 7 horns of strength. So, this little lamb didn't get torn to pieces because it was UN-aware, UN-wise or UN-able to defend itself. In its strength and wisdom, it has chosen to suffer. But why would somethingJSomeone so strong and wise choose to suffer? is where the "glasses" we norrnally wear, to see and make sense Of everything, just don't work. We can't make sense ofa suffering Lion-Lamb because there's nothing else like it. Ihis is why God must reveal it to John — and the rest of the Church. Jeff Roner continues: t/ there were ever a place where we might expect God finally to what real power looks like, surely this is it. We are no longer in Bethlehem wilh an infant. We are no longer watching Jesus kneel beside his disciples with a towel. We are no longer standing in Gethsemane as Jesus tells Peter to put away his sword. We are no longer looking at a condemned man hanging from a Roman cross. Now we are in heaven. Now we are before the throne. Now, surely, we will discover the ovenvhelming power that was hidden beneath all that vulnerability. Once again, our Revelation 5 glasses help us see what we could never imagine on our own. It'S the Lamb that was slain —not the lion — who is wonhy to take and open the scroll. 2 Tom Hansen — First Presbyterian Church of Grand Junction, CO So, the Lamb takes the scroll in verse 7. And once He does, the four living creatures and the 24 elders start a worship service — filled with music (symbolized by the harps) and prayer (symbolized by the incense). And they sing to the Lamb ' 'a new song," declaring that He is worthy precisely because He was slaughtered; and that His being slaughtered was to mnsom people from every tribe and language and people and nation. God wants John and the rest Of us to see that, because Of the Lamb who was Slain, the Church is now growing across differences and color and language barriers and borders! "lhere are now all kinds of ransomed saints! And all those Who ransomed have a purpose beyond being ransomed. Because of Jesus they/we are part Of a kingdom movement; we are priests who are saved and called to Serve in the name Of the One who came to serve usin His suffering. The song goes on to tell us we're actually called to leign (end of verse IO) with the Lamb who was slain; and reflect who He is. And it's always been that way for

those called by God into a covenant relationship. But we often forget this; forget God has so much more for us than getting saved so we can go to heaven. And that "so much more" includes living sacrificially for others; even suffering — like the Lamb who was slain. But the worship isn't over; the singing isn't finished. "Ihen I looked, and heard the voice of nuny angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads and myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain/slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:11-12) How many things is the Lamb worthy to receive? 7! Both songs start with a declaration that the Lamb who was slain is the wonhy One. The first song — sung by a choir of 28 (4 + 24), goes on to pmclaim that the number ransomed by the Lamb is significantly global. By the time we get to the second song in chapter 5 the choir would probably fill Mile High Stadium. Ihis time one of the verses goes further about the Lamb's worthiness. He's not just wonhy to open the scroll but to receive everything due to a King. But there's even mote who join in the worship and praise with another song. The size of the choir/band is now out of control. "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them " (Revelation 5:13a) lheir song is also "to the One seated on the throne and to the Lamb" (Revelation 5: 13b), which may make it sound like there's two on the throne; that there's "One who is seated" AND "the Lamb." This may be overthinking, but maybe this is another instance the scriptures make it clear Jesus the Son (the slaughtered Lamb) IS God! But that's probably not a focal point Of their singing and, by the way, the choir/band isn't done yet. This worship service isn't over because they still need to sing that "blessing and honor and glory and might [belong to the Lamb] FOREVER AND EVER! And then, our gigantic, transnational choir grows silent ... and the original quartet — the four living creatures — punctuate the song witha spoken word. Say it our loud with me: "AMEN!" When we put on and keep on our Revelation 5 glasses, we can finally see what has been — up to this point — alluded to, inferred and modeled. But here, in the Revelation of John, we are brought into the very presence of God to glimpse something that always escapes us if we only use our own glasses. Tom Hansen — First presbyterian Church of Grand Junction, CO John is making it clear that we can't understand who God is apan from seeing He is both a powerful Lion AND a suffering Lamb; can't worship fully unless we declare His strength and suffering all rolled up into One; can't fully proclaim who He is unless we also demonstrate a strength that comes through suffering. Ihe worthiness of the Lamb to open the scroll and receive all our praise is not based on power. It's based on His out-of-this- world sacrificial and suffering love; the greatest and most counter-intuitive power the world has ever known. Jeff Rooer ends his article with this: When heaven finally opens and history reaches its destination, John looks toward the throne. The wounds have not disappeared. The Lamb has not been replaced by a more powerful version of Jesus Who finally uses domination because history has become serious enough to require it. The Lamb remains. And perhaps this is one of the most important things the church needs to recover: We do not begin with our definition of power and ask how Jesus fits within it. We begin with Jesus. We look at him. And then we allow him to teach us what power means. John hears a Lion. He turns. He sees a Lamb. Maybe we should turn and look again too. You ate not worthy, nor am I. But •Ihe Lamb who was Slain is and we can join all those who worship and selve Him — forever and ever ... Amen!