



# ABC CAMP SPEAKER TALK: WORTHY IS THE LAMB—PART 1

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## **Come Up Here (Rev. 4:1)**

### **— Commending His Worthiness**

In Revelation chapters 4 and 5, we have one of the most sublime scenes in all scripture. The call to 'come up here' (Rev. 4:1) is an invitation to get a glimpse of God's glory and the majesty of Christ in the magisterial throne room of heaven. This is after the rapture of the church and a prelude to the tribulation on the earth. It is from this vantage point that we gain a true, heavenly perspective of all that is going on in this chaotic world.

The 24 elders represent the redeemed of the church age, as suggested by their white robes of righteousness in Christ, their reward of golden crowns, and being enthroned to reign and judge with God as kings and priests. The four living creatures are an exalted and highly intelligent order of angelic beings, similar to the seraphim which are mentioned only once in Isaiah's vision (Isa. 6:2). We are presented with a series of four ascending doxologies.

The first doxology is by the four living creatures (Rev. 4:8) on the holiness of God in His Person. It is also in Isaiah's vision (Isa. 6:3) that we find the only other occurrence of the thrice-holy exaltation of God by the same angelic beings. This is the only attribute of God described with a triple repetition, indicating the absolute and superlative degree of His moral purity. There is also an implicit reference to the Trinity as highlighted in the majestic hymn

'Holy, Holy, Holy' by the refrain 'God in three Persons, blessed Trinity'. In the words of Thomas Watson, 'Holiness is the most sparkling jewel of God's crown. It is the name by which He is known.' In fact God's holiness is the summation of all His other attributes, the essence of His being. A revelation of God's holiness produces a realisation of our own unholiness. We begin to see ourselves as God sees us. There are many such encounters in the Bible of men who met God this way before He made them great.

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## **A REVELATION OF GOD'S HOLINESS PRODUCES A REALISATION OF OUR OWN UNHOLINESS.**

The second doxology is by the 24 elders (Rev. 4:9–11) on the worthiness of God in His creation. Worthiness carries the idea of weight or value. God is worthy of all praise since all things are created by Him and for Him. The instinctive response of His creation is to praise the Creator for all His works.



The third doxology is by the living creatures and the elders (Rev. 5:8–10) exalting the Lamb as worthy to reign. They lie prostrate before the Lamb in praise and prayer, as symbolised by the harps and bowls of incense. None of the prayers of the saints will be lost; all will be treasured and offered in golden bowls, rising to the throne of grace.

The fourth doxology is by the innumerable angelic hosts with all creation (Rev. 5:11–14) extolling the Lamb as worthy of worship. Their voices are joined in a universal anthem of praise and worship, rising to a crashing crescendo and an explosive exaltation of 'Worthy is the Lamb!' (Rev. 5:11). Nothing will ever match that climactic chorus resounding and reverberating through the halls of heaven.

Opening the scroll involves not just revealing the things prophesied but also releasing them to be fulfilled. The opening of the scroll sets in motion the prophetic clock, which had been suspended through the church age, to resume ticking. As the seals are broken, events will unfold to fulfil all that has been prophesied in the countdown to the Second Coming of Christ. The question of who is fit or worthy to execute the judgments of God, now that the time had arrived for the wrath of God to be poured out, is rhetorical as it had already been revealed that the Father has committed

and delegated all authority for judgement to the Son (John 5:22). The right to open the scroll of judgement belongs to Him who owns the right to reclaim the inheritance lost by the First Adam in The Fall. Christ, as the Last Adam, has redeemed this lost estate with His blood on the cross, and is now 'ready to be revealed at the last time' (1 Pet. 1:5).

None is worthy in all universe but the Lord Jesus who is referred to by the twin titles 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David' (Rev. 5:5). 'The Root of David' points to Christ as a Davidic descendant from Judah. 'The Lion of the tribe of Judah', the tribe of kings, points to His ascendancy as the King of kings who is to rule the nations.

The first time 'the lamb' is mentioned in the Bible has to do with the altar of sacrifice in Genesis chapter 22 verse 7. The last time 'the Lamb' is mentioned is on the throne of God (Rev. 22:3). What John saw was not a Lion, but a Lamb. Jesus had to first come as the Lamb of God to redeem, before He will come again as the Lion of Judah to reign. This is the first of 28 times that the title of 'Lamb' is used of the Lord Jesus in Revelation—more than any other title. Its usage is unique to John. It has been said that 'the only man-made thing in heaven will be the scars of the Saviour.' What we see here is not the sacrificial Lamb in His

First Coming when He was slain to redeem, but the triumphal Lamb of the Second Coming when He will stand to rule. And it has seven horns and seven eyes, not two. The seven horns speak of His omnipotence, the seven eyes His omniscience, and the seven spirits sent to all the earth His omnipresence—all attributes of His Deity.

Where does this leave or lead us? Unlike Israel of old when 'the glory has departed from Israel' (1 Sam. 4:21, 22), for the church there will come a greater glory 'when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe' (2 Thes. 1:10).

### **Come and See (John 1:39, 46)**

#### **— Considering His Work**

A. W. Tozer observed that 'Faith is not a once-done act, but a continuous gaze of the heart at the Triune God. Believing, then, is directing the heart's attention to Jesus. It is lifting the mind to "behold the Lamb of God," and never ceasing to behold for the rest of our lives.'

We turn from the intrinsic worthiness of the Person of Christ the Redeemer as the object of our worship to the extrinsic work of Christ in the Redemption as the reason for our worship. The scene shifts from the splendour of the heavenly throne room in Revelation chapter 5 to the sweltering heat on the banks of the Jordan at Bethabara in John chapter 1. From the pen of the same writer John the Apostle, we have these twin themes of worshipping the Lamb of God in Revelation chapter 5 and beholding the Lamb of God in John chapter 1.

#### ***Invitation to See Jesus—Worship***

John begins his gospel aptly with seeing the glory of Christ in His Incarnation (John 1:14, 18). In Jesus, we see the glory of God manifested in flesh and blood, the embodiment of God's grace and truth, 'the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person' (Heb. 1:3). This is the glory of His Incarnation, the Son of God leaving

the bosom of the Father and the splendour of heaven to make 'Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men' (Phil. 2:7).

**'BELIEVING, THEN, IS DIRECTING THE HEART'S ATTENTION TO JESUS. IT IS LIFTING THE MIND TO "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD," AND NEVER CEASING TO BEHOLD FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES.'**

We next see the Lamb of God in His redemption. The call to 'behold the Lamb of God' was made twice in John chapter 1 by John the Baptist as he was baptising at the Jordan. When he saw Jesus approaching, he announced His arrival as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). John's life mission had been to prepare the way of the Lord by preaching a baptism of repentance. The time had now come to point them to the Christ who will preach the gospel of the kingdom.

This is the first use of the title 'Lamb of God' for Jesus. To the Jewish mind, this was an unmistakable reference to Jesus as the perfect Passover Lamb whose sacrifice will be incomparable and unrepeatable. Every lamb that had been sacrificed since the first Passover was just a figure of the true and ultimate sacrifice of

the Lamb of God. This Lamb of God is the only one needed and offered only once. As the Last Adam, Jesus came to undo humanity's heredity of sin inherited from the First Adam after The Fall. Jesus not only died to pay the penalty for our sin, but He rose again to prevail over the power of sin. The wages of sin as death (Rom. 6:23) have been paid in full by the sinless sacrifice of the Lamb of God. His blood was precious (1 Pet. 1:18) because His being was sinless. He was without blemish inwardly and without spot outwardly.



But we also see the splendour of Christ in His Transfiguration. Peter, James and John were given a privileged preview of Christ in His future glory on the Mount of Transfiguration with the appearance of Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets. But once it was over, 'they saw no one but Jesus only' (Mt. 17:8). That was all they needed to see, for He is the perfect fulfilment of all that is contained in the Law and Prophets. Our view of Christ in His incarnation and redemption is incomplete without His glorification. We have to see the full spectrum of Christ's life and work

from His virgin birth, through His virtuous life, vicarious death, victorious resurrection, and to His visible return. Unless we are gripped by this blessed and glorious hope, we are missing something big in our worship. We are a people living between two resurrections; His which is past, and ours which is soon to come.

#### *Implication to Share Jesus—Witness*

Disengagement with God in worship invariably leads to declension in witness. Worship is what we render to God; witness is what we represent to the world. When John the Baptist repeated the call the next day (John 1:36), he simply called attention to the Person of the Lamb without reference to His purpose. His ministry took a turn to calling people to look to the Lamb of God and follow Him, going beyond just calling people to repent from their sins to receive Christ as Saviour from sin. John the Baptist is the prototype for leading others to Christ by preparing the way of the Lord, and pointing them to Jesus as 'the way, the truth and the life' (John 14:6).

## **WORSHIP IS WHAT WE RENDER TO GOD; WITNESS IS WHAT WE REPRESENT TO THE WORLD.**

The contextual connection to sharing Christ with others is clear. Having found Christ himself, Andrew first found his own brother Simon Peter and 'brought him to Jesus' (John 1:42). There are seekers everywhere but the natural place to find them would be among those you already know, simply because you are in a better position than others to know their state and point the way. Amy Carmichael once pointed out that 'Unsaved means not yet saved, and lost means not found

yet'. Think of pre-believers rather than non-believers.

The second invitation to 'come and see' (John 1:46) was given by Philip to Nathanael. The Lord first found us before we ever sought Him. It was Jesus who first 'found' Nathanael and asked him to follow Him. Being from the same hometown of Andrew and Peter in Bethsaida, he could well have heard about Jesus from Andrew. We see again how immediate and spontaneous Philip's response was in sharing what he had seen and found, that Jesus was indeed the Messiah spoken of in the Law and the Prophets. Nathanael's first impression was dismissive at the mention of Nazareth as the hometown of Jesus.

Do not be easily put off or quickly write off those who at first seem to be scoffers or sceptics. If you ask people if they know who Jesus is, common reactions would be 'I don't know' or 'I don't care'. Ignorance and indifference are the two biggest impediments to faith. Ignorance can be overcome by sharing the facts of the gospel, but indifference has to be overcome by showing the love of God. Never take a person's word as final—only God's word is final. Instead invite them to 'come and see' for themselves, and like the Bereans in Acts chapter 17 verse 11, to search the scriptures for themselves to find out whether these things are so. According to G. Campbell Morgan, 'the Jesus that men want to see is not the Jesus they really need to see'. The indifference of unbelievers in hearing the gospel is a lesser problem than the indifference of believers in sharing the gospel. Timeliness and urgency are crucial, as Carl Henry reminds us that 'the gospel is only good news if it gets there in time.'

In the evangelistic encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well, we see the convergence of worship and witness. Her instant response was to tell others about Jesus with the invitation 'Come, see a Man' (John 4:29). Although she has had five husbands, she had never met a

real man until she met the Son of Man. There are more passive spectators out there than there are active seekers or sceptical scoffers. More likely than not, they are free-thinkers or fence-sitters. There is a power in personal testimony that appeals more directly and readily to people. A personal story with human interest helps to pique interest and promote identification. It serves as a bridge, but not the destination. It is a supplement, not a substitute for sharing the gospel from the Bible as the very words of Christ Himself.

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## **THE INDIFFERENCE OF UNBELIEVERS IN HEARING THE GOSPEL IS A LESSER PROBLEM THAN THE INDIFFERENCE OF BELIEVERS IN SHARING THE GOSPEL.**

John Piper explains that 'Evangelism is speaking to anyone anywhere about the gospel. You don't have to succeed at it. Evangelism is happening even if somebody is not getting saved. But you need to say it.' Evangelism for everyone begins with inculcating an evangelism ethic so that it becomes the mindset and practice of every member. Share stories of salvation and evangelistic encounters to encourage one another to pursue opportunities to share the gospel. The grim alternative is Leonard Ravenhill's warning that 'the Church used to be a lifeboat rescuing the perishing. Now she is a cruise ship recruiting the promising.'

*Part 2 will be continued in the next issue.*