



SESSION 5

THE LION OR THE LAMB?

The Bible refers to Jesus as both the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God. Those two animals don't usually get along.

So how can he be both? How can Christ be so powerful and yet so gentle? So fierce and so compassionate? And if Jesus is both lion and lamb, what difference does it make?

LOUIE GIGLIO



WELCOME

Jumbo shrimp. Cold fire. Authentic replica. Cruel kindness.

You've probably heard of these types of combinations that contradict one another. They're called *oxymorons*, similar to *paradoxes*, which refer to a statement that seems false or contradictory but is actually true. Most word geeks consider an oxymoron to be the two-word version of a paradox. While these paradoxes are often laughable and fun to point out, they also reflect the complexities of life.

Throughout this study, we've noted some of the paradoxes regarding the identity of Jesus—both God and man, leader and servant, powerful ruler and one under the authority of the inside and outside power of his day. However, perhaps the most challenging paradox regarding Jesus is found in Revelation 5:5–6, where we see him described as both “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” and the “Lamb, looking as if it had been slain.”

Could there be two creatures that are more different? Think about the strength, stealth, beauty, and ferocious tenacity of the lion. No wonder he's often called the “king of the beasts.” With a golden mane framing intelligent eyes and razor-sharp teeth, the lion has long been a symbol of power, determination, intelligence, royalty, and nobility. Lions call to mind iconic characters such as Aslan from *The Chronicles of Narnia* series, Mufasa and Simba from *The Lion King*, and Leo the Lion from the beginning of those old MGM movies.

Lambs, on the other hand, tend to evoke the same reaction as puppies and kittens. They're furry and white and seem to have a blank expression. Lambs are young sheep, usually less than a year old, which means their teeth have not fully developed, leaving them vulnerable and dependent. They bleat and baa and follow after the rest of the herd—and they are not particularly known for being the brightest in the animal kingdom. Lambs call to mind nursery rhymes such as “Mary Had a Little Lamb” and “Little Bo Peep Has

Lost Her Sheep,” the puppet Lamb Chop (if you’re old enough to remember that on TV), and Easter decorations.

The lion and lamb . . . *very* different creatures. Yet the Bible uses both to describe and symbolize Jesus. But what does each one mean? And, perhaps more importantly, what does it mean that Jesus is *both* the lion and the lamb?



SHARE

Take some time to share any key takeaways or insights you had during the week as you went through the *Connect* and *Reflect* personal studies. Then, to get things started, discuss one of the following questions:

- What’s your favorite animal? Has it always been your favorite? Why? What do you love about this animal?

or

- What animal best represents who you are? What qualities does it have that reflect your identity?



READ

Have someone read aloud Revelation 5:1–13. As you listen, try to envision the powerful scene that John is describing here.

¹ *Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.* ² *And I saw a*

*mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"*³ *But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.*⁴ *I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.*⁵ *Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."*

*⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.*⁷ *He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.*⁸ *And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people.*⁹ *And they sang a new song, saying:*

*"You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased for God
persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.
¹⁰You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth."*

*¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.*¹² *In a loud voice they were saying:*

*"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"*

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

*“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!”*

What speaks to you the most in this dramatic scene? Why does it resonate with you?

What confuses or troubles you about the scene? What questions do you have about it?

How does this scene emphasize the significance of our prayers? Of our worship?



WATCH

View the video segment for session five. As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or key points that stand out to you.

Notes

In Revelation 5:1-2, the scroll with writing on both sides and seven seals represents the final chapters of God’s plan to vanquish sin

forever. Opening this scroll requires someone special—someone worthy enough to break the seals and reveal what's inside.

Only Jesus can open the scrolls and usher in God's plans and purposes. As the Lion of the tribe of Judah, he has triumphed through his death, burial, and resurrection.

Judah was the fourth son of Jacob. When Jacob blessed him, he prophesied that Judah would be a young lion who would rule over his brothers.

When God's people occupied the Promised Land, the tribe of Judah—the first to claim their allotment—was represented by the emblem of a lion.

Jesus embodies the triumph, power, and sovereignty symbolized by the tribe of Judah. All nations worship him as the King of kings and Lord of lords—the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

When John looks at the Lion of Judah, he sees a slain lamb with seven horns and seven eyes. What John is seeing is a complete vision of the Risen Lord:

Slain lamb: Under God's law, lambs were sacrificed in the temple to atone for people's sins. Jesus is the perfect lamb who was slain for our sins.

Horns: In God's economy, horns represent power and might. Jesus as the slain lamb has ultimate power and authority.

Seven: In the Bible, seven is considered a perfect number. So Jesus has perfect vision, wisdom, and insight.

Spirit: Jesus is also perfect in the power of the Holy Spirit, the "sevenfold spirit," that rests on him and his life.

When Jesus was introduced in John's Gospel, he appeared not as the creator of the universe or the third part of the Trinity, but as the Lamb of God.

Because Jesus is the *Lamb who was slain*, we can embrace his finished work at the cross and receive salvation. Because he is the *Lion of Judah*, we can call on his name to receive power.



DISCUSS

Take a few minutes with your group members to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.

1. What detail or image in this scene described by John in the book of Revelation is the most striking for you? Why?
2. What is the significance of Jesus being described as the Lion of Judah?
3. What is the significance of Jesus being described as the Lamb who was slain?

4. Which depiction of Jesus—the Lion or the Lamb—appeals to you the most? Why does that particular description resonate with you?
5. What does it mean to you to embrace the finished work of Jesus who is the Lamb of God? What does it mean for you to call on the name of Jesus as the Lion of Judah?
6. Returning to the question asked at the beginning of this study, how would you now answer the question, “Who is Jesus?” How has your answer changed since the first session?



RESPOND

Close out today's session by briefly reviewing the outline for the video teaching and any notes you took. In the space below, write down the most significant point you took away from this session.



PRAY

End the gathering by praying together as a group. Ask if anyone has specific requests to share for this final session. Pray for these specific needs, and then spend some time worshiping, thanking, and praising Jesus for saving you from your sins and giving you his power.