



The Name Above Every Name

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Well, we've arrived at Christmas time at last—Christ's birthday, the longest-standing commemoration of His birth on December 25. It goes all the way back to the end of the second century. We had this great opportunity this weekend to talk a little bit about that, but today, we are actually here to commemorate Christ's life. And we do that on at least the longest-standing traditional date for His birthday.

After we get through this, we'll get into the new calendar year and start dealing with other birthdays—like George Washington's. Though now, I guess they thought we were taking too much time off, so they've scratched Lincoln and Washington together and call it Presidents' Day.

But I wanted to think through how we *think* about that holiday, if ever we are patriotic enough to pause and consider it. So, I thought I'd throw up a picture that might represent what you think of when it comes to George Washington's birthday—you think of him as a little baby, right? Fat, chubby little George in the arms of his mother. His mother, ironically enough, was named Mary—Mary Washington gave birth to George Washington.

But I guess that's not what you think of. You think of George Washington doing the things that mattered most: crossing the Delaware that cold December day in 1776, fighting for our freedom, presiding over the Continental Congress, helping to establish the Constitution, becoming our first president. Those are the images that come to mind.

Maybe it's Abraham Lincoln on Presidents' Day you think of. You don't imagine little baby Abe in the arms of his mother, Nancy Lincoln—you probably didn't even know her name. We think of him on the battlefield, commanding troops in the Civil War, or giving the Gettysburg Address—one of the most famous speeches ever given, brief but monumental. We celebrate him for what he *did*, not as a baby.

Or maybe, if you're church-minded, you think of Martin Luther on Reformation Day in October. You don't picture him as a baby in the arms of Margaretha Luther—you don't even think of her. You picture him courageously nailing 95 Theses to the Wittenberg door, confronting corruption, defending justification by faith at the Diet of Worms before the emperor, standing bold in his exile and imprisonment.



That's what we celebrate: greatness displayed through action.

And yet, Christ has His holiday too. We commemorate Him on His birthday, and when you think of Christ, this is what comes to mind—a baby in a manger. Maybe even worse—some scene of toddler Jesus surrounded by fuzzy animals, all soft and sweet.

That's how *we* remember Him. But that's not how *heaven* remembers Him.

If you want to see how heaven celebrates Christ, look at Revelation chapter 5. There, we get a rare look behind the curtain into heaven itself—to see what the angelic beings and redeemed saints do when they celebrate the life of Christ.

In Revelation 4 and 5, we find a scene unlike any other. Strange symbols, majestic creatures, radiant colors—it's the language of heaven, far beyond our finite categories. But when they exalt Christ, they don't picture a baby in a manger.

Verse 5 says, "*Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered.*"

A **lion**—not a helpless infant.

That image takes us all the way back to Genesis 49, where Jacob blesses his sons. Of Judah, he says, "*Your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies.*" He describes him as "*a lion's cub*"—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet.

From Judah would come the line of kings, culminating in the *King of Kings*.

So, when heaven worships Christ, He's not depicted as a fragile child—but as a powerful, conquering Lion.



C.S. Lewis captured this beautifully in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. His Christ figure, Aslan, is not safe—but He is *good*. As Mr. Beaver said to Lucy, “*Who said anything about safe? Of course He isn’t safe. But He’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.*”

That’s Revelation 5: the Christ of heaven is a **Lion**—mighty, sovereign, worthy of fear and worship.

But then, in the very next verse, John says, “*I saw a Lamb, standing, as though it had been slain.*”

Now, that’s quite a contrast. The conquering Lion—now a slaughtered Lamb.

To a first-century Jew, this image was immediately recognizable. Lambs were central to worship. They symbolized innocence, purity, sacrifice. They didn’t fight back. Isaiah 53 says, “*Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent.*”

So, in Revelation 5:9, they sing to the Lamb:

“For you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

By His death, He purchased redemption. That’s what the word “ransom” means—a payment that releases captives from bondage.

This was no small act. It was a universal redemption—people from *every* nation, *every* language, *every* tribe.

And because of this, the Lamb is worthy—“*to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.*”



The same attributes given to the Lion are given to the Lamb.

Revelation alternates between the Lion and the Lamb, and both are essential.

The Lion shows His **authority**—He rules, He reigns, He commands worship.

The Lamb shows His **sacrifice**—He redeems, He forgives, He saves.

You cannot commemorate Christ rightly without both images:

- A **Lion** with a crown of gold.
- A **Lamb** with a crown of thorns.
- A **King** on a throne.
- A **Savior** on a cross.

He came once to *bear* sin; He will return to *abolish* it.

Revelation 5:10 says, “*You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God.*”

Those whom Christ redeemed are not just citizens of His kingdom—they *are* His kingdom. They are His people, His rulers under His reign.

As kings, we **submit** to the Lion—we obey, serve, and follow His commands.

As priests, we **trust** in the Lamb—we approach God only through His sacrifice.



In the Old Testament, a priest could never enter God’s presence without a sacrifice. He had to kill an innocent animal before stepping into the holy place. That animal’s death symbolized substitution—the innocent dying for the guilty.

Likewise, we never come before God trusting our own righteousness. We trust entirely in Christ’s atonement—the Lamb slain for us.

So, our calling is simple but profound: **trust and obey**.

You may know the hymn “*Trust and Obey*.” The story behind it goes back to D.L. Moody’s revival meetings. After one meeting, a young man came forward to give his testimony. Nervous and unsure, he simply said, “I don’t know much yet, but I’m going to trust Him and obey Him.”

Moody’s song leader, D.B. Towner, scribbled that phrase down—and the hymn was born.

That’s the heart of Revelation 5. Two words that summarize the Christian life:

Trust (the Lamb) and **Obey** (the Lion).

But Revelation 5 is ultimately about worship.

The final verse says:

“And the elders fell down and worshiped.”

When we think of Christ as the **Lamb**, our response should be *gratitude*—thankfulness for His sacrifice that purchased our redemption.



When we think of Him as the **Lion**, our response should be *reverence*—deep respect for His power and authority.

Gratitude and respect—that's true worship.

Yes, we celebrate His birth, and there's nothing wrong with nativity scenes. But we must remember: we are not celebrating the birth of a baby, but the victory of a King and the sacrifice of a Savior.

He is the **Lion of Judah** and the **Lamb who was slain**—the one who conquered death, redeemed sinners, and reigns forever.

God, thank You for the opportunity we have to remember the life of Christ. May we not be stuck thinking only of an infant. We love You for the Incarnation; we celebrate that God became man.

But what we truly revel in—what fills us with awe—is what Christ did for us: Your Son dying in our place, possessing now all authority, having conquered death.

Give us deep gratitude for our salvation and profound respect for our King.

Help us to trust in the Lamb and obey the Lion.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.