

The Slain Lamb: Easter in Heaven

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[0 : 00] Good, we turn now to God's Word, and as Willie was mentioning earlier, we are in the book of Revelation. We've been working through these Sunday evenings, the seven letters to the churches, and there's one more to go, but we'll look at that next week. I thought it'd be good tonight to think about Easter from heaven's perspective.

So we're looking at chapter 5, but I'm going to read chapters 4 and 5. That's page 1030, I think, in the church visitor Bible.

So Revelation chapter 4 through to the end of chapter 5. After this, I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven.

And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this. At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven with one seated on the throne.

And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. And around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. Around the throne were 24 thrones, and seated on the thrones were 24 elders, clothed in white garments with golden crowns on their heads.

[1 : 24] From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings, and peals of thunder. And before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God.

And before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind.

The first living creature like a lion. The second living creature like an ox. The third living creature with the face of a man. And the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within. And day and night, they never cease to say, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the 24 elders fall down before him, who is seated on the throne, and worship him, who lives forever and ever.

[2 : 34] They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power.

For you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created. Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne, a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.

And I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, Weep no more.

Behold, the line of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll on its seven seals. And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

[3 : 58] And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain. And by your blood, you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and

people and nation.

And you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth. Then I looked and heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them, saying to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.

And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped. Amen. This is the word of the Lord.

[5 : 31] And may he bless it to us this evening. Please do turn back to Revelation chapter five. Let's spend a few moments together.

Looking at this now. Now. Now, chapter four of Revelation, as I said a bit earlier, it marks a new section in the book of Revelation as we move on from the seven letters to the seven churches. Here in chapter four, John is brought to the very door of heaven. Look at verse one there of chapter four. And he's beckoned in, beckoned into the very throne room.

And there he sees sitting on the throne, the Lord God himself and around him thrones and elders and beasts. And all are worshipping him, giving him glory and honor and thanks.

And they cast their crowns before him. Look at verse 11. And they cry out to him, worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power.

[6 : 38] For you created all things. And by your will, they existed and were created. Chapter four is all about the great creator God and the worship that is due to him.

He's the creator. He's the one in charge. He controls all things and all histories in his hands. That's chapter four.

And chapter five, it now answers the how question. How does God the father, the creator, how does he reign over his cosmos, over all of history?

And the answer that chapter five gives is that God the father reigns through the Lord Jesus Christ, through the one who died, who rose again, who ascended to heaven.

God is in control of history, of the cosmos, because of what Jesus Christ has done, what he's accomplished. And so we see here in Revelation chapter five, we see the cosmic implications of those events, that first Easter 2,000 years ago.

[7 : 50] This is Easter, from the perspective of the heavenly throne room. We saw this morning in Luke, the events of that first Easter morning from the earthly perspective, didn't we?

Saw eyewitness accounts. We saw what happened here. But Revelation chapter five takes us to the very throne room of heaven, and we see Easter from that perspective.

And Revelation chapter five will show us that over all the advances and frustrations and confusions of human history, there is another power at work, divine and saving and sovereign.

All of human history is not determined by humans, but rather by the events that are touched on in this chapter. The secret of history was not revealed in the musings of our brightest people, but on a cross outside Jerusalem.

Not by some tyrant in power, but by a man hanging, bleeding and dying. Jesus Christ, the Lion King, the Lamb who was slain.

[9 : 00] He is the epicenter of history. The Son of God, crucified and risen and ascended. He's at the very center. So let's step together this evening into the throne room itself.

And take in the sight. And let's also hear the message of comfort and assurance this vision would have given to those first readers. Think about those Christians there in Asia who's received those seven letters.

Christians facing persecution, suffering, even dying for their faith. And here, John is given a glimpse behind the curtain. He sees from heaven's perspective what's been happening on earth.

And it gives great reassurance to Christians then and today. Those who are facing pressure, who are suffering for their faith. So two points this evening as we look at chapter five.

First, Jesus is alone, worthy to reign over the world. So weep not. And then secondly, Jesus alone is worthy to receive our worship.

[10:07] So praise him. So firstly then, Jesus alone is worthy to reign over the world. So weep not. And we see here that through his death and resurrection, Jesus is the only one worthy to open the scroll and to put into effect its contents.

He reigns over the cosmos. Now chapter five begins with the camera focusing in on one object in particular.

In chapter four, it's as if the camera has been in panoramic mode, taking in the big picture of the throne room in heaven. It's overwhelming, isn't it, as we see what's going on.

But here, the camera zooms right in onto one object. Then I saw in the right hand of him who is seated on the throne a scroll.

He sees a scroll. What is this scroll all about? What does it mean? Why is it so important? Well, this scroll, it has unparalleled significance in all that is about to unfold in the book of Revelation.

[11:23] The scroll contains in detail the plans and purposes of God for all of history. One commentator writes this, this scroll is best understood as God's plan of judgment and redemption.

A plan that has been set in motion by Christ's death and resurrection but is yet to be completed. It is the scroll, it is the book of human destiny as the chapters six and onwards go on to show in Revelation.

It contains the very plans of God for the history of mankind and the cosmos. The plans established in the very beginning which we read about in the book of Genesis, plans for the Lord God to extend his rule over all the earth.

Plans that would not be thwarted by the evil one, by sin because God would send a son of a woman to crush the head of the serpent, one who would redeem his people and destroy his enemies.

As the book, the scroll that holds within its pages the destiny of everything, it is therefore a scroll of unparalleled significance. John sees the scroll and then he sees an angel proclaiming in a loud voice, who is worthy to open the scroll to break its seals?

[12:51] Who is worthy? And there's only silence. There is no one worthy, verse 3. And the apostle John as he sees all this, all he can do is weep.

No one is worthy to open the scrolls and he weeps. It's a picture, isn't it, of the utter helplessness of man. We are unable to unlock God's plans and purposes for history.

We are unable to bring about the promised redemption and the fulfillment of history. And John knows that if that scroll remains unopened, there can be no redemption, no salvation.

But there is hope. For one of the elders speaks, and what wonderful words they were to the ears of John and to our ears. Look at verse 5.

He says, Weep no more. Behold, the line of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

[14:01] The line of Judah, the root of David, the long-promised Messiah, the Lion King, the one who the Scriptures look forward to and anticipate has now come, and he has conquered, says this elder.

That is what John hears. He hears about this great Lion King. But then he looks, verse 6, And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain.

And then verse 7, he went and took the scroll. John sees not a Lion King, but a slain lamb.

This is the promised Messiah, the root of David, the promised suffering servant who would die for his people, the promised Passover lamb who would sacrifice himself for the sins of his people.

And notice that it's only now that John sees this lamb. No mention has been made of it up until this point. In all the description of the heavenly throne room, there is no mention at all of a lamb until you get to verse 5.

[15:20] Now, perhaps John didn't see. Well, that seems unlikely. I wonder instead, I was reading James Phillips notes on this early this week and he makes this observation.

I wonder instead if John is in fact witnessing the arrival in the heavenly throne room of the resurrected Jesus. This is the ascension from heaven's perspective.

Jesus arrives in heaven in verses 5 and 6, the lamb who was slain, the one victorious from battle, returning from the battlefield. And he's now being enthroned in heaven.

We got the description from the earthly perspective this morning, didn't we, in the end of Luke chapter 24. This is the earthly perspective on the ascension.

Then he, the resurrected Lord Jesus, led them out as far as Bethany and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

[16:22] That's the description in Luke's account. That's the description of the ascension from an earthly perspective. But Revelation 5 gives us the heavenly perspective.

The Lion of Judah, the Root of David, the slain lamb, arrives into the heavenly throne room. And as he arrives, he's enthroned. He takes the scroll.

And it's because the Lord Jesus has conquered, end of verse 5, that he is able to take and open this scroll. With his death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus inaugurates the promised kingdom.

All the promises of the Old Testament scriptures find their fulfillment in him through his death and resurrection and ascension. It is his death and his resurrection that make possible the unfolding of God's plans and purposes for history, for the universe.

You see, it's the cross of Christ that is the very epicenter of everything. Without the cross, the scroll remains unopened.

[17:33] Without the resurrection, the scroll remains sealed. It is through the cross that Jesus conquers the enemy. It is through the cross that Jesus' blood was shed, redeeming for himself a people from every tribe and language and people and nation.

It is through the cross that God is able to bring to fruition and fulfillment all his plans, all his purposes, all his promises. They find their fulfillment in him.

Those promises made to Adam, the first man, that he would reign over the whole world. Promises that, as we know, Adam forfeited.

and promises that the last Adam, the second Adam, the perfect man, the man Jesus Christ, inherited through his vindication in the resurrection. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead.

It's the Lord Jesus Christ alone who can therefore open the scroll. He's the only one that can put into effect God's great promises for the cosmos, promises of a new creation, a new heavens, a new earth, promises of his people ruling over the entire world.

[18:47] And that is what the remainder of Revelation sets out, how that is going to happen. It sets out the unfolding history to the final consummation when Christ returns.

It sets out the necessary judgments of God on rebellious people. It assures those who are his that he's in control and that in the end nothing is going to stop his plans from being fulfilled.

The decisive act has already taken place. The central moment in all of history occurred over 2,000 years ago when Jesus Christ died on a cross and rose again on the third day.

It was then that Christ once and for all defeated Satan. It was then that Christ conquered and was therefore able to ascend to heaven and be worthy to open the scroll.

Do we see that everything, everything depends on the Lamb who was slain, who rose and now reigns. Everything depends on that. And not just your own salvation or mine, it of course includes that.

[20:04] Christ's death was a sacrifice for sin. He has redeemed the people for himself. But it's more than that. It's everything. All of the Father's plans for the whole cosmos depend on it.

Everything in time and eternity depends on that one event. The Lamb who was slain, he is able to open the scroll. All of history is in his hands.

He will bring his purposes to fulfillment. And that is meant to be a great comfort to John, to his first readers, to us, to know that there is one worthy to open this scroll.

Think about the implications if there was no one worthy. If there was no one worthy to open the scroll, if that scroll remains unopened, then there is no protection for God's children in the hour of trial.

No judgments upon a persecuting world. No ultimate triumph for believers. No new heavens and no new earth. No future inheritance. But there is one worthy.

[21:16] The Lamb who was slain. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and that every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus was slain. He conquers. He now reigns. And history, all of history is in his hands.

Your history, my history, the entire history of the universe is in his hands. Safe, it's secure. Nothing is going to derail God's plans because Jesus has taken and opened the scroll.

And so, the implication is weep not. Don't worry. It's in his hands.

He's reigning over the cosmos because he died and ascended and now reigns. So weep not. That's the first thing.

[22 : 37] Secondly, Jesus alone is worthy to receive worship. So praise him. We see here that because Jesus reigns, he is worthy of worship.

Indeed, worthy of worship from the whole world, the whole cosmos. From verse 8, we see the response from the heavenly court. In fact, it's all of creation to the Lamb taking the scroll from the right hand of the Father.

Look down again at verse 8. And when the slain Lamb had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song. And then we have this set of three songs of worship. It begins with those immediately around the throne.

As we just read, with the four living creatures and the 24 elders, they sing a new song. It's a new song. So momentous is the ascension and enthronement of Jesus Christ that those in heaven have to sing a new song.

[23 : 49] It's wonderful, isn't it? And then in verse 11, we get the second song. Then I looked and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels numbering myriads and myriads and thousands and thousands and they sing their song.

And that is literally millions upon millions of angels stood around the throne singing worship. And then we get a third song in verse 13. And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them saying, let me get their third song.

And with each song, the camera zooms out a bit further and a bit further from those immediately surrounding the throne in the first song to the whole of the created order in the third song.

Everyone singing praise and worship to God the Father and the Lamb who was slain. And that is the only right response to what they've just witnessed. The long promised Messiah has now come and conquered.

He's ascended to the right hand of the Father and now rules over the universe. He has absolute power. And so the only right way to respond must be to praise and acknowledge him for who he is.

[25 : 06] And it's right that the whole universe is here worshipping the Father and the Son. The finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ which enabled him to go and take that scroll.

It didn't just have an impact in the heavenly throne room. No. The implications of what we read here are universal. One day there will be a day when every knee will bow in acknowledgement of who he is and what he's done.

That day is coming. And the implications of the Lord Jesus Christ and his enthronement are not just restricted to those who profess faith in him, who believe in him, who have faith.

No. Jesus reigns over all. And so at some stage all people will come to face to face with that reality. Either as those who know him as Savior who will be beckoned by him into the new creation or as those who will only know him as judge who will be cast away into eternal darkness and damnation.

[26 : 15] everyone will come face to face with that reality one day. Jesus alone is worthy to receive worship. So praise him.

Do you praise him and worship him I wonder? Do you? Now I don't presume to know the real state of anybody's heart in this room tonight.

I can't see into your heart. And no doubt there will be some here this evening who have never acknowledged Jesus as Lord. You've never sought refuge in him for the forgiveness of sin.

Never cried out to him for mercy. Well if that's you if you're here tonight you've never called out to him you've never acknowledged him as Lord. Well refuse no longer.

Call out to him he will not turn you away. Join your voice to the millions of others today all across the globe who are praising Jesus for his death his resurrection his ascension his reign his coming return in glory.

[27 : 21] Millions across the world today are praising him. So will you join your voice to those? So we've seen the fact of praise.

The whole cosmos sings praise to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's also note the content of the praise. What is he praised for? Well look at verse 9.

Here's what they sing. Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals for you were slain and your blood and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth.

Jesus is worthy of worship and praise because of his death. It is his blood that has ransomed the people for God a people from every corner of the world and a people made into a kingdom and priests to our God reigning over the entire earth.

That is what Jesus has achieved by his death nothing less than the fulfillment of all God's plans. Plans which involve and include people like you and me.

[28 : 46] Isn't that just astonishing? It's not those who are rich and powerful. It's not the people you expect that are included in God's plans but it's the people sitting in your row tonight.

Just look down the aisle and look in front of you. Think of others we know. People in Delhi and Ranchi and Jaipur. Think about those in Nigeria and Joss.

Regular people who've cried out to the Lord for mercy. People like that are involved in God's great cosmic plans for the entire history of mankind.

And what we read about here in Revelation 5 it is a massive cosmic scene isn't it? It's about the destiny of everything. the destiny of the entire universe. But it's also about your destiny and mine. We're included in his plans. His universal plans. Isn't that staggering? The Bible is in its big picture from beginning to end all about the Lord and his kingdom.

[29 : 53] His rule being extended to the end of the earth. It's about the story of God's Messiah coming as king to conquer his enemies and rescue for himself a people. And beginning in the Garden of Eden the instruction given is to go forth and multiply to extend the rule of God over the entire world to bring all of creation into submission to God the king.

And the Bible ends if you read on through Revelation the Bible ends with the consummation of that kingdom. The Lord Jesus who we read about here will return one day to judge the living and the dead to call to himself his people to usher into existence the new heavens and the new earth.

Jesus is the one who brings all this about through his sacrificial death on a cross outside Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. This is our God.

the second person of the Trinity the Lord Jesus Christ the lion king the slain lamb the one who bore our sin redeemed us and who will bring to a great climax all God's plans for all of history and he's doing it according to Revelation 5 even now he's opened the scrolls it's happening and nothing and no one will stop it it is unstoppable the slain lamb has opened the scroll he's in control so will you trust him if you haven't already this is the Easter story from heaven's perspective and so the message to you is weep not if you're one of his weep not and if you're not one of his you need to praise him submit yourself to him for he is coming the slain lamb who opened the scroll well let's pray our father god would you help us to sing to sing with all integrity with all seriousness these words worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing lord help us to believe and lord help us to praise you for you alone are worthy help us for we ask it in jesus name amen