

Singing a New Song: Worthy Is the Slain Lamb!

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[0 : 0 0] Now would you turn with me once again to your Bibles, this time to the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. Paul has been leading us through studies in Revelation recently, and we reached further on in the book, chapter 14.

But this morning we're coming back to chapter 5, which is another account of the triumph of the cross and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. A different kind of account from the one that you find in Luke's Gospel that we've just been reading.

This is heaven's perspective on these wonderful proceedings. And so we read together in Revelation chapter 5 what John the Apostle saw in his great vision on the island of Patmos, where he'd been imprisoned for his faith in his very old age.

So reading that at Revelation chapter 5 and verse 1. 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.

[1 : 2 8] And I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or look into it. And one of the elders said to me, Weep no more.

Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and 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 the earth.

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 twenty-four 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 ransom 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 earth. And then I looked and I 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 one loud voice, Worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

[3 : 3 1] 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.

And may God bless to us his word. Do be seated and we pray together before Paul comes to preach to us.

Let's pray. Look, you saints, the sight is indeed glorious. As we see the man of sorrows now as the lamb, crowned as king of kings and lord of lords amid the praise of all the heavens.

And in his great triumph, he's brought life and immortality to light in man and for man forever.

[4 : 43] Because Christ is risen and become the first fruits of them that slept. Because by man came death. By man also came the resurrection of the dead.

Now we thank you, Lord, that in his resurrection, Christ's resurrection and ascension is the transforming message of hope for all who believe. Because as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

So help us now, Lord. Help us to hear and to grasp and to rejoice in the gospel of the risen Lord.

And may our hearts this day be filled with glorious hope and our lives gladly surrender to him. To walk with him every day, all the days of our lives.

Until at last our eyes shall truly see him as he is. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

[5 : 54] We'll do turn once again to Revelation chapter 5 and Paul is going to speak to us its glorious message. Well, good morning.

Please do have, as Willie asked you there, to have Revelation 5 open in front of you. And we'll be referring to this this morning. Now, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ has changed everything.

It has changed life itself. The resurrection of Jesus Christ stands at the very center of human history.

It changes human history. It is dealt with death itself. And so the implications of that, the fact that Christ has come and defeated death, the implications of that are global.

As well as being deeply personal for each one of us. It is like nothing else that has ever happened in human history. The resurrection is the absolute epicenter of our human history.

[7 : 13] Whether you acknowledge Jesus or not, his resurrection has determined the destiny of everything and everyone forever. Whether you acknowledge him or not, it has changed the destiny of everything for all time.

Now, the resurrection may sound to you this morning a little fanciful, a bit far-fetched. A nice fantasy story to make believe.

And for many people, that's the case. But there are solid reasons for believing that the resurrection of Jesus did actually take place. Read the accounts in the Bible for yourself.

We've read one of them this morning from Luke's Gospel. Examine them. Interrogate them. And you'll find the evidence is compelling for the resurrection of Jesus.

The typical objections that have been raised over the centuries do not in the end stand up. Objections like, Jesus didn't really die.

[8 : 22] He just fainted. Or that it was somebody else who died on the cross who looked a bit like Jesus. But the thing is, Jesus' death and resurrection didn't take place in a dark corner.

These were public events, witnessed by many people. And so convinced of his resurrection were his followers, that they were transformed from fearful followers of Jesus who abandoned him at his crucifixion, to fearless messengers of his word, to the end of the earth, following his resurrection.

They saw the risen Lord Jesus, and it transformed them. Many of them were put to death for their willingness to stand and testify to Jesus Christ's death and resurrection.

Would they have really done that if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead? We could say much more about the evidence for the resurrection, but if you've not yet considered the evidence for yourself, I'd urge you, maybe for the first time as an adult, to engage with the scriptures, to investigate for yourself.

I encourage you to do that. But our focus this morning is more on the implications of the resurrection. What does it mean? What's it all about? Because the claim of the Bible is that the resurrection of Jesus is the turning point in all of human history.

[9 : 47] And it's one that demands a response from all of us. This isn't just interesting news to, you know, think about. It's to be responded to. It is to transform our lives.

Now, the reading we had earlier from Luke's gospel gives us the ascension of the risen Lord Jesus from an earthly perspective. We see the risen Lord Jesus with his disciples.

He's engaging with them, eating with them. They're touching him. And then we see his ascension returning to God the Father to reign at his right hand. That was the ascension from an earthly perspective.

The revelation reading we had is showing us that same event, but from a heavenly perspective. We have the spectacular vision in Revelation 5.

The arrival of the risen Lord Jesus in the heavenly throne room. And it's an arrival engulfed, surrounded by praise and worship and singing.

[10 : 49] And that is the right response, an understanding of what Jesus has done through his death and resurrection that will lead to a response of overwhelming joy and song.

That's what you see there in Revelation. We've just read it. The singing in that chapter builds and builds as the chapter goes on. By the end, just have a look at verse 13.

At the end of this chapter, every creature in heaven and on earth and under the sea and in the sea and all that is in them are singing.

They're praising God. And notice what they sing. To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.

And this song, this song is the appropriate response to the death and resurrection of Jesus because his death and resurrection change everything for everyone.

[11 : 55] Because of the resurrection, everything is transformed. Because of the resurrection, everything's been made new. Because of the resurrection, our grief can be turned to gladness.

Our sorrow can be turned to song. And we're going to focus on these wonderful songs this morning and notice two key things. The first is to notice what Jesus has done through his death and resurrection.

What has he achieved? What's it all for? And then secondly, is to notice what our response ought to be to what Jesus has done, what Jesus now deserves.

In light of what he's done, how ought we to respond? How ought we to respond? So first, we're going to notice what these songs tell us about what Jesus has done.

What is it Jesus has done? Look at the first of the songs recorded in this chapter. You see it there in verse 9. This is the first outpouring of song.

[13 : 00] And we see what it is that Jesus has done that has prompted this outpouring of worship and praise. Look with me here, verse 9. 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've made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth.

Now our attention is initially directed to what seems like a very strange object. Do you notice that in the song? It's like obscure.

A scroll. A wrapped up piece of parchment. A scroll. What is this scroll all about? In the first line of that song, were they you to take the scroll and to open its seals?

What's that about? Why is it so important? Well, this scroll has unparalleled significance about all that's to unfold through the rest of human history.

[14 : 16] The scroll contains in detail the plans and purposes of God for all of history. One writer puts it this way.

This scroll is best understood to contain God's plan of judgment and salvation. A plan that has been set in motion by Jesus' death and resurrection but has yet to be completed.

This scroll is the book of human destiny. It contains within its pages the very plans and purposes for God for all of human history.

The plans established in the very beginning which you read about in the book of Genesis. Plans to extend God's rule over all the earth.

Plans that would not be thwarted by the evil one and sin because God would send a man to crush the head of the serpent. One who would save his people and judge his enemies.

[15 : 20] And as the scroll that holds within its pages the destiny of everything it is therefore a scroll of unparalleled significance.

The secret of history contained in its pages. Hope for humanity. That's what's in this scroll that is being sung of in this song.

And John sees this scroll and look back a bit earlier in the passage. Verse 2 John sees it and an angel says who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?

Who is worthy? That's a big question. Given what this scroll contains given that the scroll unfolds what is going to happen through history how God is going to save his people to bring hope to you and me.

Who can open it? It is sealed. Who can open this scroll? And the answer to the angel's question is silence.

[16 : 32] Verse 3 No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. There is no one worthy.

And notice how the apostle John responds to that fact. Verse 4 And I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

No one was found worthy to open the scroll. And that is a picture isn't it of the utter helplessness of man.

We are on our own utterly unable to unlock God's purposes. We are unable to bring about the promised redemption and the fulfillment of history.

And John knows that if this scroll remains unopened there can be no redemption no salvation no hope.

[17 : 38] hope. And how we need hope in our world. A world broken and twisted and torn by sin and fallenness.

Without any hope we are lost. That is why John weeps. If nobody can open the scroll there is no hope for humanity no hope for you and me. But there is hope.

for one of the elders then speaks and what wonderful words these were to the ears of John and to us. Look at verse 5.

He says to John weep no more. Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah the root of David has conquered so that he can open the scroll and at seven seals.

this elder says there is one the lion of Judah the root of David the long promised Messiah the lion king the one who the script has looked forward to and anticipated has now come.

[18 : 49] He has conquered says the elder. And this is what John hears but what he sees is a bit different. Look at 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. He's expecting to see this great lion king but what he sees is a slain lamb.

this is the promised Messiah the promised suffering servant who would die for his people the sacrificial Passover lamb.

And notice it's only now that John sees this lamb. No mention has been made of him up until this point in this great throne room and John is here seeing the arrival in the heavenly throne room of the resurrected Jesus.

[19 : 54] this is the ascension from heaven's perspective. The resurrected Jesus arrives in verses 5 and 6 the lamb who was slain the one victorious returning from battle and he's now being enthroned in heaven sat at the father's right hand.

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

All that was promised through the Old Testament scriptures promises of a savior of one who redeemed his people has now come. It is his death and resurrection that make possible the unfolding of God's plans and purposes for history for the universe for salvation.

resurrection. That is why this lamb can go and take that scroll and open it because he's conquered through his death and resurrection. And you see it's the cross of Jesus Christ that's at the very epicenter of everything.

Without the cross this scroll remains unopened. Without the cross without the resurrection this scroll the seals remained shut.

[21 : 19] it's through the cross and resurrection that Jesus conquers the enemy. It's through the cross that Jesus' blood was shed redeeming for himself a people from every tribe and language and people and nation.

It's through the cross that God is able to bring to fruition and fulfillment all his plans all his purposes all his promises find the conclusion the Lord Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection promises of a new creation promises of a new heavens and a new earth promises of his own people ruling over the whole earth promises of rescue from sin defeat of death hope of everlasting life all those promises find the fulfillment in Jesus' death and resurrection and so the Lord Jesus is the only one able to open the scroll he is the only one able to unfold the rest of human history he is the only one that can put into effect God's great promises and this is why the central moment in all of history occurred 2000 years ago when Jesus

Christ died on a cross and rose again three days later do we see that everything everything depends on the lamb who was slain who rose again who now reigns everything depends on that not just your own salvation or my salvation from our sin it of course includes that Christ's death was a sacrifice for sin and he has rescued you from the coming judgments his resurrection has overcome death he's guaranteed our future lives for eternity perhaps this is something you've never heard about before this may be your very first time in church maybe your very first Easter well this is news that each of us must respond to that

Jesus Christ came and died for your sin he took upon himself the punishment that was due to us the wages of sin is death we deserve to die for our offense against God we have told God to shove off we're going to live our own way I'm going to live as how I like and the consequences of that are eternal because God is eternal he is perfect and he demands our obedience and love and service but the thing is we don't live like that each of us has gone our own way we need rescue from our sin we need salvation and that is what Jesus Christ came to do the slain lamb paid the price for our sin and each of us must respond to that each of us will respond to it either in repentance and faith turning to him following him or we will just keep going our own way and the destiny for that is eternal punishment away from

God and if this is new to you I urge you to respond today keep coming back come this evening come next week to church keep coming and finding out more come on to our life course in a few weeks time you've got those flyers on your chairs come along investigate for yourself what Christianity is really about examine the basics ask your questions things but each of us must grapple with Jesus death and resurrection each of us must repent and believe for the forgiveness of our sins and for everlasting life that is our only hope but Jesus death and resurrection is more than about just you and me it's everything all of the father's plans for the whole cosmos depend on it everything in time and eternity depends on these events at the cross and Jesus resurrection and it's meant to be a great comfort to us to read of these things it's a great comfort to

[26 : 17] John to know that someone is able to open the scroll think about the implications if this was not so if there was no one worthy to bring to completion God's plans and purposes if this scroll remains unopened if Jesus did not die and rise again if this scroll is not opened there is no protection for God's children in the hour of trial if this scroll remains unopened there is no judgment upon a persecuting world there will be no justice no ultimate triumph for believers no new heavens and new earth no future inheritance no hope but there is one worthy the lamb who was slain he can open the scroll because of what he did on good friday and his resurrection on easter sunday the apostle paul puts it this way 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 at 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 do we see what jesus has done he has brought through his death and resurrection he has brought salvation redemption restoration for the whole of creation and for you and me his death and resurrection achieves everything that actually matters in this world for you and me everything you need to be forgiven everything you need to be made right with god everything you need to have peace everything you need to live forever with him in the new creation everything we need comes through the lamb who was slain no wonder all of heaven burst forth in praise it's an amazing scene here in revelation five no wonder given what jesus done given that he can open the scroll no wonder all of heaven bursts forth with praise were there you to take the scroll 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've made them a kingdom and priests to our god and they shall reign on the earth that is the glorious destiny of those who belong to jesus what will you do in response to these events that's the second thing we'll think about this morning we've seen firstly what jesus has done that evokes this praise what are we to do in response well we are to sing praise to jesus because of what he's done he deserves our praise and our worship and our song now all of us sing praise to someone or something it may not be actual literal singing thank goodness the idea of a constant musical is just horrendous to me it's my worst nightmare if life was a constant musical that's not what it's saying but we all worship and praise something it may be seen in literal singing it may be at murrayfield joining your

voice to 80,000 others or at a taylor swift concert don't do that but you see it's almost like a worship experience people praising and singing and singing and we are built to be worshipers we can't help but sing to something whether it's literal singing or something else our lives center around something the question is what or who are you actually worshipping what is at the center who is at the center of your life we all give supreme honor to someone or something and this chapter in revelation would urge us it would plead with us to worship jesus because of all that he has done from verse eight here we see the response from the heavenly court indeed all of creation to the lamb taking the scroll from the right hand of the father look down again at verse eight this is the first song and who's singing it and when he had taken the scroll the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb each holding a harp and a golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints and they sang a new song that's the first song immediately around the throne in the heavenly throne room and then you get these three songs the first one we've looked at verses nine and ten and then verse eleven 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 of thousands and they sing their song and then the third song verse thirteen and I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and all those in them singing their song with each of these songs the camera zooms out further and further and further it begins right there in the very centre of the throne room and then it pans out to see all the angelic beings praising

God then it pans out again to the whole cosmos and everything in all of creation is praising the lamb who is slain and this is the only right response to what we've witnessed the long promised messiah has now come and conquered he is ascended at the right hand of the father and he reigns he rules over the whole cosmos he has absolute power and jesus has through his death one salvation for his people and so the only right way to respond must be to praise and acknowledge him for who he is and it is right isn't it that the whole cosmos is seen here worshipping the father and the son the finished work of the lord jesus has enabled him to go and take and open the scroll and it didn't just have an impact there in the heavenly throne room this wasn't just a local thing it was global the implications of christ's work are universal and one day every knee will bow in acknowledgement of who he is and what he's done the implications of what jesus has done are not just restricted to those who profess faith in him who believe in him no jesus reigns over all and so at some stage all people will come face to face with him all of us will have to reckon with that reality one day either as those who know jesus as lord and savior will be beckoned in to a new creation to reign with him forever or it will be as those who will only know him as judge and as those who will be cast away into eternal darkness and punishment either way we recognize him one day for who he is we will have no choice we will have to reckon with the reality of who jesus is either a savior or judge jesus alone is worthy to receive worship so praise him today praise him can i ask do you praise him do you worship jesus and if you don't yet will you i don't presume to know the state of anyone's heart this morning i can't no doubt there'll be some here who have never acknowledged jesus lord you've never sought refuge in him for the forgiveness of your sins you've never cried out to him for mercy well if that is you this morning then i'd urge you i plead with you refuse no longer call out to him and he will not turn you away join your voice with the millions the countless millions billions this morning who are gathering and declaring he is risen he is risen indeed there are billions across the world today doing that what a privilege to join with them this morning will you join your voice to those who praise jesus for his death his resurrection his ascension his reign his coming return when he will judge the living and the dead will you acknowledge him as lord and savior that is the appropriate response to

the lamb who was slain and let's just take note again of the content of the praise what is he praised for look again at verse 9 worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals for you were slain and your blood you ransomed your people for god from every tribe and language and people and nation and you made them a kingdom and priests to our god and they shall reign on the earth jesus is worthy of praise because of his death it's an odd thing isn't it i can't think of any other person in history who is praised for their death it is his blood that has ransomed a people for god that has ransomed you and me has paid the price for your sin a global people from every corner of the earth a people made into a kingdom and priests to our god reigning over all the earth that's what jesus achieved by his death nothing less than the cosmic plans of god for all time and it includes people like you and me it's not astonishing the picture here is just global isn't it it's massive but it includes you and me it's not the rich and the powerful it's not the people you expect it's the people sitting in your row today the people you're sat next to people in glasgow and edinburgh and india and nigeria and cyprus regular people who've cried out to the lord for mercy and this epic scene we read about this morning it is about the destiny of the world but it's also about your destiny and mine and we're invited to and we're invited to and we're invited to to repent and believe and join with what god is doing in his worlds he invites you to join with him to become part of his everlasting family and we are swept up in these great plans if we humble ourselves and follow jesus admit your shortcomings admit your sin turn to him and repent and join with his cosmic plans jesus is the one who brings all this about through a sacrificial death on the cross outside jerusalem two thousand years ago and that is why jesus death and resurrection are the central events in all of human history this is our god the lord jesus christ the lion king the lamb who was slain the one who bore our sin redeemed us and will bring to fruition all god's plans for all of history he's done it he's doing it now and he will do it in the future he'll bring it to completion nothing and no one will stop him and that is the easter story from heaven's perspective and the right response is to submit and sing to sing praise to him to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever we sing to him and we sing that song to others it was seeing the risen lord jesus that turned a bunch of fearful disciples into bold evangelists the cowardice and the claps of the disciples transformed into courageous witness to what they'd seen and heard about the risen lord jesus they'd seen him they'd seen the risen jesus and we too encounter the risen lord jesus in his word and by his spirit and we too are transformed as we hear the call of the gospel and respond to repentance and faith our lives are changed forever and we're transformed to go and tell others about jesus and what he's done will you join in and sing the greatest song that's ever been sung will you join in with all of your being with your lungs bursting singing praise to jesus the lamb who was slain will you sing the song you were born to sing the song with the slain lamb the one who died and rose again who gives you everlasting life a place in his family will you sing will you sing perhaps for the first time this easter sunday morning will you sing can i pray and then we'll sing together worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals for you were slain and by your blood you were ransomed a people for god lord thank you for your grace your mercy thank you that there is hope for people like us to know there is a way back to our father in heaven and it's all because of the slain lamb thank you for his death and resurrection which brings us life and hope and help all of us to respond by singing this beautiful song as we repent and turn to you and serve you so help us to do that help each one of us to respond in faith for you are god and we are your people help us for we ask it in jesus name amen