

A Stunning Reveal

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[0 : 00] So, when he was going to be in Alaska, he invited me to come and to preach.

! Irony is that I was a pastor up in Alaska for 10 years, and so we looked at his itinerary and know he won't be the town. Who's been to Alaska here, by the way? Oh, not enough of you.

It is God's country up there. It's beautiful up there, but I don't know the irony of wanting Mike to be on an orca whale. It's kind of dangerous, actually. So, just a little bit of my background.

I grew up in the Philippines and Malaysia. My parents were, with the Bible translator, missionaries, and my wife also is an MK from the Philippines, where we met, and good show.

I have a photo of my family. So, my wife of 28 years, and then my son right next to me there is a freshman at Wheaton College, and then you'll notice next to him, my son, my oldest son, has Down syndrome, and I'll mention disability, and then I've got two other daughters. But that's my family. We are down next to Wheaton in Warrenville. We go to College Church, which is across the street from Wheaton College. That's our home church. And then the ministry I'm part of, you can just throw that up real quick, is I'm a consultant or coach, part of Promote Humility, and we do workshops and coaching and some initiatives I'll talk about just briefly later on. So, thank you for that.

[1 : 48] So, and you can, yeah, perfect. I'm still dead. I'll move this down. So, yeah, after pastoring for 10 years in Alaska, I've been part of international missions for another dozen years or so, and now lead in this ministry and consulting work for churches, nonprofits, and mission agencies. But as Mike gave me some freedom to select a passage or passages, because I'll be here back next week, I thought, well, let's go to one of my favorite parts of the Bible. And so, if you would turn to the book of Revelation and the songs you sang of just really been wonderful at preparing our hearts for what we're going to look at today.

Hopefully, you've heard much of the fact that the Bible, even though it's made up of 66 books, is really one story, because we believe it has one ultimate author, and he's brought many players in to help write it, but it's one large arc of a story. And if you're familiar with reading books, it's particularly important to see what comes at the very end. And that's what we're going to find today. If you want to breeze through a book real quick, it's helpful to go to the end to see what it's all about, and to see the trajectory of where it's going. And it helps us then to understand who the author is, what his big message is for us. You probably know this, but Revelation was written by one of Jesus' closest disciples, the Apostle John. And he writes in a very unique way. Revelation is kind of a mixture of three genres put together. Apocalyptic, so there's a lot of metaphor and imagery, and we'll see that today. But also, it says it's a prophecy, so there's speaking about the future.

But it's also an epistle, because it's a letter written by John to these churches, so it's a mixture of those. And so we're going to look at primarily chapter 4 and 5, so if you'd go to Revelation chapter 4 and 5, and we'll look at these two chapters together. They're really a story.

It's unfortunate that chapter 5, the marker there, is in the middle, because these two chapters are a story. There's a setting, there's a scene painted, there are characters, there's some drama and some tension, and then a resolution. So it's a beautiful story that we have here.

I'm jumping into chapter 4 and 5. Actually, next week, we'll look at chapters 2 and 3, because I want to set that up by us taking a look at this passage here this morning.

[5 : 01] But before I start to read, if you'd close your eyes and bow your heads and just take a moment and ask God to speak to you, just as we sang, speak to you that we might see Christ even more clearly this morning.

So just the quietness of your heart, just do that. But Father, we could read your word nonstop, still not understand it, without your help, without your spirit illuminating your word to our hearts and our minds and our wills, and to actually bring change in us and to help us see you through the haze of

this world and our mixed up thinking. Help us to see you clearer this morning.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Let's read the story. After this, I, and this is the Apostle John speaking, looked and behold a door standing open in heaven.

And the first voice, which I had heard speak unto me like a trumpet, back in chapter 1, 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.

[7 : 04] And he who sat there had the appearance. Notice that now some imagery starts to come in because it's hard to describe what's this, so he's going to use some metaphors and imageries to paint as best he can what he's beholding in this heavenly throne room.

the appearance of Jasper and carnelian and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

We sang about the rainbow of different colors and my goodness, just looking up at the stained glass, I mean, just trying to get all these colors.

and around the throne were 24 thrones and seated on the thrones were 24 elders clothed in white garments with golden crowns on their heads.

Listen how terrifying this is now. From the throne came flashes of lightning and rumbles and peals of thunder and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, that is the perfect spirit of God, and before the throne was as it were a sea of glass like crystal.

[8 : 38] Sea is often an image of chaos, but here there's no chaos. Everything is in order. 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 like a living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight, and the four living creatures, each of them with six wings and full of eyes all around and within.

Terrifying and almost bizarre, but this is so holy and glorious and day and night they, the most terrifying and strange, they are the ones.

They never cease saying, holy, that is separate, distinct, mysterious, transcendent, holy, how different he is from us.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come. And whenever the living creatures gave, give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives, notice how forever and ever, emphasis on his, this length of time, ever and ever, the 24 elders fall down before him, who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever, 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.

[10 : 26] Then I saw in the right hand of him who is seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back sealed with seven seals and as we'll see in the rest of the book, what it is, is this symbol of the rest of history and what's going to take place to bring the judgments of God and the redemption of God's people to fruition, to culmination, to the new heavens and new earth.

earth and I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice. By the way, we've gotten to a point here where we've set the scene now, this transcendent Holy scene!

and now an angel is sitting with a strong loud voice so that it can be heard everywhere. Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?

That is, who can bring about these judgments and the final redemption of God's people? Who can unleash this? Verse 3, and no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.

Stop here and recognize what has just been explained here. There's no one to right the wrongs, to banish evil, to redeem God's people?

[12 : 22] No one. And so it's not a surprise. The next verse says, and I, John, began to weep loudly, sobs at the realization that these judgments won't come about.

There will not be a correcting of evil. There will be no redemption of God's people. And so he wept loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, beautiful words for him, weep no more.

Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

angels. And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a lamb standing.

Remarkable here, he's not coming up from the earth or some other place, he's just already there. between the elders, probably a picture of the church and the throne of God, he's there.

[13 : 53] A lamb standing as though it had been slain. Seven horns, perfect power, with seven eyes, perfect knowledge, which are the seven spirits of God, the perfect spirit of God, sent out into all 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 lived, these terrifying creatures, and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lion, each holding a harp, and the golden bowls full of incense, where our char the prayers the saints.

Is that what it says? Did I misspeak? But why? Because there's several images going on here. Verse five, there's a lion, root of David's, yes, there's a picture of a lamb. Personally, I'm writing this, I want to describe from what I know about who it's pointing to, it's Jesus, I would want to describe him now, and continuing on to the book as a lion on the throne, Aslan.

Never once in the rest of the book of Revelation is he referred to as a lion. For two dozen times now, this person is referred to as a lamb on a throne.

[15 : 44] Why? Realize what's happening here. The last book of the Bible, this one story, you have the main character, a character that's going to be repeated with this name into eternity.

Don't miss this opportunity to think through what his name will be, and it's a lamb. And so I want us to park here and think about this because this is Jesus who is seen as the word of God.

That is the perfect self-revelation of what God is like. And what God wants his people to know is that he'd like to, he'd prefer to be called a lamb.

On a throne, but a lamb. So that's what we're going to do the rest of our time here is just meditate on this.

Why a lamb? I'm going to give you four reasons that I think each one gets closer and closer.

[17 : 12] The apostle John and even his other letters in his book just loves layers of imagery, like an onion. He loves, okay, this one's accurate, but this one gets even closer, and this one, oh, yes, they're all true, but they're just getting deeper.

Let me give four, and I'm sure into eternity we'll discover other layers to this. What does a lamb symbolize? So let's picture a lamb.

I could have brought a lamb here, I guess, this morning, but Mike would have maybe gotten a little nervous by that. my wife's family is from Oregon, and so every summer we head out there, and her family has a farm, and they're our sheep, and so my kids growing up, every time we'd go out there, we'd visit the sheep, and the kids just loved bounding up to the sheep every morning, naming the sheep, feeding the sheep, petting the sheep, sheep aren't, they're not intimidating for a kid, accessible, calming, but this isn't a sheep, this is a lamb, even less intimidating, the epitome of weakness, weakness, weakness, weakness, weakness,

Jesus himself said, come to me for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, he's accessible and welcoming to any who come to him, that's what God is like, seek, and so, that's the first layer, I think, a lamb is, I think sometimes we read Revelation so much that we forget that it is a lamb, it's the lamb is, it gently welcomes you, that's the first point, the lamb, Jesus, the lamb gently welcomes, another image in the Revelation that parallels this, is said a couple times, the image of, well, this is what it says, and let the one who is thirsty come, let the one who desires take the water of life without price, you come to this lamb, there's no, if you come with your thirst and your hunger and your neediness and your just lack of, he's welcoming, you take the water of life without price, remember that this is what

Jesus said to that, the woman at the well, she had nothing, her history was littered with failures and awfulness and hardship and she feels so welcomed by his free offer that she goes and calls others to come to this unimimidating welcoming.

[20 : 56] So perhaps today the lamb is welcoming you to come to him, your questions, your doubts, your addictions, your regrets, your mistakes, your embarrassments and you find that he offers eternal life.

But again, this is just the outer layer. This isn't the primary reason. We find out from the context that he's using this image of a lamb.

It's there, but the emphasis, if you look back at chapter 5, the emphasis is on the fact that the lamb was slain.

You'll see that in verse 6. A lamb standing as though it had been slain. And jumping ahead a little bit, we'll get here a little bit, but verse 9, worthy of you to take the scroll to open its seals, for you were slain.

And then verse 12, ahead there saying, with a lot of worthy lamb who was slain. So it's not only a weak looking creature, it's a creature that at one point had been slaughtered and was the ultimate weakness dead.

[22 : 10] A jagged slash across its neck. Many of you probably know your Bibles, this is a reflection back to the Old Testament and what God called his people to do was to sacrifice a lamb as a picture of the fact that because of their rebellious, because of our rebelliousness as humans, we deserve punishment from God and one of the only means of being rescued from that judgment and punishment that we deserve is for something to die in our place, something else to take the punishment for us so the lamb is slaughtered in our place.

And we can be freed and have a relationship with God. And so this is the one who introduced Jesus, when Jesus came for his ministry, he was pointed out and said, behold, John the Baptist said, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And so by placing our trust in Jesus and coming to him without anything, we find that he bears God's wrath for all our failures and sins and pride.

So that's definitely here of what it's symbolizing. So he's a lamb, gently, he's a gentle, weak, gently welcomes you. He's a lamb that died in your place, that's definitely where he's going here, but there's more.

because there's a much greater emphasis in this passage that it's the slain lamb who conquers.

[24 : 02] So look back at verse 5, the lion, the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered and so this conquering person steps forward and it's a lamb.

how did he conquer? How did he have the authority to come to the judge or the king on the throne, the one on the throne and take this scroll?

What if gives him the authority, the right to do that? It's through weakness.

sacrifice that he is able to conquer. Verse 9, look ahead there again, worthy are you to take the scroll and open its seals for you were slain by your blood.

will be is it because this person was powerful or clever or impressive or eloquent or charismatic or smart or intelligent?

[25 : 21] No! It's because he was so humble and willing to sacrifice for his people that he's worthy.

And it refers to there by your blood you ransomed your people. So how were God's people rescued and victorious? It was because these lambs were slaughtered, blood was put on the posts so that the angel of death passed over their, this is the people of Israel and Egypt, passed over their homes and they were rescued and redeemed and were victorious because of a slaughtered lamb.

Who is the one who has authority to unleash all the righting of wrongs and defeat all evil and redeem God's people? So here's this next letter, Jesus the lamb conquers because of his humility and sacrifice.

The lamb conquers because of his humility and sacrifice. And so you see that his reign in this verse, you know, as we saw there, he's got seven horns that is perfect power and seven eyes, so he's omniscient, nothing will ever take him by surprise.

he's on the throne. And so we get this massive paradox, this juxtaposition, which I think will be, stand all, in awe of, for all eternity, the great power and authority and his weakness, his willingness to enter such weakness and humility and sacrifice.

[27 : 14] sacrifice. But I, that's really close, that's it, but I think there's one, even one more layer in.

And that's because we've got to sit back and look, who is this written to? This is a letter to people.

And what are they going to get out of this? Yes, at the heart of it is to be enamored and awestruck by this lamb on a throne. But what was the situation for those reading this?

They were facing tremendous hardship, martyrdom, losing jobs, losing family. John is in exile at this point.

And so one of the repeated descriptions of those who follow the lamb is to the one who conquers.

[28 : 16] So actually look at, just before our story here, at the end of chapter three, look at that with me. Verse 21, we'll see this a little more next week, but verse 21, the one who conquers, I will grant

him to sit with me on my throne as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne.

So those who follow this reigning king follow in his path. In other words, the lamb invites you to follow him to victory through humility and sacrifice.

They would be victorious even in their weaknesses and, might I say, because of their weakness.

One of my favorite verses in Revelation, if you just jump over a couple chapters to the end of chapter seven, just an absolutely beautiful description of what we look forward to.

Look at verse 15, but I'm going to zero in on verse 17. Chapter seven, verse 15. Therefore they, and this is God's people, are before the throne of God and they serve him day and night in his temple.

And he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more. They were hungry, but they'll hunger no more now. Neither thirst anymore.

[29 : 56] The sun shall not strike them nor any scorching heat. There are no more hardship. Look at this beautiful passage. Verse here, the lamb in the midst of the throne.

Now he's not beside the throne. He's in the midst of the throne. Will be their shepherd. Notice the ironic picture here. The lamb is a shepherd and who's he shepherding but his people.

And verse 17, and he will guide them to the springs of living water. He gives for free and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Isn't that beautiful? The intimacy of someone who wipes every tear from eyes.

But he's a lamb who is a shepherd. And that means those who are reading this, we his people, are like sheep. Like the image in Isaiah chapter 40, he will tend his flock like a shepherd.

He will gather the lambs in his arms. He will carry them in his bosoms and gently lead those that are with young. And so this image of the lamb is hard.

[31 : 09] As we get to know this lamb, we see that this is a lamb who invites you to follow him to victory through humility and sacrifice. sacrifice. I think those are some of the images that this picture of a lamb give to us.

And so how do we respond? We follow him. That's the call of this last book is to follow him by embracing humility and sacrifice.

This is the upside down nature of Christianity that we constantly have to have God transform our hearts into.

This is why he's so holy. By the way, it's interesting how chapter four and chapter five, the holiness of God is then revealed in this paradoxical upside down.

We're upside down. He's right side up, but it's that a lamb. This is describing what God is like. And yet we in our world, which were influenced in our world every time we go on social media, et cetera, is to, we want to be a lion, we want to be strong, we want to be powerful, successful, impressive.

[32 : 44] And yet scripture says that it's the lowly who win. The last will be first, the first will be last, the humble are exalted.

If you want to be great, you must be servant of all. Love the story of that first and second Corinthians unveils as Paul interacts with the Corinthian church who loved impressiveness as Christians.

And yet Paul's life was in the opposite direction to the point where they wanted to get rid of him and they said, you're a failure. And he says, no, I'm weak.

I'm strong. God's power is made perfect in weakness. and yes, humility, but sacrifice.

We don't run after sacrifice just for sacrifice's sake, but that's what it means to follow Jesus is to take up our cross daily and to follow him.

[33 : 50] that's part of this journey for me and understanding this little bit has been living with a son with down syndrome as you saw.

And to an international ministry, you think of the people that are typically seen as the very bottom of society. they may have more for us than or any other kind of people that are at the very bottom more than we typically think.

First Corinthians, again, the Corinthian church was all about impressiveness, talked about the body while every part is needed and the parts that you think are indispensable or are dispensable or just lowly.

They're indispensable. we must have them. We give them greater honor. It's upside down.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Jesus moved toward the outsiders, those who were kicked to the curb. And so that's part of what you promote humility is to talk to folks,

even business leaders, how Christian business leaders, how can you work to cultivate humility as an aspirational value in how you do your business or in your home?

[35 : 26] Humility becomes more and more central because that's our eternal future is marveling at the humility of the Lamb.

and so we follow him. We follow him. We follow him by embracing humility and sacrifice. And finally, and this is where I'm going to close, we follow him and we sing.

So I love what was said today. We sing because that's what they did. Look at verse nine. The Lamb comes, chapter five, verse nine. The Lamb is presented and they sang a new song.

No better way to respond. Sing a new song saying, worthy are you to take the scroll and 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 made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth.

So these lambs, these sheep that he shepherds, they, these humble sacrificial, who sacrifice so much, they will reign on the earth. And then it keeps, the singing keeps going.

[36 : 52] Then I looked and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders and the voice of many angels numbering myriads of myriads, thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice, worthy is a lamb who slain.

See power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. And I heard every creature in heaven on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that's 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. finally just turned very briefly to the very end of Revelation 22.

I'm going to read something here and then we'll be done. the very end of the body of the book of Revelation ends in chapter 22 verse 5.

Verse 6 is the beginning of the epilogue. So how does the very end of the body of the book of Revelation end? And you'll see some of the themes that were introduced in that throne room in chapter 4 and 5.

[38 : 04] But notice also there's just a reference of the lamb over and over again. Verse 22 chapter 22 verse 1. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life. Oh the water of life.

There it is again. Bright as crystal flowing from the throne of God and of the lion. No it's the lamb through the middle of the street of the city on either side of the river.

It's a river of the water of life which plenty. The tree of life. There's twelve kinds of fruit yielding its fruit every each month.

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed but the throne of God and of the lamb will be in it.

And his servants will worship him. Will be there with in awe eternal awe of who this God is.

[39 : 04] They will see his face. His name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more.

They will need no light of lamp or sun for the Lord God will be their light and they will reign forever and ever.

Would you bow your heads and close your eyes again and just ask God what he wants you to take into your week from what we saw this morning. Father, think of that hymn.

Father, that come thou fount of every blessing to my heart to sing thy grace.

Streams of mercy never ceasing call for songs of loudest praise. Father, tune our hearts. All of our hearts this morning and the days ahead need to be tuned to receive and be awestruck at who you are.

So much so that we want to follow you and to sing. Help us to do that. We need you.

[40 : 54] Oh, give our hearts, hearts that are just overflowing with thanksgiving for who you are and what you've done for us. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. B exported exported exported