

A vision of the redeemer God

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Preacher: Mark Jackson

[0 : 00] The reading this morning is Revelation chapter 5 on page 1, 2, 3, 8. 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 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 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 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 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.

[1 : 24] And they sang a new song saying, worthy are you to take the scroll and open its seals. For you were slain 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 the earth. 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 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 worshiped. Let me add my word of welcome to Nat. It's great to see so many of you over half term and great to welcome new faces this morning.

Do please open your Bibles back to page one, two, three, eight, Revelation chapter five. And if you turn to the back of the service sheet, you will see an outline of this morning's talk.

[2 : 47] Let me pray for us. Father God, we do praise you very much for the richness of your word. We thank and praise you for this book of Revelation, for the way it plays on our imaginations and shows us the Lord Jesus in new ways.

So we ask that you would do that for us now. Show us the Lord Jesus and strengthen our faith in the light of it. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Our theme this morning is what makes Jesus Christ so special and unique?

What makes Jesus Christ so special and unique? I think this is a vital topic given the pluralistic society we live in.

So I'm not sure if you ever find yourselves in a conversation or overhearing a conversation, which goes something along the lines of, well, you know, all religions, they all lead to God.

[3 : 56] Jesus, Buddha, Allah, they're all the same God. There's no one right way. They're all right.

Now, it could be that for one or two here, you're in total agreement with those words. In which case, I hope today's passage comes as a welcome shock to you and challenges your thinking.

As we see the Lord Jesus Christ and his unique role in God's plan of salvation. But for Christians who do believe in the Lord Jesus as the only way to God, these are the sort of conversations we are constantly and more and more coming up against today.

We get put on the spot. Is Jesus really that special? Is he really any different to the others? Are you telling me that Jesus and only Jesus is the way to God?

And we feel, don't we? I mean, we feel the pressure. We're in those conversations. We're tempted not to speak up, to keep quiet, not to join in the conversations, not to testify to the uniqueness of Jesus, which is why we need the message of Revelation chapter five.

[5 : 18] Because this morning we're going to see what makes Jesus so unique and special. Why he and he alone is worthy of our praise.

So in verse two, you can just see it there. This loud voice cries out, who is worthy? And we're going to see there's only one answer. Jesus Christ.

If you were here with us last week, you will know that the Apostle John is being given a vision into the throne room of heaven.

God's throne room. And we finish chapter four on a climax of praise and exaltation to God for his perfect rule over the entire universe.

But now, suddenly, at the beginning of chapter five, we're still in the throne room. Instead of praise, there is now weeping.

[6 : 21] There are tears in heaven. So let me read verses one to four to you. 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 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, that's John, began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or look into it. Here is an apostle of God in the throne room of God with God himself.

But he's weeping, crying loudly. He's distraught. What is wrong with him? Well, it's all to do with this scroll that God is holding in his right hand.

If you're familiar with the Old Testament book of Daniel, you'll know that this scroll represents God's plans for the future.

[7 : 48] His plans of judgment and salvation. The end of sin, the end of death, the end of Satan, and the wonderful new heavens and new earth that God's people long for.

Problem is, there's no one worthy to open the scroll. And that's why John's weeping. Because it looks like God's plans for the future can't come about.

No eternal life. No new creation. No triumph over evil. No end to suffering. No happy ending to the story of this world.

If the scroll is not opened, all hope is lost. If the scroll remains shut, our faith is in vain.

And it leaves John weeping uncontrollably. It's like the weeping of the seven-year-old child who begins thinking about death for the first time and is fearful of what happens when they die.

[9 : 00] It is their life after death. Is there no scroll, no script to life, no meaning behind it all? It's like the weeping of Daniel James, paralyzed from the chest down after a rugby scrum collapsed.

Seeing no hope for the future. No happy ending to the story, the scroll of his life and this world. Asked his parents to be a part of his assisted suicide at the age of just 23.

And it's like the weeping of Christians the world over. Whenever the guilt of a particular sin overwhelms us, whenever opposition feels too strong, whenever we feel our hope beginning to get crushed, when suffering seems never like it's going to end, we are, if you like, crying for this scroll to be opened, for God's purposes to come about, for judgment and salvation to come.

So why does this scroll matter? Why does opening this scroll matter? Because without it, there's only weeping. If there's no future, there's no hope.

And with no hope, there is only tears. Tears even in heaven. But that is where Jesus Christ steps up to the plate.

[10 : 23] The only hope. Because marvelously, Jesus is worthy to open the scroll. So have a look at verse 5. 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.

In the midst of his tears and weeping, what does John hear? A voice of hope. Weep no more. Jesus has conquered. He can open the scroll.

God's purposes can come about. Now, we're not told exactly what it is that Jesus has conquered here. But I think that's the point.

To show the full extent of his conquest. Jesus has conquered everything. Everything that needs to be conquered. Sin, death, the devil, God's enemies.

[11 : 32] God has conquered them all. That's why he's worthy to open the scroll. In other words, our faith is not in vain.

Because there is one who can bring God's purposes, plans for the future, he can bring them in. All that we said before, judgment, salvation, the end of sin, judgment, the defeat of death, the destruction of Satan.

This future is coming because Jesus has conquered. He's worthy to open the scroll. The vindication of God's people. The perfect new heavens, new earth.

It is coming because Jesus has conquered. Weep no more. There is one worthy to open the scroll. And it is only Jesus who can do this.

Verse 3 makes that quite clear. And no one in heaven and no one on earth, no one under the earth, was able to open the scroll or to look into it.

[12 : 37] In heaven, on earth, under the earth, the Bible's way of saying absolutely no one in the whole of the created universe was able to open the scroll.

Only Jesus could do it. Buddha was unable to open the scroll. Muhammad wasn't able. Gandhi neither.

Scientists have tried to beat death but fail. Philosophers of thoughts have ways to make the world a better place. Can't come close to bringing it about. When it comes to the stopping of sin, when it comes to the end of evil, when it comes to the defeat of death, there is only one who is able.

When it comes to the salvation of God's people, the creation of this perfect new heaven and earth, only one who is able. this is what makes Jesus so unique and exceptional.

And in fact, the rest of the chapter, you can see, it's just full of praise and wonder at Jesus for this very fact. Verse 9, they sang a new song saying, worthy are you, Jesus, to take the scroll and to open its seals.

[13 : 50] Verse 12, saying with a loud voice, millions of angels saying with a loud voice, worthy is Jesus to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

Verse 14, the four living creatures said amen and the elders fell down and worshipped. See what's happened? We've gone from the depths of despair in verses 1 to 4 to these, the heights of praise by verse 14.

And it all turns on the Lord Jesus Christ. and how great and worthy he alone is because he is the one who has conquered.

So we spoke at the start of the pluralistic age we live in, but can we see there's only one, only one able to open the scroll, only one able to bring God's plans of judgment, salvation, only one who has conquered.

And we're being moved here to praise Jesus for it and to join in this praise of worship to him with the rest of creation. Now this leads us on to our third point because did you notice how they describe Jesus in the songs of praise?

[15 : 15] They call him in verse 12 a lamb. Worthy is the lamb who is slain. And again we see it in verse 13. Towards the end to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever.

Now that doesn't sound very mighty and conquering does it? A lamb. And you may wonder well has Jesus really conquered? Is he really worthy of our praise?

And what's going on here with this thing about a lamb? This is our final point. The lion who is a lamb. Back to the Apostle John.

Let me read verse 6 and 7 to you. 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 the seven spirits 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.

So there's John and he's just been told about Jesus' conquest as this great lion of Judah. So he's probably got this picture in his mind of this mighty Jesus this roaring lion standing over his prey.

[16 : 42] But instead what does he see? A lamb. And not just a lamb but a slain lamb. He hears lion he sees a lamb. And it's just a bit incongruous isn't it?

I mean a lion and a lamb you don't normally put these two animals together. So did any of you come across that story of the eight year old boy in Australia who ran away from his parents or got away from him in the zoo and he ended up in the crocodile pen.

And later on when he was found he was seen just like feeding turtles to these crocodiles. And well obviously you don't put kids in crocodile pens and you don't put normally these two animals together a lion and a lamb.

But you see this is the twist of the passage. God wants us to see that Jesus is both the almighty lion and the slain lamb. And contrary to what we might think it is actually as the lamb as the slain lamb that Jesus has conquered.

So let's see that in verse 9. Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals for you were slain.

[17 : 57] And by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. Now we already know from verse 5 that Jesus is worthy to take the scroll because he conquered.

But now we see he's worthy because he was slain. In other words we are told now how he conquered. He conquered by being slaughtered.

Isn't that amazing? He conquered by being slaughtered as a sacrificial lamb like the ones used in the Old Testament to wash away sins and avert God's wrath.

contrary to what it might look like this is the moment of Jesus' conquest as he dies on the cross 2,000 years ago.

This is the moment sin was paid for once for all. This is the moment the devil was defeated. This is the moment that everything that blocked our relationship with God was removed.

[19 : 09] So that God's plans for the future for salvation and new heavens and new earth they could be realised. If you've read or seen The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe you'll remember that scene where Edmund has been revealed as a traitor before Aslan and the White Witch makes it quite clear to Aslan the law of Narnia states all traitors must die.

Aslan of course knows this and wonderfully chooses to die in Edmund's place. So he can go free free from the sin of treachery free from the penalty of death free from the demands of the White Witch.

And C.S. Lewis wrote this because it's a picture of what happened when Jesus died for us. All of us are traitors and sinners before God and the devil says doesn't he the law of God states all sinners must die.

That's where the devil's power is. Wonderfully, marvellously God chooses to die in our place to be slain for us so that we can go free free from sins free from the penalty of sin death and free from the demands the accusations of the devil.

This is the moment of Jesus' conquest. This is when sin, death, the devil were defeated. Through his death and now John he sees Jesus in the throne room of heaven next to God's throne.

[20 : 47] He's standing now a lamb standing risen from the dead alive powerful with these seven horns all knowing with these seven eyes a lamb as though it had been slain bearing the marks of victory a permanent reminder of his conquest a permanent reminder that he and he alone is worthy to take the scroll and bring God's salvation plan to fulfilment.

And again, I mean, can we see why Jesus alone is the one who's worthy? Buddha didn't die for us Muhammad wouldn't die for us Gandhi's a sinner just like the rest of us none of them died for us but Jesus did.

He alone was the perfect sacrifice he alone was prepared to be the perfect sacrifice enduring the cross being slain shedding his blood for you and for me and for the glory of his name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. So if you're ever doubting what makes Jesus so unique and special well God says to us God says to you this morning look at his death this is the moment of his conquest this is when sin death the devil were defeated this is why Jesus is the only one worthy to bring us to God because he's dealt with sin do all religions lead to God of course not only Jesus can bring us to God he's the only one dealt with sin he's the only one who's conquered and he's calling us to believe in him and only him or if we're ever doubting ourselves our position in God's plans for the futures struggling with assurance again God would say look at Jesus his death because this is his moment of conquest see him dying for you paying for your sin removing every barrier to a relationship with God he's done it all

I mean it's amazing in verse 10 we've skipped over that but Christians are described as as belonging to God's kingdom safe and secure as priests to God calling others to turn to him rulers one day on earth if we believe in Jesus our future is secure because of Jesus' death you can be sure of it so to use those three examples from earlier from point one if and when your child does come up to you asking about death and this has happened several times at Sunday school and certainly was an issue for me when I was younger when they ask about death what happens when you die well remember these verses point them to Jesus this is just such good news we can be sure of the future the future is secure because Jesus is the only one worthy to bring it in there is life after death and their future can be secure if they trust in Jesus because he died for them if they're friends with Jesus they can be sure of life after death eternal life the new heavens and new earth the future that Jesus alone can bring in or if and when friends are suffering perhaps suffering in terrible ways paralyzed if you find them saying to you look I mean is there any hope for me again remember these verses point them to Jesus it is such good news there is hope because we have one who has conquered one who has suffered himself for us but now alive in heaven victorious and one day certainly bringing in a new world free from suffering free from paralysis free from all the evil of this world and these verses just to keep reminding to each other whenever the burden of guilt gets too strong whenever the opposition gets too strong whenever we feel our hope fading

[25 : 27] Jesus has conquered and he's conquered through his death keep trusting him keep praising him and above all I mean this is the message to be praising him whatever we're doing or facing this week let's not forget that all the honour all the glory all the praise belongs to him the big picture here is Jesus next to the throne with the four living creatures around him praising him then have the 24 elders around them praising Jesus we then have millions thousands upon thousands of angels around them praising Jesus and then in verse 13 we read that every creation in the whole of the universe in heaven on the earth under the earth in the sea and all that is in them praising Jesus the whole universe focused on him praising him because he's conquered and he's conquered through his death the only one worthy to open the scroll the only one who can bring in God's future purposes for the world well let's praise him now as I pray and in our lives this week let's pray together we praise you Lord Jesus for you are worthy to take the scroll worthy to open the seals because you were slain praise you that by your blood you ransomed people for God you are worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing we praise you this morning in Jesus name Amen Amen thank you for your loveworks