



The allied forces faced a daunting challenge at the start of WWII. They were intercepting radio messages from the German forces, but the messages were encrypted. In order to securely send messages, military commanders had to ensure that no one would be able to read them. Only those who had the proper knowledge and deciphering equipment were supposed to read them. By working together Polish, British, and French intelligence were able to crack the German encryption techniques. That was a major war effort. But what about the greatest hidden truths in all of history? What if you could reveal what was hidden and known only to God – the outcome of all wars, of your life, and the fate of all mankind? We find the answer this morning in Revelation chapter 5. And it doesn't take a code-cracking expert mathematician. That's because the book of Revelation is not some difficult code to crack. In fact, it is a clear, comforting, message from our God for us, his people. We continue our series in the Book of Revelation for this Easter season as we see the LAMB OF GOD LIVES 2) TO GIVE ME A NEW SONG.

I mentioned last week that **John was not in the most favorable position** when this vision comes to him. He is exiled on the island of Patmos, advanced in years, and the churches he writes to are facing many hardships. We have skipped over a part of Revelation that included the letters to the seven churches. They weren't much better off. They struggled against false teaching, sin, and spiritual apathy. Many Christians in the Roman Empire were routed, beaten, tortured, fed to the wild animals, made for sport to die. If there was any word that would have summed up their outlook for the future it might have been "uncertainty."

Do you ever find yourself pondering the future of the Church with uncertainty? You see the spread of false teachings. You wonder how long the truth will continue to be shared. We see struggles against things like apathy toward the Word of God, indifference in regard to sexual sins, and tolerance of false teachers. In addition things outside the church bring on an attack. Just as the vision received by John tells us, Christians will face many trials and troubles during this life. What does that do to your singing and praise? Is your worship softened or dampened because of uncertainty?

But when you and I begin to feel that way it is not God who is failing. When our song of worship is feeling like a tired old song it is really you and I who have failed him by turning our eyes away from his Word. In Revelation we find just the message we need to brighten up our song of praise! Some people look at parts of the Bible like Revelation and think it is too difficult to understand. They approach it as if only the expert code-reader could ever make sense of it and that even the experts don't agree what it all means. But that is far from true. The book of Revelation is not only clear, it offers us full certainty of what to expect for today and for tomorrow. And it's message causes God's people to burst into song!

John is **invited to take a look at what we right now can never see.** In chapters four and five there is a vision in which he sees a door into heaven opened. John is invited to come in and see the things which would take place in history. There he sees a vision of the throne of God. In his hand is a scroll which is full of writing: the complete record of history and God's working in history. It is something which God alone holds, and God alone knows. Nothing can be changed or altered from his plan. Nothing can be revealed without his willing it be so. And John was about to witness the opening of that scroll and breaking of its seal: the following vision was going to reveal the pages of history!

At first there is an apparent problem. Who can open it? Who has the right or ability to reveal the course of history? An unanswerable challenge is put forward. John hears a voice of a mighty angel says, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" A search is made for someone who is worthy to open the scroll. But there is no angel, no creature, no man, no military code-breaker, no one who is able to take that scroll and break it and reveal its contents. Imagine the sinking feeling in his stomach as no one is found who can do it. Are we to remain in the dark about the events of history? But then one of the twenty-four elders speaks up. The twenty-four elders evidently signify for us the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles, that is, the Old and New Testament Church. Jesus had told his disciples that someday they would be seated on "twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Mt 19:28) The elder speaks up because God's Church knows something wonderful, "The Lion of the tribe of Judah as triumphed, he is able to open the scroll." John then sees a vision of a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, at the center of the throne. The lamb takes the scroll from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne. This is where verse nine of our reading for today picks up. We hear three anthems of praise by three groups in the presence of the throne of God.

To begin with the center of all of history is not what one might expect. Who does all history depend upon? He is depicted as a lamb looking like it had been slain. That is the center of history and the one who holds all knowledge and power over history? Yes. It is unmistakable and clear if you know the Scriptures. This lamb is the Lamb of God. It is Jesus. He was slain for sinners. And it is Jesus who now lives. He holds the power over all history. He is the one who alone can reveal history. The devil fools people into thinking that he has the answers and knows the future. He doesn't. Only Jesus can speak of the future with absolute certainty and unfailing truth.

This truth alone, that **the Lamb of God lives, is the source of all comfort for us.** He is over history and all history centers on him. When you begin to wonder if the outcome for God's Church is safe, take comfort knowing he is in charge of history. When it seems like all is lost for the Church, the Church needs to look to this vision. Jesus knows all things and knows what the future holds.

So, **what is the proper response to realizing that the lamb who was slain now lives** and holds all things in his hand? John's vision reveals a three-fold round of praise and proclamation for the Lamb of God who lives.

The first song of praise is sounded. All creatures on earth and all God's church bursts out in a new song. The song is called new because it is not like the long recorded history of sin, death, and suffering. It is not a song under the curse of the law. Nor is it a song that can become tired or old. It is a song of the good news of Jesus, the gospel. **We don't have the heavenly tune that they sang to.** But for each of the three songs we have the powerful words that they sang. *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."* It is a song of redemption and of the Redeemer who now lives again forever!

This first song declares *why the Lamb who was slain is worthy* to take the scroll and to open it. It is Jesus. He is the Lamb of God who was slain. And his death accomplished an amazing feat. He poured out his own blood as the price to purchase people for God from every tribe, and language and people, and nation. We saw an example of this fact in our reading from Acts. The apostle Paul is sent by Jesus to share the good news to the non-Jews. Jesus died so that his blood would redeem, buy back, the world from sin. And this first song of praise is sung to proclaim this gospel truth: Jesus died to purchase us at his own. And his purchase is to make us kings and priests to reign with Christ. Note that the 24 elders are also seated on thrones around the center throne. God redeemed us so that we would share in his victory. We are heirs of his kingdom. As Peter says, "you are a royal priesthood." It is a song of victory for us, not defeat!

This is our new song! Our fears and worries are forever gone! Time is not under some random fate. Christians do not die to the whim of Satan and evil. Our Savior Jesus holds history in his hands. And he purchased us from sin, death, and the devil. This song of praise is not just for the angels and elders in the vision. It is for the church. It is for the angels and the New and Old Testament Church of God to join in. It includes you. He paid for the world's sin. He purchased you and countless others around the world join with you in singing his praise.

The second song of praise is sounded. John sees the picture open up to reveal a countless throng of angels. The number ten-thousand times ten-thousand signify a complete number beyond count. *"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"* This seven-fold acclamation of praise rings out the chorus begun in the previous hymn. Notice too what heaven is all about. It is not the fulfillment of a selfish and sinful desire of man. It doesn't involve us receiving our own god-headship over a harem of wives in which merely sexual activity is exulted. Nor does heaven get portrayed as the Koran's depiction of wealth and many virgins for the zealous warrior of faith. No, heaven is far more noble and great. It is centered on the Lamb, on Jesus. And it involves what the Church already dimly does already: praise him, our Savior. It is a song of our ascended Jesus in heaven! It is a song of Jesus now exalted!

Our new song, the gospel, rings out with amazing praiseworthy truths. The angels of heaven sing that the same Jesus who was killed is to receive 1) power. Jesus told his disciples "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." When he rose to life, he fulfilled the prophecy regarding the Messiah who would be exalted above the heavens and worshipped as Lord of all. 2) wealth. Jesus as true God had the riches of heaven all along. But in order to be slain he took on flesh and set aside the riches of heaven to die for us all. Now his human nature takes up the wealth of heaven as he rises to victory. 3) wisdom. Jesus humbled himself when he came to die. He set aside his full use of divine omniscience. But what he set aside to die as our savior he now possesses once again in full. He has the full omniscience as the Son of God. 4) strength. Once so weak that he was able to be pierced and slain, now he exercises all his full power as God. 5) honor. He was held as despised and the lowest of all men. But now he is honored equal with the Father. 6) glory. He once had no credit as the people laughed at him, mocked him, ridiculed the fact that he could be Savior. Now everyone must give him the credit and glory for shedding his blood to save the world. 7) praise. The word for praise is "blessing." As we bless the Lord and ascribe to him all divine worship, so also ascribe this to the Lamb who was slain. This song is about Jesus now true God and man, exalted forever!

Finally, we get to the third round of singing. John hears the singing of all creation. "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" The song is not just sung by the angles and the Church. Every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. Granted, for his enemies this will be a bitter cry, but for his people it is a vision of what now is and will forever be true! And the Church falls down before the throne of God to worship the Lamb.

We have a new song! The gospel! He gives us what truth we need for comfort and praise in all circumstances. He did it many years earlier when the disciples went out fishing. They went about life as usual. Last we saw them they were cowering in fear behind locked doors. He appeared to them, not once, but twice. Then we see them again going about business as usual. No longer in full fear, but not yet proclaiming him and singing him as called to serve him as apostles. Jesus appears to them again and shows his same glory as when they were first called to serve him. The nets are filled with fish. He eats with them in resurrected bodily form. Now we see him in the highest position of power and authority in heaven! He lives!

Next week we'll look at what is revealed by Jesus. Until then let nothing dampen your praise. Sing the unending new song! Remember this three-fold chorus of praise to the Lamb who was slain. Remember the glory that Jesus now holds. Remember that God has opened the scroll. There is one thing that is most certain for us: Jesus lives, and we will sing his praise both now and forever.