

The other day, I was talking to Robyn about Easter Sunday, and I said, “I haven’t even decided what I’m going to preach on, on Easter Sunday yet.”... And Robyn (being the very helpful wife, that she is), said “How about the resurrection.”... And I thought for a while about how to reply to such an obvious answer, and I said “It’s been done.”....

I don’t know if you realise it or not, but when someone’s been a preacher for 10 or 12 years in the one location, Christmas and Easter become very difficult times, to decide what to give the message on. Because obviously at Christmas we want to preach on the “incarnation”. Obviously at Easter we want to preach on the resurrection ... But we **also** feel that we’ve got to give a fresh perspective on it, every year.

And for some people, Christmas and Easter are the only times that they ever make it to church, and so the message has to be evangelical – it has to be something that will cause the hardest of hearts crumble, and the prodigal son to return home to His heavenly father...

And the problem we have, is we preachers convince ourselves that we’re better than what we are, and that we’re more memorable than what we are... and we think “Oh, I preached on that 8 years ago – everybody’s heard it already...”, Whereas the fact of the matter is, everybody’s probably forgotten what that preacher said by lunchtime on the day they heard it...

Which is just as well, because when I was about half-way through preparing today’s message, guess what I discovered: I actually preached on this same Bible reading, Easter Sunday last year... Dohhh!

So, let's see how good our memories are.

Today isn't going to be a standard resurrection message. In our current series, we've been working our way through the book of Revelation. And currently, we're only up to chapter 3. But for **today**, we're going to jump forward to Chapter 5, because this is where we catch a glimpse of the throne room of Heaven, and there in the throne room of Heaven, we encounter the Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

And so this is going to be a bit back-to-front – it's going to be another couple of weeks yet, until we get to Revelation 4.

And in Revelation 4:

- it describes the Lord our God on His throne; and
- 24 elders on **their** thrones, surrounding the throne of God; and
- the 4 living creatures, on each side of the throne; And
- every being in Heaven, is worshipping the Lord God almighty...

That's a very condensed version. In a few weeks time, we'll look at Rev 4 properly.

Let's now read Revelation 5:

5 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. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open

the scroll and break its seals?" ³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴ and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. 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."

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, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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,

¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth."

¹¹ 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, ¹² saying with a loud voice,

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honour and glory and blessing!"

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,

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honour and glory and might forever
and ever!"

¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

When the vision of Revelation first began, Jesus said to John, "You need to write this down. What you're about to see, is what I'm going to do in the world." And John knew that it was going to be significant, because Jesus had said that He has "the keys to death and Hades"... This was going to be a matter of eternal life and eternal death...

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And because we have a number of visitors here today, who haven't been following our series, I'd better re-say this: Revelation, is what's called "Apocalyptic literature". It gives us a message through pictures (images). And the images have meanings:

- Some of the meanings relate to similar images in the Old Testament.
- Sometimes we're told what the images mean within the book of Revelation, itself.
- Sometimes we're told what they mean in other parts of the Bible.
- Sometimes the meanings are obvious and self-evident.
- And sometimes we don't know what the images mean, and we **won't** know – that is, until the point in history where God does make it obvious to us.

So, for example, in this morning's reading, we're given an image of a lamb. Only it's not like we might picture a little cute, cuddly lamb – The Greek word "ἀρνίον", is a **Ram** Lamb, of at **least** a year old. Alright, so if you understand your sheep, it's a 2-tooth Ram (or a Ram Hogget, depending on your definition) – nothing cute and cuddly about it. The Passover lamb, that they killed to celebrate the Passover, was a **ram** of at least a year old – a 2-tooth Ram – A ram in its youthful prime... Strong and vigorous – but not old and crusty...

And so it's obvious to us here, that the image of this young ram, in its youthful prime, is an image of Jesus – who died at the Passover.

And then as we continue with the image, it all gets a bit “weird”... This young Ram has 7 eyes. And 7 horns. ... And you don’t need **me** to tell you “that’s not normal”... But, don’t get all freaked out – “**Ahh! There’s a mutant Ram roaming the floors of heaven?**” – No, it doesn’t mean that - it’s just an image that’s telling us something about Jesus:

- 7 is the number for “perfect” or “complete”
- A horn is a symbol of strength or power
- Eyes obviously see.

So this is telling us that Jesus has complete strength – He has **all power** and **all authority**. And he has 7 eyes – He sees everything...

Did you know, when Jesus came to Earth, He lowered Himself, to become fully human. And at **that** point, Jesus **wasn’t** able to be, what we call “omniscient” or “omnipresent” - He couldn’t **be** everywhere at once. He couldn’t **see** everything at once. He couldn’t **know** everything at once... He only knew what the Father showed Him...

But now that Jesus has ascended into Heaven and now that He is glorified, He **does** see everything. He **does** know everything. He is supremely powerful, and all-knowing.

Alright, so that’s the way Revelation uses images...
Are you keeping up with me?

Where were we up to? ...

John knew, that in this vision Jesus was going to reveal to him the destiny of the world... And he finds himself in the throne room of Heaven. God the Father is on His throne, and He's holding a scroll in His right hand... and John must sense, "This is the destiny of the world"... And he's waiting to see what's inside of it... It's jam-packed. It's written front and back...

But then his anticipation gives way to uncontrollable grief...

No one in all of heaven; or on the Earth; or under the earth, was able to open it – **no** one was worthy... And John began to weep (uncontrollably) because it was right there, and he wasn't going to know... No one was worthy to open the scroll – no one was worthy to break the seals.

The scroll contained the destiny of the world:

- The salvation of the disciples of Jesus Christ
- The judgment of the world
- The chaining and the destruction of Satan
- And the glorious new heaven and the new Earth

And the seals were going to be broken one-by-one – each seal, setting into motion, God's planned destiny for the whole universe ...

It was all there – all ready to be revealed – all ready to begin – but no one was worthy. And so John bawled his eyes out, until one of the Elders said to him "**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 John looks around for this lion, only instead of finding a lion, he sees this Ram Lamb, with all of its horns and all of its eyes... And it looked as if it had been killed, but it was alive... It's **not** Frankenstein's monster, but "It's alive!!! It's alive!!!"

And so Jesus took the scroll, and as He did, He received the authority, to reveal, and to set into motion, the world's final destiny.

What gave Jesus this authority? Why was **He** the only one who was worthy? Well, it's because **He** is the one who has conquered. Alright, well how did He conquer?

Jesus is worthy to be in control of the World's destiny, because first, He **died** to save the world. Jesus didn't come to the world as some disconnected cosmic judge – Jesus **entered** His creation, to suffer by the hand of His creation, in order to save His creation. And because of this, Jesus is the one, who is worthy, to set in motion, the final redemption, and the final judgment, because He is the one who was killed, and it is by His blood, that He bought people back for God.

- And He didn't just buy back the good people with His blood;
- He didn't just shed His blood for the descendants of Abraham;
- He shed His blood for every tribe;
- every language (yes, even the Afrikaans speakers);
- every people and every nation...

And by His blood, He has brought into being a **new** kingdom – a kingdom of priests – holy to God... As disciples of Jesus Christ – we are this new Kingdom – and we shall reign with Him on the earth.

And on this Easter Sunday, it is because Jesus is the risen crucified one, that He is worthy to have control over History.

He is worthy of all glory, honour and blessing.

He is worthy to receive our prayers. Have you ever wondered, “Is it right to pray to Jesus?” Well we get your answer right here – As soon as Jesus received the scroll, which contained the destiny of the world, the 24 elders fell down before Him. They were holding harps, which are a symbol of worship – it is right for us to give our worship to Jesus. And they held “**golden bowls full of incense**”, which we are told, represent “**the prayers of the saints.**”

Yes, it **is** right to pray to Jesus Christ.

Yes, it **is** right to worship Jesus.

He is worthy, of all power, and all glory.

He is worthy of our worship.

Why? Because He died to save us. And yet He lives with all power and all authority.

That’s all I’ve got to say today. Let’s spend the rest of the morning in worship, as we worship our risen Saviour.

Sentence: Easter Sunday – Worship the risen, crucified one.

Scripture: Revelation 5

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