



Sermon Title: The Lion and the Lamb (Revelation 5:1-14)

The following resource gives a helpful insight into the study of this passage:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Apocalyptic-Literature>

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. What music group do you enjoy listening to? Why? What is the biggest choir you have ever heard?
2. What is something that you have really struggled to understand? (eg. Shakespeare? A manual? Statistics?)
3. Have you ever rec'd an important message? What was it? How did you react? (ex. Phone call? Email?)

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Describe the original recipients of this revelation from John. Who were they? How many were in their group? What was the historical setting? Why do you think John wrote in this 'apocalyptic' style? (resource or a study Bible)
2. What is the dilemma around the opening of the scroll? (What was the context of opening a scroll?) Why did John weep? What did the scroll represent for him?
3. Look at the three songs (vv. 9-13). What is the theme of the songs? What is noteworthy about each of the musical groups?
4. How does Colossians 2:15 further explain 'Christ as Victor'?
5. Many religions and cults do not believe that Jesus is God. Give examples. Read Rev 4:8-11 and then Rev 5:9-10. How do these show that Jesus is God Almighty?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. What does it mean that Jesus is both a Lion and a Lamb? What does this mean for you?
2. How has this message from Pastor Ashwin influenced your perspective on world chaos in our time? How can we be encouraged that God is in control? What are our roles during this period of time? (Refer to Rev 5:13)
3. As you go out into your world this week, how do you need to live like a 'lamb'?

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

(This week's writers: Thomas Attrell, Edi Dygert, Sandi Somers, Don South, Georgia Harrison.)

THE WORD (NIV)

Revelation 5:1-14

Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" ³But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

⁶Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. ⁹And they sang a new song, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

¹⁰You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

¹¹Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹²In a loud voice they were saying:

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

¹³Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!"

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

Colossians 2:15

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.



In the book of *Revelation* Jesus is unveiled, revealed, so that we can see His full spectacular identity. This week's message reveals the amazing Saviour who has taken the reigns of history in His hands and promises to guide us in the path of victory! We are looking at another fascinating portrait of Jesus where the worship of heaven is directed at the Lion who conquered as a Lamb, one of the great paradoxes of the Bible. Jesus is the Lion of Judah as well as the Lamb of God.

Keeping in mind we are not the original recipients of this message and the books of the Bible were written in a particular historical context with a specific audience in mind, we must remember that Jesus is the focus of this book. While *Revelation* has prophetic content and speaks to the future, it was not written as a theological puzzle for the early church. The early church faced a major dilemma – they struggled to reconcile their suffering with Christ's victory. The Roman Empire had expanded under the brutal rule of various emperors. The Apostle John in exile on the island of Patmos, under the brutal emperor Domitian (81-96 AD), wrote this book to the seven churches in Asia. The church was discouraged, facing waves of persecution, violence and martyrdom as their way of life confronted the culture of the time. Their refusal to participate in emperor worship made them atheists in the eyes of the Roman government, political traitors who gave their allegiance to another king. They believed and were convinced that Jesus is Lord. Why then were they hunted, killed, mocked and shamed while the Roman Empire dazzled with its pomp and glory? Scoffers abounded and questioned – where is the promise of Christ's coming? They wondered, "If Jesus has won the battle, why are we not experiencing the victory?" Today this still is one of the most relevant questions!

In his book entitled "Discipleship on the Edge," Darrell Johnson points out, '*Revelation* is a down-to-earth manual on how to be a disciple facing the harsh realities of life on earth . . . *Revelation* helps us to see the present in the light of the future reality. *Revelation* also offers an alternate reading of the current reality – things are not what they appear to be on the outside!' When we read *Revelation* today, we are obsessed with what it has to say about the end of the world. But it was written as a simple and straightforward message – Don't worry about your circumstances – Jesus is King, Caesar is not; Jesus' Kingdom is far more powerful than our earthly kingdoms – Jesus is coming soon to make everything right. These same messages resonate in our time and culture: moral depravity, an inability to discern right from wrong; governments against God and Christians, media portraying the church in negative terms, a systematic decimation of the Christian foundation of our nation. And like the early church, we too need the exalted view that Jesus is Lord, that He has won the victory. Our message from *Revelation* is that we are not in charge of this world – God is and He has transferred the authority of running it to Jesus. The symbolism in Revelation 5 is rich and powerful. God is seated on the throne (*King of Kings, maker of heaven and earth, God Almighty*) and in His right hand (*symbol of power and authority*) is a scroll (*His plan of salvation & redemption to align His creation with His original plans*) with writing on both sides (*nothing to be added*) and sealed with 7 (*signifying completeness*) seals (*an important document to remain closed – similar to a Roman last will – to be opened only by the executor as rightful and authorized recipient*) **Rev 5:1**. John wept in great grief when no one was found worthy to open the scroll **Rev 5:2-4** – his was the helplessness of humanity without a Saviour. But then Jesus steps into the scene – the Lion of Judah – He has triumphed, He is able to open the scroll, **Rev 5:5**. But where John expects to see the triumphant Lion, he sees instead a Lamb, looking as if slain **Rev 5:6**. It is a startling juxtaposition – the mighty lion wins by being slaughtered as a lamb. But notice: the meek and diminutive lamb has 7 horns (*omnipotence*) and 7 eyes (*omniscience*) which are the 7 spirits of God (*symbolic of the fullness of the Holy Spirit*) and is standing at the centre of the throne. The Lion of Judah triumphs not by tearing his prey apart, but as a Lamb allowing himself to be torn apart. John presents this image to highlight the centrality of the cross. It is at the cross that the Lion became the Lamb that was slain, the sacrifice through whose shed blood He won the most decisive victory. In C.S. Lewis's Narnia books, Aslan represents Jesus. Aslan did not conquer as the lion he was; he lay helpless, his beautiful mane shaved off, humiliated and jeered by the forces of evil; he did not fight back or resist. His brutal torture and killing is a graphic symbolic depiction of Christ's crucifixion.

The early church held onto the atonement as 'Christus Victor' – what seemed to be a defeat of Jesus was the greatest victory. Satan's greatest tactical error was to contribute to Christ's death. He took part in his own defeat. Instead, when Christ died on the cross and thereby stripped the principalities and powers, He had the outright victory! **Col 2:15** Here is an important lesson for us – how do we triumph as Christians? Not as lions, but as lambs; not by domination or power, but through the path of self-sacrifice to advance the victory of Jesus and the Kingdom of God. The symbolism of *Revelation* continues: 4 living creatures (*all of God's creation*); 24 elders (*representatives of the redeemed humanity*); the Lamb standing at the centre of the throne even though he was slain (*the resurrected Saviour bearing the scars of His agony and sacrifice*); the centre of the throne (*the place of Almighty God*) **Rev 4**. Now the Lamb is at the centre of the throne, in the same place as God because the Lamb is divine as God is divine.

Many cults and religions deny the divinity of Jesus (e.g. Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses) by acknowledging Him as a prophet only. But see this audacity and boldness: the slain Lamb walks up to the One who holds the scroll and takes it from His hands – authority has been transferred. Jesus will execute God's plans; Jesus holds the destiny of the universe. What is heaven's response to Jesus? Three explosions of songs of worship. The 4 living creatures and 24 elders worship the Lamb. The multitudes of angels join in with their own outburst of praise. Lastly, every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, worship. Ongoing worship, unbroken praise! Worship does not begin when we come to church. Whenever we worship we tune in to the worship service that is already taking place in heaven. And who is object of this worship? The Lamb at the centre of the throne, for He is worthy. By worship, we proclaim His worth. The Lamb now seated on the throne was nailed to a cross 2000 years ago as our substitute and by His blood He ransomed people from every tribe, language, people and nation **Rev 5:8-10**. That is why He deserves highest praise. The invitation to participate in the worship of heaven is given to every single person – worship the one who is worthy because He gave himself for you. The book of Revelation offers us this divine perspective of the world. The early church felt like a minority; weak and insignificant. John sees them as an alternate reality, multitudes of worshipers before the throne. Turn your eyes towards heaven and this worship scene to reverse your perspective. Jesus has triumphed gloriously, and if you belong to Him – yours is the victory!