

The soundtrack to the future

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- [0 : 0 0] This is from Revelation 5. 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.
- And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll? But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.
- I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then 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. Then I saw a lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by 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. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.
- [1 : 1 5] And 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.
- And then 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 men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.
- You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth. Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand.
- They had encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In 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.
- Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them singing, To him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be praised and honor and glory and power forever and ever.
- [2 : 4 0] And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped. We're going to take some time now to think about Revelation chapter five, which Anna Lauren was reading to us earlier.
- I don't know how your time has changed or how you use your time. You know, how's that working out for you in this season? Are you doing things differently?
- Obviously. I'm probably listening to more music, and I've definitely watched more movies than I normally would. And I've got a little track here playing, which is a theme tune.
- I don't know if you can see it, but it's to Star Wars. It's not enjoying going up there, but great movies and great music go together.

It might be Train Spotting and Iggy Pot or Star Wars, or it might be the Spaghetti Westerns with Clint Eastwood. And people like John Williams and Hans Zimmerman, these great movie songwriters and composers, have done such a great job of using music to create drama.

[4 : 01] And Revelation chapter five is a chapter that's full of music and drama. It's the soundtrack of the future.

We're looking ahead in Revelation chapter five and seeing the unfolding of history, and that history centers around the worship of Jesus. So it's a really happy song, the songs that we find in Revelation five, the song that's going to fill the earth, the song that praises the name of Jesus.

And that's a song that we can all start singing now. And no matter what else is going on in our lives, I think it's really important that we allow praise to fill our days.

So John's writing the book of Revelation, and he's thinking about certain groups of people. We know that. They were grouped in seven churches in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey.

And he's thinking about these people. And he knows that they're living through really distressing persecution and hard times. But he gives them a happy song, a song of praise for difficult days.

[5 : 18] So if we're thinking as a church family at Cornerstone, and those of us who are regulars, I always try and give people a thought to hang on to later in the week. Well, our Thursday thought is, even when the clouds look dark, we will let praise fill our days.

Even when the clouds look dark, we will let praise fill our days. Because to be a Christian is to be part of a choir that's signed to a heavenly music label.

So that's my first point, really, that the church is an earthly choir signed to a heavenly record label. We use music to tell our stories.

And I really love live music. Some of the most enjoyable, exciting nights of my life have been listening to great singers, singing great songs that I really love.

R.E.M., U2, Stiff Little Fingers, Nick Cave, the list goes on and on. Singing songs of love, of loss, of hope, anger, wonder.

[6 : 27] When was music first heard in our world? I think music was first heard in our world in the Garden of Eden. And we know that in the Garden of Eden, God walked in that garden paradise with Adam and Eve.

And the music, the songs of Eden, would have been songs of love and friendship and peace. But when Adam and Eve reject God's rule, and when they turn against God and his reign, well, the story takes a dark twist.

The human story takes a dark twist. The human race no longer lives in friendship with God. And as a result, the world begins to suffer really deeply. And then the music changes, doesn't it?

After the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, the human race is singing a symphony of sorrowful songs, full of minor notes. But now in the book of Revelation, at the end of the Bible, we've been pointed to the end of the story, and told that at the end of the story, there's a new song.

That at the end of the story, is the renewal of all things, a new heaven, a new earth, where God once more dwells among his people.

[7 : 46] And in that new heavens, a new earth, in the new creation, a new song is being sung. And that song is a song of praise to Jesus.

And as Christians here in the world, we are here to sing that song to the people round about us today. We are called to be God's choir on earth, singing the praises of Jesus Christ.

And as Christians living in the world, we've to always sing this song. We don't stop singing it. We never stop praising Jesus. So think about the songs of worship and praise that we find in the book of Revelation and in Revelation chapter five.

Is that a song that resonates with you, that chimes with you? Are you rejoicing at the thought that one day we will all be in God's presence, all God's people will be in his presence forever in a world set free from sin and suffering?

Is that a song? Is that a song that you can sing along to? Well, those of us who are Christians, we do sing that song every day. Some days we'll sing it with longing.

[9 : 01] It might just be a whisper in our lips. Some day we'll probably sing it with tears, just croaking out the words with sobs. Some days Christians sing this song joyfully, you know, you know, robustly, with a big smile, singing at the top of our voices.

So in all the different circumstances of life, we keep singing the same song. It's a song for every season. It's a song for every day.

It's a song for every time. It's a song of hope and life in Jesus. The crisis we're going through is opening up all the old questions, the meta level questions about what's the meaning of life?

How does the world end? Who of enemies is in control of the world? Why is there all this suffering? And we answer those questions with this song. We answer those questions with the music of the gospel.

We answer those questions with a life that praises Jesus. So for those of us who are Christians, what we're saying is this, that the lyrics of our life will always point to Jesus and say, he's the hope of the world.

[10 : 20] Here in this chapter, there's this great vision of Jesus. telling us that he holds the destiny of our world in his hands. That's such a comforting truth.

And it's a song that brings joy to the heart of believers in every kind of circumstance. So we're an earthly choir signed to a heavenly record label, singing the song of praise to Jesus.

And thinking about soundtracks, the soundtrack of my youth is sitting right here. So I don't know if you can see these, but look, this is the soundtrack of my teenage years.

Stiff Little Fingers, R.E.M., Johnny Cash, Van Morrison, don't know what that's doing there. Bob Marley.

These are the songs that shaped the way I saw the world and thought about the world and sang about the world in my youth. Some great music, some great songwriters. But I'm trying to say here that God is the greatest composer, the greatest songwriter ever, and that the song that he's given to sing is the best song.

[11 : 34] The chapter that we've got here, Revelation chapter five, begins with a book, with a scroll, and it's encrypted. And it's encrypted in a way that nobody can open it.

It's protected by the super complex program, and there are seven layers to it, and each of the seven layers has its own kind of encryption. And even the best hackers in the world are totally useless at opening up this book, this scroll.

But it has to be opened, because what's in it really matters. Because the book holds God's plan to restore this world and create the new heavens and the new earth.

So that means that as chapter five begins, there's a note of anxiety or tension, even despair. John's in tears, because they can't find anyone to open the book.

And if nobody can open the book, then the whole plan of renewal and restoration and salvation's in danger. So there's great fear until somebody points out the Lion of Judah, the Root of David.

[12 : 49] The Lion, of course, symbolizes great strength. But when John looks around, he doesn't see a lion, does he? What he sees is a lamb.

And the lion and the lamb turn out to be the same person, the Savior, the Messiah. The lion tells us that the Messiah is a person of immense and great royal power.

But he's also the one who's made himself the lamb, vulnerable and helpless. Jesus, the Messiah, is both lion and lamb.

And now as we gaze on him, he's the slaughtered lamb, the lamb who bears the wounds of sacrifice and suffering.

He's put right in front of us here in such a visible, tangible way as the lamb who's died. And we've been told that history turns on his death, his sacrifice.

[13 : 50] If he didn't die, then this great future that God promises wouldn't be ours. If he didn't die, he wouldn't have the authority to break the encryption and open the scroll.

But he has this power because he died. And he died to guarantee us this new, different future full of joy and hope. And that's why Jesus, the slaughtered lamb, opening the scrolls, opens up this whole panorama of praise and worship with the greatest song ever by the greatest composer ever.

So, just imagine that you're John and you start to hear the sound of singing. And the singing is so beautiful.

It's like a song you've never heard before. And the hairs on your neck are standing up. Every fiber of your being is tingling. You look and first of all, you see the 24 elders, these great men of authority.

And they're singing. And then the sound increases and you look further and you see that there are multitudes of angels in the heavens above and they're singing.

[15 : 13] And then you look further and you see that every creature in heaven and earth and in the sea and everything that's in them, all of them are singing and they're singing in harmony together the same song of praise.

The whole world vibrates to this great song. You can hear the notes rising up from the oceans. You can hear the song echoing off the mountains.

You can hear the music pouring down from the skies. You can hear worship swelling up from every corner of creation. You can hear songs of praise to Jesus coming from the farthest reaches of the universe.

And it's the most beautiful sound ever. It's the greatest song you've ever known. You're totally immersed in it. Everyone in heaven and earth, all the creatures of the universe, singing together in perfect harmony, singing the same song to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb to be praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever.

That's what God invites us into. That's the future that God calls us to. That's the soundtrack of the future that God holds out to us through his son, Jesus Christ.

[16 : 32] To be part of this beautiful future, we need to receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. We need to put our trust in the lamb who was slain, who sacrificed his life to redeem us and restore our world.

Listen to the lyrics that God has written for his gospel song. The lyrics are all about the lamb. You were slain and with your blood you purchased men and women for God.

Listen to the lyric. Worthy is the lamb who was slain to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb. This slaughtered lamb is the lyric of our worship forever and ever.

Because the death of the lamb is the turning point of the story. It's because he dies to reconcile us to God that one day we can live in fellowship with God in the new creations, the new heaven and the new earth.

That's why Christians worship Jesus. That's why we never stop worshipping Jesus. Because he deserves it. He deserves it all. We really believe with all our hearts he is worthy of all glory and worship.

[17 : 41] Because he is God the Son, sits and shares the throne with God, still bearing the marks of his sacrifice. Because he gave his blood for our salvation.

Because he rules over the events of history on our behalf. One of our convictions as Christians is that we are made for worship and that we are made to worship Jesus.

We are most fulfilled. We are most at home. We are most human when we will give worship to God. We were made to sing this song.

It's when we sing the praise of Jesus that we feel truly free. And it's a song that we can sing even on the cloudy dark days.

Because it's a song of hope. Of better days. Psalm 147 in the Old Testament says this. How good it is to sing praises to our God.

[18 : 41] How pleasant and fitting to praise him. This is the song we were made to sing. So we've got this great choir signed to a heavenly record label that sings songs of praises to Jesus.

We've got the great composer God himself who has written this amazing song with all these incredible lyrics about Jesus. We've got a picture of the choirs of the universe singing praise to God in the heavens.

And that's the song that God is asking us to sing today. So, what song are you singing? Can people tell where you belong from the songs that you sing?

Do the lyrics of your life, does the melody that you sing, does that tell people that you've found a hope that never fades? Does it say to people that you've seen a light that never goes out?

A sun that never sets? Does the lyric of your life and the melody of your life say that you belong with Jesus in heaven? Because people's songs tell us where they belong.

[19 : 58] You might hear a bagpipe. I don't know if you hate the bagpipes or love the bagpipes, but you might hear the bagpipes playing a lament. You know where that music's from. You might hear Latin music.

You know where that music's from. You might hear the West African desert blues. You know where that music's from. You might hear Indian bangra music. You know where that music's from.

Well, does the music of our life tell people that heaven is our home, that that's where we belong? Are our lives in harmony with the sounds of heaven?

Are we living in tune with Jesus? This is the new song that's shaping the future of this world. And we're all invited to join this great choir, this amazing chorus that sings the best songs that ever will be sung.

And the song will get more and more beautiful as we go through life and into eternity. So is God's praise part of your future? Is this soundtrack, the soundtrack to your life and to your destiny?

[21 : 09] Perhaps you've never praised God and so I'm inviting you begin praising him today. If you're a Christian, I'm saying, what's the song that will be in your lips on Thursday?

What are the lyrics of your life? Even when the clouds look dark, will we let praise fill our days? One of my favourite songs is on this CD.

Johnny Cash sang it along with Joe Strummer but it's a Bob Marley song, Redemption Song. And it just says this, won't you help to sing the songs of freedom? Because all I ever have, Redemption Songs, Redemption Song.

That's the song God's given us. It's a theme tune and the soundtrack to our lives and to our future. And I'm asking us all, let's sing this song together today.

So, going to pray and then Fergus is going to lead us in a song that we can join with. Lord Jesus Christ, thank you so much. Thank you so much that you give us a better song to sing, a new song, a song that's full of hope, full of joy, a song that's about Jesus because Jesus is our hope and our joy.

[22 : 24] So, give us that tune in our hearts today. Give us that melody to sing. Put these lyrics on our lips. And help us to sing your praises not just today, but every day and for all eternity.

And may we look forward to this with such longing because we know that you, God, are our home, that to be in your presence is our great destiny.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.