

Great Questions Series
“Who is Worthy...?” (Revelation 5:2)
October 12, 2018

Today is the last sermon in the Great Questions series that I began at the beginning of last summer (when it was still warm outside). To end the series, I’m transporting us from **earth up to heaven**. And this final question is not actually asked by a person, but rather by an **angel**. The angel’s question is an extremely important question because the answer to the question either gives us hope beyond the grave or destroys all hope.

If you’d like to follow along in your Bibles this morning to the Scripture that contains this question, please turn to **Revelation 5**.

Before I read the text let me give you a bit of foundational background. The apostle John, is living out the end of his life on the island of Patmos, likely because of the increasing persecution Christians were undergoing because of the Roman government.

One day, while on this island, John is given this incredible vision of God’s plans for bringing history on this planet to a close and ushering in God’s eternal kingdom. The immediate purpose of the book is to give hope and reason to stay true to the Lord for Christians who’s lives were becoming increasingly difficult because of persecution. And my hope this morning is that as we look at the answer to the angel’s question that it will give you hope as well.

In chapter 4 John is given this breathtaking view of heaven. There’s an open door that he’s invited to come through and he’s taken up by the Holy Spirit and walks through this door and discovers that he’s now in God’s throne room. He saw God sitting on His throne and John attempts in his limited human language to describe what he sees there. I’m confident that our language seemed quite inadequate to properly describe what he saw. But he describes what it looked like around the throne, with brilliant colors and a rainbow. And he also notices that there are also 24 other thrones with 24 elders seated on them wearing crowns of gold on their heads. And before the throne was a sea of glass. And in close proximity to the throne were four living creatures that looked like a lion, an ox, a man and a flying eagle. And constantly there is worship going on unlike any worship service he’d had ever encountered.

With all of that taking place, John noticed that God was holding something in His right hand. And that’s where I want to begin reading today with **Revelation 5:1-14**

John saw this fascinating scroll written on both sides and sealed with 7 seals. In that Roman culture, this would have quite likely been a will, for it’s only wills that would have been witnessed and sealed by 7 individuals. The seals kept the contents of the will secure and private until the person who wrote the will passed away. Then and only then could the will be opened and read. And the will would be read by the executor one section by another. And then once one section was read, then the next seal would be broken and that section would be read. One by one until the whole will had been read. And that’s exactly what we read over the next several chapters of Revelation. One by one the seals are broken and opened and we read of God’s plan to liberate His people from the fallen world we live in and bring them to live with Him forever.

However, there was no one who was found who was qualified to open the scroll and read it’s contents. Apparently just being strong or wise or influential or successful didn’t qualify you to open the scroll. When there wasn’t anyone found qualified to open the scroll John began to weep uncontrollably. This isn’t just a silent cry but the word John uses to describe his reaction conveys the idea of openly and loudly weeping so that everyone around him could hear it. And the text seems to indicate that this weeping continued on for quite awhile. Why this strong reaction?

Because if there's no one worthy to open the scroll then God's plans for the culmination of history on earth would never happen and God's people would never receive their long awaited inheritance from God. It would be like the situation in C.S. Lewis' series of books, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, where the bleak situation is described by Beaver as "*it's always winter but never Christmas.*" After a week and a half of rain and cold recently, many of us are already beginning to dread the onslaught of winter where we have more darkness than light and it's not enjoyable to go out. John was heartbroken with the thought that the curse of sin upon this planet would never be lifted and we'd never be blessed by living in God's presence.

Paul talks about the anticipation of all of creation, including us, finally being rescued and liberated from the bondage that's existed, because of sin, since the Garden of Eden.

Romans 8:19-23 (NIV) *For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.*

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

If no one is found worthy to open this scroll, then this situation will never change. God's plan of final redemption will never be carried out.

In the midst of John's open weeping, one of the elders breaks in and says someone has been found who is qualified to open the scrolls. He says, "*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.*" That's really great news. This is what every Jew had hoped for when Jesus was here. Because the Lion of the tribe of Judah represents **strength and power** and to deliver them from the strong arm of the Roman government they needed that power of God to show up. But instead they got Jesus, who wasn't seen as strong and mighty and was able to be nailed to a cross and put to death. If Jesus had actually appeared with a lion's strength and might and killer instinct then they probably would have accepted him – but instead, out of disappointment they called out to Pilate, "***Crucify Him, Crucify Him!!***"

As John turns to look at this mighty lion, he had to be a bit confused. Because instead of a powerful lion he sees instead "*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.*"

Upon seeing the Lamb, I wonder if John's mind raced back to John the Baptist's reaction upon seeing Jesus when he said, "*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*" And then shortly after John declared this identity of Jesus, John records in his gospel that he saw "*the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.*" This must be that same Lamb that eventually died on the cross for our sins. The same Lamb that Isaiah the prophet prophesied about 1,000 years earlier when he said: *He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.* (Isaiah 53:7)

So, in answer to the angels' question, "*Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?*" the answer is Jesus in all of his power and might and in Jesus who willingly and lovingly gave his life as a required payment for our sins. And if you read the rest of chapter 5 you'll notice that not only is John relieved and excited in the answer but all of heaven is as well and all of those in heaven erupt in worship and praise of Jesus.

But for the remainder of the sermon this morning I want to focus on what our inheritance is as disciples of Jesus.

The fact that we will inherit riches from God is talked about quite a bit in Scripture.

- While talking about the end times, Jesus said that God will divide his children from everyone else and then the King will say to his children, *“Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.”* (Mt 25:35)
- In **Ephesians**, Paul prays that we would all more fully understand and be enthralled by our inheritance waiting for us: (Ephesians 1:18-19 (NIV))
- In **Colossians**, Paul further calls us to work at everything as if you’re working for Jesus, and our motivation is knowing that you’ll receive an inheritance one day. (Colossians 3:23-24)
- **James** also talks about how God shows how amazing He is by choosing people like you and me to be rich in faith and inherit a kingdom which he promised to those who love Him (James 2:5)
- **Peter** describes our inheritance 3 ways: it can’t perish, spoil or fade and that it’s kept in heaven for you and God is working on your behalf to make sure you don’t forfeit this inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-5).
- And in **Revelation**, after the 7 seals have been broken and the details of God’s plan to give His inheritance to His children is this statement: *“Those who are victorious will inherit all of this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.”* (Rev. 21:7)
- Additionally, there are several references to us being “heirs” of God’s riches. But for the sake of time, I’d like to move on to what exactly is our inheritance.

In regards to our inheritance it’s talked about in two ways.

1. What our inheritance is **right now**.
2. What our **future inheritance** will be as well.

Right now:

- **God provides for our needs**
Philippians 4:19 (NIV) *And my God will meet **all** your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*
- **We’ve been given God’s peace**
Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV) *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
Colossians 3:15 (NIV) *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*
- **God cares for us** (this verse occurs in the midst of Satan trying to attack you by way of anxiety – the antidote is letting God take care of Satan and your situation)
1 Peter 5:7 (NIV) *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*
- **We are the poster child of God’s grace and kindness**
Ephesians 2:6-7 (NIV) *And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*
- **We are called and equipped by God for ministry** (I’m not the only person in this church that’s been called and equipped by God for ministry. Every single Christian has been uniquely gifted by God for ministry. And ministry comes in all shapes and sizes.
1 Corinthians 3:9 (NIV) *For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.*
1 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV) *Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

- **God has a plan for our lives and gives us the power to live it out**
Ephesians 2:10 (NIV) *For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Part of that plan is to be a light to the darkness and to bring God's kingdom, in its power to earth right now.

Matthew 6:10 (NIV) *your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

John 14:12-14 (NIV) *Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

- **We are fruit bearers of Christ**
John 15:5 (NIV) *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*
- **We are members of God's body (the church)**
Ephesians 2:19 (NIV) *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,*
- **We have the mind of Christ**
1 Corinthians 2:16 (NIV) *But we have the mind of Christ.*
- **We have the character of Christ living inside of us**
Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV) *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Future:

- **We look forward to receiving new, glorified bodies** (the older we get the more attractive this sounds).
Philippians 3:20-21 (NIV) *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*
- **We look forward to continuing to live in God's presence forever**
Revelation 21:3 (NIV) *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*
- **God's original creation will be restored**
Revelation 21:4-5 (NIV) *'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"*
- **We will be reunited with the Christ followers who have gone before us.**
1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NIV) *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

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Why does John react so strongly to not finding someone to open it?

What does it mean to you to have an inheritance awaiting you?

Our Inheritance: Now

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- We’ve been given God’s _____ (Philippians 4:6-7)
- God _____ for us (1 Peter 5:7)
- We are the _____ child of God’s grace and kindness (Eph. 2:6-7)
- We are called and _____ by God for ministry (1 Cor 3:9; 12:7)
- God has a _____ for our lives and gives us the power to live it out (Eph. 2:10; Mt. 6:10; John 14:12-14)
- We are fruit bearers of Christ (John 15:5)
- We are _____ of God’s body (the church) (Eph 2:19)
- We have the _____ of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16)
- We have the _____ of Christ living inside (Gal. 5:22f)

Our Future Inheritance:

- We look forward to receiving new, glorified _____ (Philip 3:20-21)
- We look forward to continuing to live in God’s _____ forever (Rev. 21:3)
- God’s original creation will be _____ (Rev. 21:4-5)
- We will be _____ with the Christ followers who have gone before us (1 Thess. 4:16-18)

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