

Revelation Song

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Preacher: Pastor Scott Johnson

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Hi, Ed. That's my father-in-law. I've got to say good morning. Revelation song is a powerful song for me. The first time the song moved me was at Grace Church, and that was a church my daughter, Veronica, attended. So a bit of history.

When we moved from Indiana to Pendleton in 1997, we found PCUMC and quickly became a part of this church family. Our children grew up in the church, and one activity that our daughter enjoyed was singing. She sang with the Frogs, the fully reliant on God singers, and the youth band, as well as at Star Point School in the chorus. Veronica then attended Mercyhurst College in Erie and found friendships at Grace Church. One Sunday, while visiting her, we attended her newfound church with her new church family. During the service, Revelation song was played by the band.

I felt moved through the words and the tune. It's hard for me to choose which lyrics to share, but here's a sample. Clothes in rainbows of living color, flashes of lightning, rolls of thunder, blessing and honor, strength and glory, and power be to you, the only wise king.

These lyrics glorify and praise God. The song continues with more lyrics of worthiness, wonder, holiness, and adoration. The combination of melody and words and how they build in the song touched me, and I felt the revelation that my daughter had found a church and a church family.

The values that we found here at PCUMC have carried on into my daughter's everyday life. Since then, Revelation song has been special to me. My daughter continues to sing in Milan, where she lives, and has sung at the Duomo Cathedral in Milan, as well as the church in Lake Como, Italy.

[2 : 1 3] The praise band will now be performing Revelation song for you. Tom and I are thrilled that Ronnie will be singing as well. I hope you get goosebumps, like I always do when I hear this song.

Good morning. Yes, my hair did raise up on my arms. Thank you, Veronica. I miss you singing. You can come back from Milan anytime you want. That was great. Thank you.

So this morning's scripture reading is taken from two different books, Revelation 5, verses 1-14, and Matthew 17, verses 1-8. 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.

[3 : 2 7] 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 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. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

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 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.

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 heard the voice of many angels numbering thousands upon thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand.

[4 : 34] They 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 saying, To him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever.

The four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshiped. And from Matthew. After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, This is my son whom I love.

[5 : 48] With him I am well pleased. Listen to him. When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. Get up, he said.

Don't be afraid. When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. This is the word of our Lord. Thanks be to God. So friends, let's pray together. Loving and gracious God, we give you thanks for this moment.

We give you thanks for this morning. For the ways in which your spirit is already at work and moving and breaking through in each of our hearts. Lord, as we come with our hearts open now, having praised your name, having sensed your movement, having heard your word and offered ourselves in prayer, fall fresh on us, Lord.

Plant a new seed in each of us that will grow and bear fruit for the honor and the glory of your name. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen. So you heard me say during the greeting time that what we're doing over these next few weeks is celebrating the way God speaks to us in song.

I want to thank Sarah for her reflection today because it's a perfect example of what we're talking about. How God uses a song to reach us. How God uses a song to help us understand.

[7 : 03] And that's a powerful thing. And I'm hoping that if any of you have maybe had a moment recently, maybe where you felt God was kind of far away or maybe God wasn't talking to you, I hope you hear what we have to say today and over these next few weeks about how God reaches and continues to reach each of us.

So as we start on this journey, I want you to think about something. When was the last time that God blew your mind with something so beautiful you didn't know what to say?

That you were just simply going through your life and you were doing the day-to-day ordinary things that we do and something just caught your eye and held your gaze and took your breath away.

Because God is still in that business. Let me tell you about one of the times that happened to me. A few years ago, I was in Italy for work. And part of what we did, we were taking some students on an exchange trip.

And part of what we got to do was tour the Vatican. So we had been doing those sort of mundane things that happen when you got a group of students you got to worry about. But while we were there, I walked into a particular room and I saw this.

[8 : 26] For those of you who don't know what this is, this is the Sistine Chapel. And now you've probably heard about it in the course of your life. And you probably know some of the backstory about how Michelangelo was painting these stories on the ceiling.

But nothing can compare to when you walk into the space. Now it's surprisingly small. But it is covered in some of the most beautiful, breathtaking art you will ever see.

Now, the thing about it is, as I said, kind of with my feet on the ground and worried about a million other things, and, you know, I was kind of looking forward to it. But honestly, I got to say, I wasn't ready.

Because literally, what's happened here is the artist has tried to bring the Bible to life visually. Next one, Adrian. So some of you have probably heard about the ceiling.

And you've seen that picture of God creating Adam with the two fingers touching. Like most of us have seen that, right? And so, but these panels, and that's just one of these panels that capture this story.

[9 : 39] Now, of course, I'm getting shepherded through with a tour. So they're kind of doing this thing. But, like, people hit the room and you're kind of doing this.

And everybody wants to take pictures and all that sort of thing. But it was literally a time when I had my breath taken away by something that was painstakingly and amazingly beautiful.

Now, this is God breaking through using a person to do it. That this work of art that we see, but of course, God still puts on amazing shows on God's own.

Let me show you another one. This is a moment that just happened. I was out to dinner with some friends on vacation a few years ago and we were walking along this boardwalk that's on the sound side of the island we go to.

And we were laughing, having a great time, enjoying each other's company, but then God put on one of God's shows. And we literally, in the middle of our walking and laughing and everything, just had to stop and take in this sunset.

[10 : 44] Because that's what God does. And I wanted everybody to be aware of that. I wanted you to think about this moment as we talk about this idea of God and revelation.

You heard Sarah allude to that in her reflection about how God makes God's self known, how God breaks through in our day-to-day and in our going through the busyness of things.

And God makes God's self known to us. Now, the song we're celebrating today called Revelation Song is built on the scene in Revelation that Amy read for us today.

And that's a complicated, big, deep, weird scene. Okay? It's amazing and it's going to be something when we get to see it unfold.

But I want you to hear some of this again. because some of this imagery and I want you to capture like when you heard her lay some of those pieces out, I want you to recognize some of that stuff that comes through in the song.

[11 : 53] Right? But to understand what's happening, you got to understand what happened before this. So we're in this moment and what John sees as part of the revelation is that God is seated on God's throne.

That he's transported into the heavenly realm, literally the throne room. And people are around and God is standing there and God is, of course, revealed in God's glory and it's awesome and it's overwhelming.

And it's amazing. You know, I don't even think our brains can process the beauty and glory of God. Excuse me. The beauty and glory of God. But what happens is is God is there and God's hand is a scroll.

And that scroll is interpreted a variety of ways by scholars. It could be God's full plan. It could be the names of those who are saved, those sorts of things. But it's got God's wisdom, God's plan, and things that God, only God, knows in it.

So, the scene opens up in chapter 5, which is where we started today. And there's this thing that says, well, who is worthy to read the scroll? And it transports us into this place where you hear the following.

[13 : 07] Now, if you want to follow along, this is Revelation chapter 5. I'm going to start at verse 6. Oh, sorry about that. Starting at verse 5. 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 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. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

So, what we're dealing with is God has this wisdom, this knowledge, this power, and says, who's going to be able to share this? Who's going to be able to open this? And of course, the lamb is a symbolic representation of Christ.

And so, Jesus is the one who can do this. Now, that imagery, like I said, Revelation is full of this stuff. It will give you a headache. Because you hear this thing about seven horns and seven eyes, and some people try to draw that, literally, if you have time on social media, watch that.

[14 : 23] When people talk about drawing the images as they're described in the Bible, it'll kind of freak you out because it's not them little babies with wings that we think about. Right? But, here's a way to understand that.

To understand this image and understand why it's about Jesus, think about all these things laid over each other. The lion of Judah. Okay? The courage. The one, what it means to be the lion.

The root of David. The thing, the shoot that comes out of David's line. The lamb who was slain. Kind of obvious.

But then the seven horns and the seven eyes thing. Horns, when they're in this sort of context, are used to represent strength. To say he has seven horns means that he's almighty.

When it talks about eyes and it talks about creatures covered with eyes and that sort of thing, it talks about knowledge and the ability to see and know all things. So when it says he had seven eyes, it's about this idea that he knows all things.

[15 : 28] Okay? That's what it's trying to communicate. So this is who our Jesus is. And he goes and he takes the scroll. But what happens after that?

This is where the song that we're singing today gets its power. Because what happens is those who are in the vision break into what's called a new song.

And they celebrate the fact that Jesus is able to do this. And what does it tell us? If you're following along, this is verse nine. And they sang a new song saying, you are worthy to take the scroll.

Okay? I'm not going to read the whole verse. But then we go forward and then there's this whole heavenly host of angels. An infinite number of them. And then what do they say? In verse 12, it says, worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.

Then we get to all creatures on earth and in heaven. And what do they say about the Creator? They talk about he is worthy and deserving of power and honor.

[16 : 39] The reason why I wanted us to hear that is think about what you heard. Because that chorus stands out with that, right? Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.

That refrain repeats over and over. And that's what it's rooted in. Now, it's not meant to capture the actual literal story. In fact, there's an interview with Kerry Job who talks about the songwriter saying this is about the type of song we will sing when we are in heaven.

That's what it's meant to symbolize. And so she builds upon this imagery that comes directly out of the book of Revelation. That's where we are.

Now, the reason why I wanted us to see that is if you think about God blowing your mind with beauty. God blowing your mind with who God is.

This is a particular image of that. But our experience is probably a little bit more like Peter, James, and John. Which is why I wanted to make sure we spend some time with the transfiguration today.

[17 : 54] Because put yourself in their shoes. Here are three fishermen. they grew up in a small fishing town and they encounter the savior of the world.

But most of their experience with him is he's a guy just like them. They spent days walking through the land. They ate together.

They would camp together at night. They would sing songs and go to synagogue. They would hear the word. Jesus would teach. But we also saw these times when God would break through and remind you that God is in fact God.

When the paralyzed get up and walk. When the hungry are miraculously fed by simply the meager containment the meager contents of a boy's lunch.

And then you have a moment like we read today. Because what happens is that Peter makes this bold declaration that you are the Messiah the son of the living God.

[19 : 16] Okay. Okay. And then six days later Jesus says come apart with me. I want to show you something.

So he takes him up to this mountain. And there he's revealed in his heavenly glory. Not just the guy we've been hanging out with.

Not just the guy we just had breakfast with. Not the guy we've seen build some things and work with his hands. Or the guy who helped us catch this fish.

But a cloud comes and literally the voice of the creator speaks into our world that says this is my beloved son.

Listen to him. You talk about having your mind blown. But then think about how the story ends.

[20 : 15] All of that goes away. And Jesus walks over and taps him on the shoulder and says come on it's time to go. And they head on back down the mountain.

But that's what I want us to get. Right? Because that's our journey with God. That we go through the day to day and we get caught up in the mundane. And so much feels like drudgery and so much feels ordinary.

But all along there are these times when God breaks through and reminds you that no this is really who I am. In case you forget. But see when we start to think that God is far away.

When we think that God has nothing to say to us. When we think we're just out here on our own. How many times have we just let moments like that amazing sunset go by because we were on our phones.

Or we had something else to do. Or other things were on our mind. And yet we sit here and we go, God, where are you? And God is saying, just pay attention. God is breaking through in these amazing ways in the laughter of children.

[21 : 37] In the voices of friends. In seeing a beautiful natural landscape. In the sound of the ocean. And all these other things God is telling you, this is who I am.

And the question is, are we paying attention to that? The amazing part that I really appreciated about what Sarah was sharing today is that we can talk about these moments, right?

These big moments. And we talked about what happens visually. We've alluded to how this gets to us when we hear it in a song that may speak to us in a given moment.

But did you hear what was really going on? Not only was it about the beauty of the song itself, but it was how God was present in the moment. How God used that moment not only to say, hey, how cool am I?

But also to say, I've got this. Ronnie's going to be okay. Okay. that's who our God is.

[22 : 48] See, that's what we need to remember. That God is with us in these huge, amazing, and big ways. But God is also with us in these very small and quiet ways.

but the point is that God is with us. That's what we need to remember. Because we start getting into that place where we say, where are you?

Why are you so far away? Why haven't I gotten an answer to my prayer? Or we get so focused on the day-to-day things of life, and we miss this dance we're a part of with God all the time.

The question is, why are we missing it? Because it's not that God has stopped doing it, it's just we're missing it. So friends, if you hear nothing else today, open yourself up and listen for the revelation song that God is singing constantly.

Look for the revelations of the divine around you. Open your heart up, and if you're struggling with it, ask God to help you. God is more than happy to remind you that God is there, that God does these things, that God is still very much in the miracle and revelation business.

[24 : 18] We've just gotten so busy and preoccupied that we forget. See, this is how we end up in this space. This is our journey.

You see, you hear that chorus that we sang today. Sometimes that moves right past us, right? Blessed Assurance is one of those hymns that most of us know, know pretty well.

I grew up singing it in church constantly. It was one of my favorites, especially the way our church organist would play it, because he would add a little funky underpiece to it, right?

So the thing about that is that when it sinks in, but like a lot of the songs we sing, does it just sink in and you forget what you're saying? Like, listen to those first words.

Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine. Hear that again. Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine.

[25 : 22] Now, did those words just kind of fall out of your mouth this morning? Or were you actually letting the world know that I'm in this particular place, that I can face what's going on in my world because Jesus is mine.

That's what we're talking about. That connection, that thing that only a song tends to do in our lives. And that also moves us to the chorus, which is our basis.

See, this is what this is about. When we say this is my story, this is my song. So you heard it today from our sister, didn't you?

What it means to praise my Savior all the day long because God has done this for me. This is my story.

This is my song. And that's why I praise my Savior all the day long. You have it too. But we need to remind each other to stay in touch with it.

[26 : 29] Because this is who our God is. So let it sink in. Because God is always giving us a reason to praise.

Look for yours. Get back in touch with it if you've lost it. and let your story, your song, touch somebody else.

Amen and amen. Loving God, we do in fact thank you for the ways in which you continue to reveal yourself. The ways in which you continue to blow our minds with the beauty you place around us in so many different ways.

beauty we can see, beauty we can hear, beauty we can touch, beauty we can know, beauty we can experience. The ways you remind us of your presence.

That even when we're feeling preoccupied, even when we're feeling overwhelmed, when the world feels ugly and too much and we're wondering where you are, remind us.

[27 : 41] Open our eyes, open our ears, open our hearts, because this is about listening and seeing with our souls. Touch us anew, that we can indeed live lives that bear witness to who you are.

Let the world see and hear in each of us. This is my story. This is my song. Praising my Savior. Savior. All the day long.

Amen. So as we go into the world this week, we know that we have a song to sing to the world. Whether you sing it, literally singing it, or whether you tell it, simply by the ways in which you walk through the world, giving glory to the one who's made such a difference for you.

As you look at how you might put your faith into practice this week, we have a lot going on in terms of the tough stuff Bible studies coming up on Thursday. We also have the ice cream social, the Sunday social, which is coming up next Sunday.

So make sure you look into the bulletin and see these things and get more information about them as they can help you with your plans. So, so much going on, but live your faith, that is the key, and sing a song to the world.

[29 : 01] Now in the name of God, our creator and king, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our savior, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, our counselor and our sustainer, may God bless us now as we leave to love and serve God and all God's children.

Amen.