

Title: The Coming King**[Slide 1]****Text: Revelation 5:1-14****The World's Last Chance****How do you fix a broken world?****[Slide 2]**

How do you fix a broken world?

In the aftermath of World War I someone came up with the great idea that the best way to prevent another war would be if everyone got together and signed an agreement that made war illegal. No, I'm not kidding.

It's been tried. In 1928 various countries got together in Paris to hash out just such an agreement. They created the Kellogg-Briand Pact, or General Treaty for Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy. The first three nations to sign on were Germany, France and the United States. Ultimately 62 nations signed the treaty! It remains in effect to this day.

As if that means anything at all! Needless to say, outlawing war did not end warfare. In fact, the pact "erased the legal distinction between war and peace," with the result that the nations which signed the pact could now go to war without declaring them. In 1931, just 3 years after signing the pact, Japan invaded Manchuria. Italy invaded Abyssinia in 1935. Russia and Germany invaded Poland in 1939, unleashing WWII -- all without having to declare war.

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Turns out it takes more than a meeting to fix a broken world.

A world in need of repair:

If earthlings can't fix a broken world, what about Heaven?

One earthling named John the Revelator was granted a vision of Heaven in which fixing the world was on the table. In this vision, he is confronted with the dilemma of how to fix a broken world.

The first thing he sees is a scroll in the hand of the Creator:

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Revelation 5:1 NIV

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.

The scroll is God's blueprint for rescuing and repairing His creation. The number "seven" signifies completion and perfection. These seals can only be broken by the person who affixed them to the scroll. We can think of these seven seals as pointing to God re-creating His world, just as the Genesis story pictures the Creation in terms of seven days.

Heaven has a way to fix a broken world.

Cosmic Crisis:

But there's a problem...and it has to do with those seven seals. John now hears an angel speak:

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Revelation 5:2-3 NIV

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.

Interpretation: there is no way for Creation to heal Creation. Think back to that well-minded attempt on the part of dozens of countries, both big and small, to eliminate warfare. "The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry." We can see the problems. We can dream of solutions. But no matter how hard we try, we cannot fix a broken world through our efforts.

John's reaction is one of intense grief.

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Revelation 5:4 NIV

I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.

One commentator puts his reaction this way:

"Expectations are raised then dashed as God's destiny for humanity goes unfulfilled." (Resseguie, The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary, Kindle loc. 1303)

And isn't that the way it is so often in our world? Whether we're trying to end all wars, feed the hungry, heal the environment or solve a host of other problems, the problems never actually go away. We come up with a plan; we anoint a leader. We get our hopes up one more time. But in the end, the scroll remains sealed.

Only Heaven can repair a broken world. The God who made the world is this world's "last chance."

The Lamb**Lion and Lamb:**

So what does our world's "last chance" look like? A member of God's Heavenly Court provides the answer:

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Revelation 5:5 NIV

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."

John *hears* the description of a victorious King. Here at last is someone with the power and authority to break open the seals and implement God's rescue of His Creation.

But when John looks for the King, he *sees* something very different!

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Revelation 5:6 NIV

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 sevenfold Spirit of God sent out into all the earth.

A slaughtered, mutilated Lamb stands on the Throne of the Creator! The Creator God has made Himself known to us as King and Ruler of His world. But He does so in this vision of the Son whom He gave to a wicked and broken world.

Here is the all-powerful and all-knowing King. The Lion you expected comes as a Lamb. Here is the King you would never have looked for.

Harps and Bowls:

The people of Israel were a nation of singers.

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A wall painting in ancient Egypt captures the arrival of a family of Semitic people, precursors of the Israelites. They come in their many colored robes, and one is playing the harp. A thousand years later a Jewish poet exiled in Babylon would tell how he and the other singers of Israel could no longer sing songs of joy:

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Psalm 137:1-3 NIV

*By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.*

*There on the poplars
we hung our harps,*

*for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"*

It's impossible to sing the "Songs of Zion" in our broken world! But John sees that when Jesus the King takes the scroll from the Creator God, Creation can once more lift up songs of joy:

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Revelation 5:7-8 NIV

He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 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.

Prayers and song come together in the paradox that is the Lion and the Lamb.

New Exodus Song:

The song that the elders sing is the song of a New Exodus:

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Revelation 5:9-10 NIV

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."*

This is a song first and foremost for the **Lamb**:

- He became the New Passover Lamb, sacrificed for the freedom and deliverance of God's people.
- His blood purchased and ransomed not just one ethnic group, but the entire human race.

But this is also a song for the **Lion**:

- Just as God had promised in Exodus, He has now made His people a part of His royal family.
- No longer are they confined to the bottom tier of an emperor's cameo; they are seated with the King. They assist in the governing of the world.
- And here we have a hint of our unique purpose in the world: we are the servants and emissaries of the Lion and the Lamb. It is our mission to do His work in restoring God's world.
- But it takes both harps and bowls, songs and heart-felt prayer.

The Coming King

Worthy is the Lamb:

And now it is time for both Heaven and Earth to welcome the King as He comes to restore God's world. First John hears from Heaven:

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Revelation 5:11-12 NIV

Then 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. 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!"*

Satan had tempted Jesus with the power and wealth of the world, gained through embracing Satan as lord. Jesus had chosen a different path – God's path, and it is for that reason that He alone is *worthy* to be King of the world.

Finally, John hears all Creation answer the angels with a shout of praise:

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Revelation 5:13 NIV

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,
for ever and ever!"*

John's vision is nothing less than one of the whole world repaired and made right, rescued by Heaven's great King.

How you fix a broken world:

South African writer Allen Boesak, writing during the horror of apartheid, explains why King Jesus, the Lion/Lamb is worthy to open the scroll and repair God's world:

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Christ is worthy because his power is so completely different from that of the Caesar. It is a power that is manifested in his love, in his willingness to give all of himself for the sake of those whom he loves. And in that willingness, in the power of that self-giving love, lies the liberation of his people.

(Boesak, Comfort and Protest: Reflections on the Apolcalypse of John of Patmos, cited in Resseguie, Revelation)

The Coming King:

John's visions conclude with a simple message:

Revelation 22:17,20 NIV

*The Spirit and the bride say, "**Come!**" And let the one who hears say, "**Come!**" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.*

*He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, **I am coming soon.**"*

Jesus is our Coming King. And that means that we have work to do! It means that we have songs to sing and prayers to pray. It means that we do not have to despair when we see the brokenness of our world. It means that we do not have to put our hope and trust in mere humans, only to be disappointed over and over again. It means that we know, honor and serve the King who alone can open the scrolls and unleash God's mysterious plan for saving His world.

It means that we are a people who show the love of the Lamb to a needy world. It means that we join the Spirit and say to our broken world, "Come! Everyone who is thirsty, come! Drink freely of the King's water of life!"

And it means that with our songs and our prayers we say to our King: "Come!"