

A lamb as it had been slain

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 0 0] let's turn back then to Revelation 6 Revelation 5 rather and verse 6 and between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain with seven horns and with seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth I want to focus on the first part of this obviously the seven eyes which are the seven spirits have reference to the fullness of the Holy Spirit's ministry and the seven horns refer to the sovereign power of the lamb over all things the horn is a symbol of strength seven being the perfect number tells us about the fullness of the authority the lamb has now in your translation there it says and between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a lamb

I'm going to keep it simple and say in the midst of the throne because actually that's what it means if you think it out the way it's translated simply means that he's right there in the midst of the throne we'll come to that by and by what I want to say by way of introduction is simply this I know very well that it is customary for us to dwell upon the sufferings on some aspect of the sufferings of Christ on behalf of his people on a communion Sunday morning but what I want to do here for a wee while with you is to look at what I think is a bit of a neglected area of remembrance remembrance and that is that teaching in the Bible of the risen and ascended lamb of God in the midst of the throne now for reasons of time we're not going to look into all that's in this rich and full chapter we're maybe highlight one or two things of the detail but our exposition is really to do with this this wonderful area of revelation to us that the lamb as it had been slain is in the midst of the throne the context of course if you look back from verse 1 through is that there's no one in all the universe in all the worlds it cosmos the word there in all the worlds there's no one in all the worlds except the root of David and otherwise known here as the lamb there's no one his equal no one is up to the task of governing all things in God's providence and unfolding the history of planet earth he it is to whom all things are known and it is by him that all things come to pass he alone is the one who opens the seals who unpacks if you like the providence of God but also and perhaps more particularly he alone is the redeemer of sinners from all over the world and that is a wonderful thing when you think of what the fledgling church was in Jerusalem and what it became in a short period of time it's wonderful but when you think about it where it is today notwithstanding all the persecution it is in all the world some Presbyterian churches in the world are vast there's more members in them than we have people in Scotland and it's good for us to remind ourselves that that is on account of the Lamb who reigns who is in the midst of the throne and so on

I want to think about four things and I'm conscious of the importance of tying in with the Gaelic service concluding so we'll do what we can here four things first of all thinking about the Lamb his appearance and we're told that I saw a Lamb standing as though it had been slain first thing is his appearance as a Lamb now of course to us the image of a Lamb is not new the Bible is full of references to creatures that have been used to illustrate something about human beings you find it and we're very familiar with it we were thinking about the importance of being kept by the Lord from the wilds of the devil the devil is talked about as a serpent he's talked about as the dragon he's talked about as the roaring lion he's talked about as the prowling lion and so we're familiar with that kind of imagery but we're also told for example about

Herod Antipas Jesus called him a fox because of his cunning and unscrupulous merciless ways but on the good side we've even got a reference to a lion here that is verse 5 the lion of the tribe of Judah he has prevailed he has prevailed to unpack the providence of God it's in his hands and of course the illustration there on the good side talks about the lion as majestic and powerful as king interestingly we're told that God's people when they function properly are bold as a lion they're made bold by God as a lion and it's good you know for those of us who are perhaps more timorous to remember that God's grace can make us bold can make us courageous and speak when we ought to speak a word you'll know as well as

I do there's nothing more difficult in a in a shop or a supermarket when you hear a string of blasphemy coming out of somebody to go and excuse yourself and say you're talking about my saviour there and it's really hurting to hear it something like that but the Lord can make us bold as a lion so again you've got the illustration using the creature the bold the strong the fearless we're told that God can make his people as as agile as a gazelle to overcome obstacles but when we turn down to God's lamb we see that prophecy is full of examples of the promised lamb of God I think the favourite has to be surely Isaac and

[8 : 02] Abraham heading up to the top of Mount Moriah and they've got all the kids for the sacrifice but they haven't got the lamb and you remember the words I'm sure Isaac says my father we have these things but where's the lamb my son he said God himself will provide a lamb for sacrifice and that is a weighty reference it's part of what our saviour said to others Abraham rejoiced to see my day and was glad he saw it in the prophetic vision he saw it in the lamb that God would provide and so on and down through the history of God's dealings with Israel you have references to the lamb in fact you may recall that Jacob who became known as Israel when as an old man he was blessing his sons

Genesis 22 8 he he he he refers to I think I said Genesis 22 it's Genesis 48 he talks about the Lord who shepherded him the Lord who looked after him he regarded his servant as a sheep of the flock as a lamb of the flock but we've all learned I think in Sunday school and since about perhaps the most famous of the types the lamb the Passover lamb and it's most relevant here today isn't it where in Exodus 12 you have the story of redemption from Israel through the blood of the lamb in fact in Exodus 12 21 the lamb is actually called the Passover it takes the name it is the Passover it is the means whereby the angel of death passes over the people and they are saved and they are brought out and the blood in that sense that was a powerful reference to the one who was to come to the one who would be our

Passover and you know Paul coming from an Orthodox Jewish background when he was when he was then the Apostle Paul he had no problem in saying 1 Corinthians you remember the reference verse 7 of chapter 5 Christ Messiah is our Passover slain for us Passover lamb and if we were to wind back from Paul there in 1 Corinthians to John the Baptist the Herald that was his great cry that's what he wanted his own disciples to listen to when he saw Jesus behold the lamb of God God's provision the lamb who takes away the sin not just of believing Jewish people but of sinners from all the tribes of the earth sinners for whom he would lay his life down and of course you know and I know

Peter was gripped with that in his first letter he says you weren't redeemed by your traditions you weren't redeemed by silver or gold or any traditions you inherited from your fathers but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish or spot a flawless lamb and so his appearance is that of a lamb a lamb as we know who would by his death satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God and that's why we can identify with this passage a little bit later on we can identify with the words we can use them in worship and you have it there worthy is the lamb worthy is the lamb who was slain for you have redeemed us to God you've redeemed us from every tribe and language and people and nations wonderful thing it is that the lamb is worthy of our grace and here we behold him as the lamb in the midst of the throne that's the first thing his appearance as a lamb second thing is his marks we're told there in the passage he says

I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain so John's vision of the lamb is that he is there in heaven in the midst of the throne and he's there as a lamb as it had been slain and this is a powerful image of course of redemption accomplished he's there having done what he came to do here to planet earth redemption has been accomplished it is finished it stands finished and he's there as the risen one but he says he says as it had been slain now the image here of course in our minds is not literally of a lamb on an altar because the lamb standing will come to that but the image is of

[14:12] Jesus and we're thinking about him with the marks of his suffering still on him he bears the marks of the slain victim he bears the marks of as I think it was Moons who said in his commentary he bears the marks of sacrificial slaughter in him now for sure the marks on his hands would have been seen John would have at least seen those nail prints of course he retained the nail prints the wound mark and the nail marks on his feet as it had been slain but he's alive he's no longer dead he's there as a lamb still bearing the marks he's alive but why is he bearing the marks after an all did we not hear in the gospel that he rose triumphant that he rose in his glorious resurrection body in all its perfection aye but he appeared to his disciples and showed them the marks of slaughter in his hands in his feet in his side and of course that's for us that's a reminder to us he doesn't need to be reminded we do and we need to be reminded not just of the past and I hope today when we come to the table we'll not just be remembering the past but he is in glory the ascended and risen

Lord and by his spirit with us here for this feast of remembrance we're remembering what he was and did and we're remembering that he completed that and is there in the midst of the throne and these marks are there to remind us of what he has done for us you know perhaps you've heard it expounded here shall every passage in Isaiah 49 where the prophet speaking comes to the point that can a mother forget the child she's given birth to the child she's sickled yes she may forget but I will not forget see I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands your walls are ever before me and that's the energy seeing that John sees the lamb has retained these marks for us to keep before us that he doesn't forget us it was seeing the marks in his hands that made the doubts of Thomas fly away forever and so we see him not like that we see what

John says we listen to what the spirit is saying to the churches and we remind ourselves of those nail prints the marks of his suffering on our behalf he said himself to Thomas behold my hands my feet my side it is I myself his appearance as a lamb the marks of sacrificial slaughter thirdly his posture standing in the midst of the throne and without being in kind to translation if you work out between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a lamb standing he's there where it matters he's there in the midst of the throne he is of course sometimes referred to as seated at the right hand of the majesty on high but here he is depicted as standing and the image of standing is activity activity he's active on our behalf he's active in all the things that happen in life and it's good to remember that when you're under trial and life is hard and you can't see your way ahead remember he's standing he's active on your behalf and he's there where it matters the reins of power are his the all authority is his he's no longer the lamb despised and rejected en route to Golgotha hardly managing to bear that cross he's no longer lifted up and nailed on the accursed tree nailed there to die the death of shame no longer is he bleeding and dying and crying no longer is he scorned by the multitude no longer do we hear the cries of dereliction nor rather we take we take the cry tetelestai it has been finished it remains so we hear him say father into your hands

I commend my spirit no longer the grave no longer the cold place the grave clothes no rather we're told behold I see him in the midst of the throne and of those creatures around him and of the elders he's there he's standing in the midst of the throne and that means he has conquered and is conquering we have in him one who has conquered who has overcome some of you young ones you'll be like most young ones you want either a Nike t-shirt or you want Nike trainers or something like that with a tick but perhaps your minister here has told you that Nike is from the

Greek and that Nike means victory or overcoming and we have overcome in him and we will overcome in him he has conquered he has had the victory every time you look at your Nike kit whatever it is you'll remember in Jesus who is in the midst of the throne still bearing the marks as the lamb of slaughter alive forever more he has overcome standing in the midst of the throne and there is an assurance for us that in him and through faith in him we will overcome those words are familiar through faith we shall conquer though often cast in he who is our saviour our strength will renew look ever to

[22 : 03] Jesus he will carry you through see he's there as the lamb not slain as it had been slain the marks are still on him but he is alive and he's in the midst of the throne he's standing he's active on our behalf one last thing then and we finish his place we're told emphatically he is in the midst of the throne and I think the translation of of this is better it sets our focus where it needs to be he's there in the midst of the throne he's in the place where it matters he occupies the place of supreme importance now I come from a very much a free church tradition theologically reformed thinking is my home base in terms of theology

I'm thankful for it thankful for all the lord has taught me through it but I've heard over the years I'm afraid it's decades now but anyway I've heard you know people say all these hymns you know that exalt Jesus they go too far you know what about the father well I agree what about the father of course what about the spirit well the hymns do that too they catch in praise the father work of the spirit and so on but my point in drawing attention to this is this whenever you're tempted to think there's too much focus on Jesus remember this it pleased the father that in him all the fullness should dwell and you are complete in him now if it's good enough for our heavenly father it should be good enough for us it pleases the father that we should honor the son and you know when you're working in evangelism you're in the gospel you can press upon people for example the JW

God God God actually you're not honoring the father if you're not honoring the son and you can say to the Jewish person to the Muslim person to whoever to honor the father in heaven is to honor his son and to honor his son is to remind ourselves that he is in the place of supreme authority and it pleases the father that we think like that the attention in the glory of heaven is on the land and that should be good enough for you and me I hope it is and it pleased the father you see because honor as I've said to honor the father is really to honor his son if you don't honor his son you're not honoring his father this was the problem the religious leaders in the Jewish community they were setting him at naught the corner stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone in the spiritual temple it's the Lord's doing it's marvelous in our eyes and they wouldn't believe it they stumbled at that stone they dishonored the son of the father and it's important for us to join the praise of heaven now and again worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive glory and honor and power let us use this truth about him to encourage ourselves here in this world of trial remembering that there isn't anything happening in our lives by way of trial that he hasn't put there

I think one of the most wonderful parts of revelation comes to us in Psalm 139 where he tells us that the blueprint for our lives was there with him from everlasting in a sense it's mind boggling when you think about all of the people in all of the ages all of the time of whom that can be said it can be said of all mankind from start to finish but in a very special way for you believer in Jesus all the things that you wish you weren't are in that blueprint doesn't justify the wrong things it just helps us to appreciate that he knows us through and through and that he's working for our good he's ruling over all he is our glorious triumphant conquering lamb of

God and in a real sense his place is our place that elevates us it elevates us like Paul says he has made us to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus and I think it's important to make more of that I can't remember was it Hugh I was saying this to but we took on in recent times we've taken on four new missionaries to the Jewish people and they are really talented men of God multilingual they're growing in their theological understanding but what to me is refreshing about them is they are under authority they have a great sense of the authority Christ has given them to share the good news about

[28 : 33] Jesus with anyone and I commit to you this thought that we may never be like them accomplished evangelists but think on the authority he has given you and be bold in him what if people call you crackpot so what we still are to tell them the gospel story they called Paul many of them they called Jesus many of them a blasphemer a sabbath breaker one who was utterly false to the law of Moses and so on and so on he reigns in the midst of the throne and wonderful it is he's on our side and may we say then by faith to the spirit of the living God revealed to us through the scriptures the glories of the lamb who was slain for us and who has redeemed us to your God through his own blood enable us to appreciate all the more those glories of that lamb who died for us that we may live for him who lives for us amen amen