

## Written Copy: Revelation 5:1-5 “At the Right Hand of God?”

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter

Sunday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022

### Text: Revelation 5:1-5

<sup>1</sup> Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. <sup>2</sup> And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" <sup>3</sup> And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, <sup>4</sup> and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>5</sup> And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

### The text's intent

Through a symbolic word picture explain what it means to us, the Church, that Jesus Christ, our Savior, the Lamb of God who suffered, died, and rose again to take away the sin of the world has ascended to the right hand of the Father. He is no spectator but is given the honor, power, authority, and might to rule over all things throughout creation. He not only declares all that must happen before His Last Day return but by the power of His Word sets these things in motion, governing over them for the good of those The Father has chosen to be in His eternal kingdom. At the hand of Christ all that happens serves to bring His chosen to faith and keep them in faith, while bringing judgment on all who refuse to believe in Him as Lord and Savior. The response of all creation should be to worship Him with thanks and praise for who He truly is, what He has done for us, and what He is doing. We praise and proclaim our faith in Him now and for all eternity.

### Focus Statement:

Jesus Christ, the Messiah prophesied of old is the Lamb of Sacrifice who has made all who believe right with God and worthy to be under His reign and rule in this world and the world to come. He is the One who sets in motion all that must happen to prepare the world and His Church for His Last Day return. He controls all things, the law not preached trials and tribulations that His Spirit uses to call His chosen to repentance and the Gospel that brings and strengthens faith unto life everlasting.

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

We speak and confess in the Creeds that Jesus has ascended to the right hand of God without understanding what that means for us. We might see Him as a bystander, or one who reacts to the evil that is allowed to happen instead of understanding and confessing the complete control He has over all things

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

Live out our lives in the midst of the fallenness of this world rest assured by faith in the promise that our Savior has complete control over all things, and all that happens serves to bring His chosen to faith and keep them in faith. He charges us to proclaim His Gospel through which He enters the hearts of His chosen to reign and rule forever.

### Subject Sentence: Lamb of Sacrifice ruling for our eternal good

## **Introduction: We Say It All the Time w/o Considering it**

It's something you say all the time, just about every worship service. You probably say it without thinking about what it really means. You all said it just a few minutes ago when you recited the Nicene Creed. You said, "And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father." He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. We say that, or something similar to that no matter which Creedal statement we recite in worship. But what exactly are you saying? Did you ever stop to think about that? What exactly are you giving witness to? What does it mean that Jesus is "at the right hand of the Father?" Where exactly is the right hand of the Father anyway?

### **What is "At the Right Hand of the Father"?**

Well first of all where is the Father when Jesus ascends to be at His right hand? We say that the Father is ruling on His throne. But what does that mean? What picture comes to mind when you hear that statement and think about it for a moment? Perhaps something like this from the movie "Coming to America" [*show picture from Coming to America*], king Jaffe Joffer (played by James Earl Jones) sitting on the throne from where He rules the rich African nation of Zamunda, with the heir to the throne, his son, Prince Akeem (played by Eddie Murphy) at his right-hand side. Here Akeem is being prepared to one day rule the country, but he doesn't have the authority or responsibility to do so yet. This would not be the correct way to picture either the Heavenly Father ruling or Jesus at His right hand.



When we say that the Father is ruling on the throne it something not meant to be taken literally. There is no throne room with a huge elaborate chair that exists out in space beyond our galaxy, or even at the end of the universe. God the Father is Spirit and doesn't have a body that needs to be seated on a throne. God the Father on the throne is not so much talking about a place either in this universe or even in a parallel one. It describes a state of being that is beyond our ability to fully comprehend. It means that the Father has total control and dominion over all things everywhere, throughout the entire universe. He rules all of creation, and yet He does not do so from a distance. He is a hands-on ruler involved with every aspect of life as we know it. Yet He is not a part of creation. He exists above and beyond this creation and is not bound by the laws that govern it. Yet He is close by, present in each of our lives every moment of every day. He is present with the power to change things at a moment's notice according to His will and plan

With Jesus, who is God the Son, God entered into creation and located Himself within the boundaries of our time and space by taking upon Himself a human body and soul. He subjected Himself to the natural laws that govern our reality and lived the life that you and I should be living, a human existence that is completely obedient and without sin. In His death, His body was buried, and His soul returned to be present with the Father outside of our world of time and space. But in the resurrection His soul returned, and the Father raised His body from the grave and glorified it, making it into a body that is what you and I will have on the Last Day. In that body He appeared to many of His followers giving them ample proof of the resurrection. And then, in that glorified body, Scriptures tell us He ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. But now what exactly does that mean? And that spiritual reality that is beyond our complete understanding is the subject of the Apostle John's vision presented in Revelation Chapter 5.

In the vision that is found in Chapter 5 John's spirit has left his body, not in death, but in a vision that shows to him a highly symbolic word picture of a reality that is beyond human comprehension. He finds Himself in the presence of God as He rules the universe. But the only way he can describe this reality in the human language is to use symbols and concepts that we are familiar with. Hence the throne and God the Father sitting on it and ruling.

**Revelation 5:1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.**

Seeing God the Father on the throne, is John's way, and the Holy Spirit's way, of communicating how God the Father reigning and ruling over all things throughout the universe and beyond. And John sees He has in His hand a scroll. A king would write down his will and orders that were to be carried out on such a scroll. Usually scrolls only had writing on one side, but since this one has writing on the front and back, it gives the picture of a very detailed communication of the Father's will, command, and orders. A scroll would be sealed so that it could only be read by the intended and authorized recipient. And the fact that it has seven seals is significant because numbers in Revelation have great

significance. The number “seven” is the product of the number three (signifying the Trinity) plus the number four (signifying the four directions of the compass). This scroll describes the work and will of God for the entire earth, and even more so the entire creation. It is what must happen according to the will of God throughout the rest of time until the Last Day.

**Revelation 5:2-4** <sup>2</sup> **And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"** <sup>3</sup> **And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,** <sup>4</sup> **and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.**

The problem is no worthy recipient of this scroll can be found. Contained in this scroll is God's perfect will. Only a perfect sinless person is worthy to open and read it, someone who has been obedient to all God's commands. The angel calls out in a loud voice as to appeal to all humanity, but none is found worthy. John is crying because he knows how important it is that God's people know what is written on this scroll, that His Church be told what must come before the Last Day. And it looks as if this message will remain secret forever.

**Revelation 5:5-6** <sup>5</sup> **And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."** <sup>6</sup> **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.**

One of the Elders, and there are 24 of them, consoles John and provides him with the answer to this problem. These 24 elders encircle the throne of God in John's vision. They represent the 12 tribes of Israel, which is God's Old Testament Church, as well as the 12 apostles, representing God's New Testament Church. Here symbolically we have the Church, who are always in God's presence in worship, giving witness to what we confess in the Apostle's Creed.

The Lion of the Tribe of Judah and the Root of David are Old Testament prophetic pictures of the Messiah that was to come. The Messiah who would descend from the tribe Judah, which the Patriarch Jacob described as being like a “lion”. And Isaiah describes the Messiah as being from the stump of Jesse, and from the root of David. This worthy person is the offspring of David that God promised in the Old Testament who would reign and rule on a throne that would never end. And when John describes Him as being the Lamb, we know this person to be the human being that John the Baptist pointed out in **John 1:29** **The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**

He is that Lamb of God that is standing before the throne as though He had been slain. That's because Jesus Christ is God the Son, become human, to take on the role of the Lamb of Sacrifice, slain on the altar that was the cross in order to be the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, for me, and for you. In this vision John is describing a Lamb that has come back to life. This is the resurrected Christ our Lord who has ascended to heaven in His risen and glorified body and is now present at the throne of the Father as He rules over all things. This resurrected Lamb has seven horns, horns being symbolic of power. That Jesus has seven of them means He has complete power and authority over all of creation. And He is one with the Spirit of God, here referred to symbolically as the seven Spirits. This describes how the Holy Spirit is at work throughout all of creation, throughout all time and space. Jesus union with the Spirit means that even though He is before the Father, He is all seeing and all knowing about all that happens upon the earth, even in my life and yours.

**Revelation 5:7-10** <sup>7</sup> And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. <sup>8</sup> And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, <sup>10</sup> and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

It is Jesus who is worthy to receive this scroll. He is worthy because He completed all that the Father asked of Him to do, giving His very life over to suffering and death to provide forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life for all humanity. And so the Father gives to Jesus the power and authority to rule over all that happens from here on out. He has the power and authority to open the scroll declare all that is written on it. And what is written on it is the subject of all of the visions that make up Revelation. In the same symbolic manner they tell us what must happen between Jesus' ascension and His return on the Last Day. And our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ not only has the authority to declare the will of the Father, but His words also have the power to make what He declares reality throughout all creation. As Jesus breaks open each seal, He not only declares what will happen but sets that very thing in motion.

What kind of things are written on that scroll? All the problems, troubles, and tribulations that have plagued this earth throughout history up through today. Authoritarian rule and the wars that happen because of it, such as what is going on in the Ukraine. Famine, disease, plagues, natural disasters, all these are set in motion by Jesus breaking the seals of that scroll. That's because they are all part of what God has declared must happen before Jesus returns and the Last Day comes.

## **What Should Jesus at the Right Hand Mean to You?**

Perhaps you wish that John would've yelled out to Jesus to stop opening those seals, so that we might be spared all of the horrors we are living through right now. But all of these things serve God's purpose, which is different from our own. Our purpose is to make this world and this life as near to perfect and comfortable as possible. But God knows that when we are too comfortable, we stray away from Him. We stray from worshipping Him and calling out to Him with heartfelt pleas. We stop seeing Him as the LORD God whose presence and help we need every day. We leave behind the love relationship that He saved us to have with Him.

All these troubles serve God's purpose to turn people away from their own self-sufficiency and turn them back to Him in repentant faith. And for us who believe, they serve to keep us in that repentant faith. You and I need to remember who it is that is controlling and directing these things. It's not some mindless force. It's not some authoritarian ruler who hates you and all that you do. It is your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who loved you so much He allowed Himself to be put to death in the most horrible manner so that you could be declared right with God, so that you could be a precious child of God. He is at work to keep you as that precious child of God through all that has come and is yet to come, so that when the end does come, you will stand with Him, giving praise and worship to Him for eternity.

### **Conclusion**

Confessing Jesus to be at the right hand of the Father should be a great source of comfort and joy to you, as a member of His family, His Church. He is the one in control of all things, and He is controlling all things for your eternal good. Even though bad things are allowed to happen and will continue to happen we should not take this to mean that God has abandoned us. Nothing that happens in the world or in your life is a surprise to Him. He is watching out for you every day of your life through His seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God. It only appears that evil tyrants such as Putin are allowed to have their way. It only appears that the devil is at work in this country unchallenged. But the reality is that no matter what they do, no matter what they propose, the real power in control is our Savior at the right hand of the Father ruling over all things for our ultimate good. He is at work in you now to keep you as part of His kingdom and gives to you His Spirit to make you a priest in His kingdom, which is the Church. He calls you to offer sacrifices of praise to Him, and to serve as His Gospel witness, just as He called on Saul to repent and serve Him in His kingdom. Along with all the bad stuff that is sent out upon the earth, our Savior sends the powerful message of the Gospel. He uses that to transform even the most evil unbeliever into a child of God. And through that Gospel He is at work preparing you, me, and all the members of His Church for His return on the Last Day. So we can join with the Church of all times crying out "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen.