

A Sermon Preached by Emma Hodge on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2025

May the words of my lips and the thoughts and meditations of all our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight O Lord our strength and our Redeemer  
Amen

Today is the eve of the feast of St. Michael & All Angels, and I've chosen reading that focuses on the "all angels" part of the celebration which looks at heavenly worship with all the angels and other heavenly beings.

The reading from Daniel is part of a vision that Daniel had and features St. Michael the Archangel, but I'm not going to focus on this reading instead I'm focussing on the other part of the feast the "All Angels" part which is picked up in the psalm where in verse 2 the angels are instructed to Praise God and our reading from Revelation.

Our New Testament reading from the book of Revelation which is the last book of the bible and is APOCALYPTIC, and if you are not familiar with the term APOCALYPTIC, it is a term that refers to the end of the world and in the Christian tradition the time looking forward to Jesus' second coming.

The book of Revelation is full of visions of that time in the future. However, it is not always an easy to understand, it is written in a way that would have been clearer to first Century Jews but to twenty-first century people it is less clear and some of the references need a bit of unpicking to fully understand them as it is full of Jewish imagery and metaphors with often references to passages in the Old Testament which themselves are mysterious.

Our reading today was chapter 5, but it follows on from chapter 4. Both these chapters are a vision of worship; chapter 4 focus on worship of God the father and chapter 5 turns on focus on worship of the son.

This evening I'm going to try and explain some of the references, images and metaphors found in chapter 5 so that we can understand the celebration that this chapter of Revelation really is and let us join in the hymns and worship.

Before looking at chapter 5, I want to start in chapter 4 as this will set the scene and introduces some of the images.

I want your imaginations to picture a heavenly throne room, with one throne in the centre, twenty-four other thrones also in the room surrounding this centre throne and on each of the twenty-four thrones is an elder dressed in white with gold crowns. This image is from the Revelation 4 verse 4. It is not clear who the elders are and there is debate among biblical scholars on this point.

In this throne room there are four living creatures and verses 6 to 8 of Revelation 4 give us a description of them, the description is similar to one found in Ezekiel 1, each creature has 6 wings, covered with eyes, and each living creature looks different

- First like a lion
- Second like an ox
- Third had a face like a man
- Fourth like a flying eagle<sup>1</sup>

Well if you are struggling to imagine these creatures, then no worries, as help is here, as next to the high altar we have these amazing Victorian tiles which show the four living creatures and have a lot of details in the images

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<sup>1</sup> NB it is the church fathers (circa 200-430 AD) who put these images to the writers of the gospel.

Daniel 10:4-21; Psalm 148

Hymn request: Angel Voices Ever Singing

which line up with the description in Revelation, each image is accompanied by the words from Chapter 4 that they speak.



So we have a heavenly throne room, complete with thrones and elders and living creatures, and this is the scene for Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 starts with a mighty angel questioning who is worthy to open a sealed scroll and John, whose vision it was started weeping as it appears, at first glance that there was no one who was worthy to open it<sup>2</sup>,

however, one of the elders, who obviously knew their Old Testament, comforts the person who is weeping with references to the “Lion of the Tribe of Judah” and this is a reference to Genesis 49:9-10. This is one of the obscure references that I mentioned earlier.

The elder also provides comfort by adding references to the “Root of David” and while the “Lion of the Tribe of Judah” is a slightly obscure Old Testament reference, the “root of David” may be more familiar as often at Christmas, we have an Old Testament reading from Isaiah 11 which mentions a root coming out of Jesse, Jesse was David’s father. This is the

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<sup>2</sup> The lambs book of Life- see Apocryphya - 1 Enoch 47, 81, 106

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reference that will be most familiar to us but there are other Old Testament references to the Root of David or Root of Jesse.

These two sayings – Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and Root of David, provides hope that there is someone, who had been part of God’s plan to redeem the world and be worthy to open the scroll. Of course, we as Christians know who that someone is, and he is Jesus and that becomes clear in the next part of the vision.

The vision, goes on with a lamb, that looks like it was slain. The lamb is Jesus and the reference to him being slain is his death on the cross. It is not only in Revelation that we find a reference to Jesus Christ being the lamb, in the first letter of Peter the reference to Christ being the sacrificial lamb.

The image of the lamb being Jesus is a popular one in art and we have 2 images at St. Michael’s the first one is the obvious one on the chancel arch but the other is not so obvious



The image of a sacrificial lamb would have been an easily understood image to the Jews, as it was a key part of their life. For Jews, at Passover, one of their major feasts, a lamb is sacrificed and cooked and eaten in remembrance of the event.

Daniel 10:4-21; Psalm 148

Hymn request: Angel Voices Ever Singing

The image of Jesus being the sacrificial lamb is a key image of the salvation that Jesus brought for us with his death upon the cross.

It is Jesus who is the lamb and worthy to open the scroll that is on the throne with the elders and living creatures.

The elders and the living creatures in the Throne Room are now joined by a multitude of angels (Rev 5:11) all focussed on worshipping God with hymns being sung complete with harps and incense. As our hymn “Angel-voices ever singing, Round thy throne of light,” sums up this picture

The Angels, Elders and living creatures are spending their time worshipping God and Jesus, the lamb who is worthy to open the scroll. This is their role, giving praise to God.

Our vision in Revelation continues with the entire creation, everything and everyone joins in with worship. The first verse of our hymn “Angel Voices ever singing” sums up this part of chapter of revelation “... Thousands only live to bless thee and confess thee Lord of Might”

We are told two of the songs that are sung in Heaven and these songs are picked up in several hymns. The hymn in Revelation 5 is “Worthy is the lamb...” and the theme of this song have been, and continues to be used, in sacred music from Handel’s Messiah “Worthy is the Lamb” to extracts from these have been and continue to be used in hymns and worship songs so that we can continue the instruction given in verse 13 of Revelation 5 where everyone both in heaven, and on earth (and under the earth) join in worshipping the lamb that was slain. As we join in the worship we praise God the Father, God the Son and give thanks that Jesus died for us upon the cross and was worthy to open the scroll.

Daniel 10:4-21; Psalm 148

Hymn request: Angel Voices Ever Singing

We may not often think about the worship that happens in heaven but it has three main points for us.

Many of us, like me, may spend part of our days, worshipping God without the company of other people, however if we read Revelation we are reminded that we are not actually alone, we are joining in with the heavenly chorus and praising God with others who are not physically in the same location as us. It reminds us that it doesn't matter where or when we worship, we are not actually alone as the elders, living creatures and angels are also worshipping God, they worship Him day and night, that's their job. Giving praise to God the Father and celebrating the fact that Jesus is the lamb that is worthy to open the scroll.

Secondly, it is a reminder that part of our faith as Christians to worship God, to celebrate that Jesus is the one who is worthy to open the scroll. An aspect of our worship is that we can spend time considering the sacrifice that Jesus made by dying on the cross and everything that means. We often think of Jesus dying for us and rising to new life but the reading adds another view, that Jesus is the lamb, who is worthy to open the scroll. The only one who could. And that is reason to celebrate and to worship.

And thirdly, the visions in Revelation remind us of an important part of our faith, that we believe that Jesus will return to earth at some point in the future. We often do not think about this and dwell on it but it is useful to consider the part of the creed where we say that Christ will come again.

Let us pray

Blessing and honour and thanksgiving and praise  
more than we can utter, more than we can conceive,  
be to you, most holy and glorious Trinity,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
from all angels, and all people, all creatures

Revelation 5

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Daniel 10:4-21; Psalm 148

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for ever and ever.