

Chat with the Children

- Which is the best? Number one?
 - cars...
 - animals...
 - people...
 - Have to have the right criteria, reason for judging something or someone "best"
 - Jesus is the best... **but why, on what basis is he the best?**
 - that's what we'll be exploring today...
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Introduction

- We started this series a couple of weeks back by talking about heroes - those we hold up as examples to follow
 - what is that marks such people out for their status in today's world?
- Generally speaking, it is some kind of success:
 - **intelligence** - exam passes - Carol Vorderman, Paxman, University Challenge;
 - **financial success** - Richard Branson; bankers?
 - **sporting prowess** - Usain Bolt, whoever the heroes of this summer's world cup will be...
 - **achievement** - first woman to climb all 5 highest peaks in the world...!
 - **leadership** - despite a hung parliament!!
- We talked of the picture of Jesus painted by John in all his power and glory - a hero figure; an example; a Lord to follow
- What we didn't do was explore anything of **WHY he has that status**
 - is it intelligence? money? physical/sporting ability? achievement? leadership?
- The Bible in general, and this passage in particular, says something quite different

Background

- Context - **we've had the direct encouragements and challenges to the seven churches**; John moving into the bigger picture; **God on his throne**; **main body of the revelation is "contained" in the scroll which no-one can open... except Jesus**
- So, almost in passing, we have a picture emerging of Jesus
 - in particular John emphasises why Jesus has the place he has
- The picture is of God's plan for history, hidden in the scroll:
 - no one can look at it... **except Jesus!**
- He is described as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David:
 - and **BECAUSE** he has triumphed, he is able to open the scroll

Jesus' Triumph

- But it is in the nature of Jesus' triumph that we find the distinctive message of the passage:
- For, who is this "Lion", this "Root of David" (descendant of kings)?
 - a lamb - a small, weak animal, food for whichever predator came across it
- Remember - word pictures!
- Jesus is being compared to a lamb - a slain lamb - a lamb carrying all the overtones of the OT sacrificial system
- Notice this one, key, main thing:
 - it is in Jesus' death and resurrection, in his sacrifice on the Cross that his triumph is completed
- Coming Alive: facts about Jesus - power over wind and waves; spoke with authority; lived without sin; made some startling claims about himself (mad/bad/God)

- BUT: in none of those things is his victory vested!
- He could have done all of those things, said all of those things, even lived the way he lived - and still not have been worthy to open the scroll!
- All the way through: the song in v.9-10; the song in v.12; the song in v.13
 - it is the "lamb who was slain" who is praised and counted worthy;
 - **not** the robed, bronze footed, powerful figure of chapter one!

The Purchase of Blood

- First thing to say about Jesus' death is the obvious thing:
- **it was through his death that we are saved!**
- Bible uses many images to try and describe and explain this
- One here is of purchase - trade and commerce
- Blood most valuable commodity someone has:
 - no blood transfusion service!
 - so part of the imagery of the OT sacrificial system is that of something extremely valuable being paid to receive something extremely valuable;
 - **blood for life!**
- We are in debt to God - because of our sins - an amount we cannot pay
- Jesus buys us back - giving up that which is most valuable in the whole cosmos - himself!
- In a sense, that's why we have such hope - for we can be in no doubt that Jesus has paid enough of a ransom for us!
 - if its not a daft thing to say, he's paid out enough to buy caviar and bought baked beans!!
- Able to worship, give thanks - and join the throngs around the throne praising!

The Way to Up is Down

- Remember the British Gas advert about being in control?
 - snapping of fingers and a little flame appearing, "don't you love being in control?"
- Something we all hanker after to some degree
- Second thing want to say about Jesus' triumph is:
- Jesus demonstrated a completely different attitude - he had all the power and authority you could imagine - and then some
- But did he want to hang onto it? No!!
- He consciously and willingly gave it up - to die for us!
- Power and control all about making things happen
- What Jesus demonstrated is that making things happen in the Kingdom of God is about choosing the path of weakness
- When he came to earth to bring salvation, to buy our freedom, our redemption, he came in weakness:
 - he let go of the greatness of heaven, for in God's Kingdom the way to real greatness is through weakness
- *"The way to up is down!"*

Conclusion

- Jesus Christ HAS purchased us as his own!
 - tremendous comfort and encouragement in that!
- The way to be great in God's Kingdom is to be the servant of all - the way to up is down
 - why is Jesus worthy to sit on the throne beside God? Because he humbled himself and became obedient to death on a cross for us!