



## **FAITH 5 WITH FLAT JESUS!**

### **The week of Sunday, August 20**

**SHARE** – Share at least One High and One Low from the day or the week.

**READ** – Revelation 5:1-14

**TALK** – John of Patmos, the author of the book of Revelation has a vision where everyone including animals join in praising God through singing. John shares this vision to a small bunch of churches he mentions at the beginning of Revelation. John wants to make sure that the churches have their priorities straight. He wants to make sure that they are putting God first in their lives. And one really good indicator of that is if they are praising God in similar ways to his vision in chapter 5.

The clear message is about allegiance: Only God and God's Lamb Jesus are worthy of our worship, not the Roman emperor or any political/earthly/human power.

If John of Patmos would write today, he might say: 'Don't salute the flag, salute God'; or 'Don't pledge allegiance to the state, pledge it to God'. When John says, "Only Christ can open up the scroll," he means only Christ holds the power of life and death.... And because of that only Christ can give our life meaning. Nothing else in our lives can fulfill us the way that Christ can.

The powerful metaphor of Jesus as "the Lamb who was slain" will become the central symbol of the entire book. This image of a weak little lamb that died seems like the opposite of what we expect to see as the key to life, but that is how God chooses to work. God turns weakness into power in the same way God turned death into life on the cross. This scripting of Jesus as a lamb is an obvious signal not to interpret the imagery of Revelation literally, but rather metaphorically. Just as Jesus was not literally a four-legged sheep or lamb, so Revelation's other symbols and numbers should not be read literally. Revelation's profound truth is not as a series of predictions to be figured out; but rather a deeper-than-literal truth -- a journey into God's vision of hope for our world.

### **Discussion Questions:**

#### **How does this Scripture relate or connect to your life and faith, your Highs and Lows?**

What are some songs you sing or listen to when you need hope or inspiration?

Where can we hear the Lamb's "new song" (Revelation 5:9) being sung in the world today?

What are some areas where you feel weak? How might Christ turn that weakness into strength?

What are some ways we can help make Christ more central in our lives?

**PRAY** – You can hold hands or fold your hands when you pray together...

Thank God for the Highs you shared with each other.

Ask God for whatever kind of help and support you need for the Lows you shared with each other.

If you want, you can pray the Lord's Prayer together.

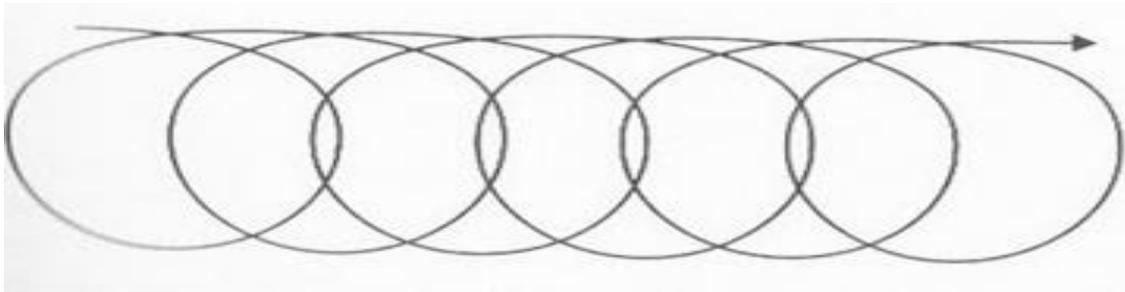
**BLESS** – Mark each other with the sign of the Cross on the forehead and say this, or some other blessing you may think of:

**Remember that Jesus loves you and the Holy Spirit is within you!**

## **A Cyclical Outline of the Book of Revelation**

The Book of Revelation has been both the source of comfort and inspiration for Christians across the centuries, as it has been a source of misunderstanding, sensationalistic interpretations, and fear. One major misunderstanding is that the Book of Revelation is not a book filled with predictions of the future, but instead filled with timeless truths written for a particular people in a specific time, that transcend history and speak into the challenges and struggles of Christians in every time and place. It is a letter to seven churches; that alternates between threatening warnings and comforting hope, constantly looping back to the central vision and promise of God's salvation purpose for all of Creation.

Prof. Craig Koester, in his book, Revelation and the End of All Things, shows how Revelation is written in a non-linear, cyclical, looping pattern, and should be read as a whole, without trying to insert other portions of Scripture like a jigsaw puzzle. When seen as an outline, it looks like a spiral with loops consisting of a series of visions.



Loop 1 – Seven messages to the seven churches in Asia (chapters 1-3)

Loop 2 – Seven seals (chapters 4-7)

Loop 3 – Seven trumps (chapters 8-11)

Loop 4 – The Beast and the Lamb (chapters 12-15)

Loop 5 – The Harlot and the Bride/Seven Plagues (chapters 15-19)

Loop 6 – The Great Battle and the New Jerusalem (chapters 19-22)

At the top of each loop, readers are given a revelation/vision of God's Holy Presence with the Lamb of God and all of Creation worshipping the Lord. Even in the midst of threats of violence, destruction, and trials on earth, Christians are reminded to put their trust and hope in God alone, who has conquered Sin, Death, and the Devil through the death and resurrection of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, and encouraged to join the heavenly host in the worship of God, even in the midst of adversity.