

The “New Song” in Revelation

<http://psalmstudy.org/TestamentNew/27Revelation/a-new-song.pdf>

Table of Contents

Revelation - A New Song - A Te Deum	1
Structure of the Hymn.....	2
<i>An opening refrain.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>The hymn of the heavenly choirs.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>The hymn of the church.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>The hymn of the bride</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Another voice serving intermittently as a cantor to explain or affirm the Te Deum.....</i>	<i>3</i>
“New Song” Verses in Other Scripture	5
Praising God with Music and Song in other Scripture.....	6
The “New Song” of Revelation in other Music.....	6
The “New Song” in Handel’s Messiah.....	6
<i>Stanza 45 (Chorus).....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Stanza 54 (Chorus).....</i>	<i>7</i>
The “New Song” in Contemporary Music	7

The “New Song” in Revelation

Revelation - A New Song - A Te Deum ¹



In the apostle John’s vision of heaven he saw testimony to Jesus’ atoning work and heard a “new song” to celebrate the accomplished fact of our redemption and the opening of the book representing a new act of grace bestowed upon the Church, then and now, to revive - to renew - our hope and confidence. We may often seem to have lost our way, no longer sensing Jesus’ presence and feeling abandoned.

We may want to cry in the absence of our Savior as did John: *and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.* (Revelation 5:4/ESV) Just when we may feel abandoned, then our Lord appears to open the book and shower us with the grace of hope and confident faith in Him.² John’s weeping teaches us that the defeat of evil, sin, and death depend on Jesus opening the scroll so that we may have His grace.³

The song is “new” because it has never been sung before. It contains no direct Old Testament quotes. This song is a great “Te Deum” whose other stanzas are found elsewhere in Revelation. The new song of Revelation celebrates the victory and enthronement of the Lamb. Any earlier hymn could have only anticipated Jesus’ enthronement. It is sung in Revelation because the promise has been fulfilled. Jesus has ascended and has won the victory for God and his people. The hymn expresses why the Lamb is worthy to receive all “*power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!*” (Revelation 5:12/ESV), because *he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation* (Revelation 5:9/ESV).⁴

John saw four living creatures and twenty-four elders who praised God:

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” And whenever the living creatures give glory

¹ A “Te Deum” is a hymn of praise to God. The term “Te Deum” is Latin for “To You God.” The earliest “Te Deum” is attributed to two Fathers and Doctors of the Church, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine. It is one of the most majestic chants in the Liturgy of the Church. It is sung in traditional seminaries and monastic houses at the Divine Office and for Double feasts of the First Class, The Nativity, Easter, Corpus Christi, Epiphany, Pentecost and those that have an Octave. The solemn “Te Deum” is sung on all occasions of public Church rejoicing (in Traditional Catholic Churches). See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “Te Deum laudamus,” Accessed June 19, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Te-Deum-laudamus>.

² E. W. Hengstenberg, *Revelation of St. John, Volume One*, Rev. Patrick Fairbairn, trans. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005) pp.241-242.

³ *ESV Gospel Transformation Bible*. Bryan Chapell, ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013) p. 1732 Also Accessed January 13, 2016. <http://www.esvbible.org/Revelation+4.1-5.14/>. Image “Saints and New Song,” Tribulation Network, Accessed January 21, 2016, http://www.tribnet.org/tribnet_2013/images/articles/TN_08_12_2013_18_20_51_20557.bmp.

⁴ See Louis A. Brighton, *Revelation* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1999) pp. 128, 141-142.

and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” (Revelation 4:8, 11/ESV)

John’s vision reminds us of Isaiah’s vision:

Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” ... And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” (Isaiah 6:2-3, 8/ESV)

John saw a Lamb standing between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders. The Lamb took the scroll from God the Father:

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. 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, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” (Revelation 5:8-14/ESV)⁵

The celebration continues:

The celebration that began and was initiated at the Lord’s enthronement was still going on when John saw the dramatization of it. It is still going on and will continue into eternity. Christ’s exaltation as Lord continues, as does also the celebration with the singing of the “new song” in the Te Deum, for that “new song” is ever new and the One it celebrates is ever present with his church.⁶

Structure of the Hymn

This great hymn can be understood in the following structure:⁷

An opening refrain

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”⁸

⁵ Louis A. Brighton, *Revelation* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1999) pp. 141-142. Singing a “a new song” may also be found in the following Psalms: Psalm 33:1-5; 40:3; 96:1-3; 98:1; and, 144:9-10; 149:1-5; Isaiah 42:10-12.

⁶ See Louis A. Brighton, *Revelation* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1999) p. 145.

⁷ See Louis A. Brighton, *Revelation* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1999) p. 527-532.

⁸ Revelation 4:8/ESV

The hymn of the heavenly choirs

“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, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”⁹ Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever! Amen!”¹⁰

The hymn of the church

“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”¹¹ We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. 18 The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.¹² Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.¹³

The hymn of the bride

“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants. Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever. Amen. Hallelujah! Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.¹⁴ Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure.”¹⁵

Another voice serving intermittently as a cantor to explain or affirm the Te Deum

[The elders identify for John the ones from the great tribulation.] *“These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”¹⁶* [When the seventh angel sounds the trumpet, the elders sing of God’s judgment.] *“The*

⁹ Revelation 5:9-10/ESV.

¹⁰ Revelation 5:12-15/ESV.

¹¹ Revelation 7:10-12/ESV.

¹² Revelation 11:17-18/ESV.

¹³ Revelation 15:3-4/ESV.

¹⁴ Revelation 19: 1-4/ESV.

¹⁵ Revelation 19: 6-8.ESV.

¹⁶ Revelation 7:14-17/ESV.

*kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”*¹⁷ [A heavenly voice explains the rejoicing.] *“Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”*¹⁸ [An angel affirms the last stanza of the hymn of the church.] *“Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve! Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!”*¹⁹

Merged together, the following stanzas would form the “new song.” This is a Hymn of the Heavenly Choirs:

*“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”*²⁰ *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, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.*²¹ *Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever! Amen!*²² *Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.*²³ *We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. 18 The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.*²⁴ *Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.*²⁵ *Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants. Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever. Amen. Hallelujah! Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.*²⁶ *Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his*

¹⁷ Revelation 11:15/ESV.

¹⁸ Revelation 12:10-12/ESV.

¹⁹ Revelation 16:5-7/ESV.

²⁰ Revelation 4:8/ESV

²¹ Revelation 5:9-10/ESV.

²² Revelation 5:12-15/ESV.

²³ Revelation 7:10-12/ESV.

²⁴ Revelation 11:17-18/ESV.

²⁵ Revelation 15:3-4/ESV.

²⁶ Revelation 19: 1-4/ESV.

Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure. ²⁷

[The elders identify for John the ones from the great tribulation.] “*These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*” ²⁸ [When the seventh angel sounds the trumpet, the elders sing of God’s judgment.] “*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.*” ²⁹ [A heavenly voice explains the rejoicing.] “*Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!*” ³⁰ [An angel affirms the last stanza of the hymn of the church.] “*Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve! Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!*” ³¹

“New Song” Verses in Other Scripture

The term “new song” is used nine times in Scripture - two in Revelation (quoted above), six in the Psalms, and one in Isaiah. “New song” uses in the Psalms and Isaiah are quoted below.

Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright. Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts. For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord. (Psalm 33:1-5/ESV)

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord. (Psalm 40:3/ESV)

Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. (Psalm 96:1-3/ESV)

Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. (Psalm 98:1/ESV)

²⁷ Revelation 19: 6-8/ESV.

²⁸ Revelation 7:14-17/ESV.

²⁹ Revelation 11:15/ESV.

³⁰ Revelation 12:10-12/ESV.

³¹ Revelation 16:5-7/ESV.

I will sing a new song to you, O God; upon a ten-stringed harp I will play to you, who gives victory to kings, who rescues David his servant from the cruel sword. (Psalm 144:9-10/ESV)

Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly! Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King! Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre! For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation. Let the godly exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. (Psalm 149:1-5/ESV)

Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the habitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory to the Lord, and declare his praise in the coastlands. (Isaiah 42:10-12/ESV)

Praising God with Music and Song in other Scripture

The Bible has three songbooks, documents made up entirely of lyrics. They are Psalms (the largest songbook), the Song of Songs (Song of Solomon), and Lamentations. Solomon wrote 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:29, 32). The Bible doesn't record them all, but we know which one Solomon thought was best: the Song of all Songs (Note that Lamentations does not claim to be a songbook. However, when the book was translated into Greek (the Septuagint), it was called a book of dirges. Some verses in Scripture speak of singing a new song and of singing in general. We find many songs in Scripture outside of the three songbooks.³²

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore ... He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. (1 Kings 4:29, 32/ESV)

The “New Song” of Revelation in other Music

The “New Song” in Handel’s Messiah

Stanza 45, the Alleluia Chorus, and Stanza 54, the final chorus, are adapted from the “New Song” of Revelation.³³

Stanza 45 (Chorus)

Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.³⁴

The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.³⁵

³² Credit goes to the following resources for providing much of the research to prepare the list of music and song in the Bible. Jeffrey and Laura Kranz, “All the songs in the Bible”, The Overview Bible Project, Accessed December 30, 2015, <http://overviewbible.com/bible-songs/>. Knowing Jesus, “Singing”, Accessed December 30, 2015, <http://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Singing>.

³³ Stanza 45, “King of Kings, and Lord of Lords,” is not from the “New Song”. It is from Revelation 19:16.

³⁴ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.” (Revelation 19:6/ESV)

³⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 11:15/ESV)

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. ³⁶
Hallelujah!

Stanza 54 (Chorus)

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.
Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen. ³⁷

The “New Song” in Contemporary Music

A song that stays with me since I first heard it is “Indescribable” by Chris Tomlin. ³⁸ This song buzzes through my head frequently, lifts me up, and reminds me of the amazing power and majesty of God.

The chorus goes:

“Indescribable, uncontainable, You placed the stars in the sky, And You know them by name, You are amazing, God”. ³⁹

One verse is:

“Who has told every lightning bolt where it should go, Or seen heavenly storehouses laden with snow, Who imagined the sun and gives source to its light, Yet, conceals it to bring us the coolness of night, None can fathom.”

Another goes like this:

“Incomparable, unchangeable, You see the depths of my heart, And You love me the same, You are amazing, God, You are amazing, God”.

For me, this song matches well with the following five parts of Revelation that portray God’s power and majesty.

The Throne (Revelation 4:2-7, 9-11)

The song of the scroll and the Lamb: (Revelation 5:9-14)

The great multitude from every nation praising God: (Revelation 7:9-12)

The seventh angel blew his trumpet: (Revelation 11:15-17)

A multitude, the elders, and a voice from the Throne rejoiced in Heaven singing: (Revelation 19:1-5)

The New Heaven and the New Earth:(Revelation 21:1-5)

³⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. (Revelation 19:16/ESV)

³⁷ ... saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped. (Revelation 5:12-14/ESV)

³⁸ Chris Tomlin, “Indescribable”, Accessed January 1, 2016, www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/christomlin/indescribable.html.

³⁹ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.” (Revelation 19:6/ESV)