

Now about that time, **Herod** the king stretched out his hands to **oppress some of the assembly**. He **killed James**, the brother of John, with the sword. When he saw that it **pleased the Jews**, he proceeded to **seize Peter** also. This was during the days of unleavened bread. When he had **arrested him**, he put him in **prison**, and delivered him to **four squads of four soldiers** each to **guard him**, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover.

Peter therefore was kept in the prison, but **constant prayer** was made **by the assembly** to God for him. The same night when Herod was **about to bring him out**, Peter was **sleeping** between two soldiers, **bound with two chains**. Guards in front of the door **kept the prison**. And behold, an **angel of the Lord** stood by him, and a **light shone in the cell**. He struck Peter on the side, and **woke him up**, saying, "Stand up quickly!" **His chains fell off** from his hands.

The angel said to him, "**Get dressed** and put on your sandals." He did so. He said to him, "**Put on your cloak, and follow me.**" And he went out and followed him.

He didn't know that what was being done by the angel was real, but **thought he saw a vision**. When they were past the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which **opened to them by itself**. They **went out**, and **went down one street**, and immediately the **angel departed** from him. When Peter had **come to himself**, he said, "Now **I truly know** that the Lord has sent out his angel and **delivered me** out of the hand of Herod, and from everything the Jewish people were expecting."

Thinking about that, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where **many were gathered** together and were **praying**. When **Peter knocked at the door** of the gate, a maid named **Rhoda came to answer**. When she recognized Peter's voice, **she didn't open the gate for joy**, but **ran in**, and **reported** that Peter was **standing in front of the gate**.

They said to her, "**You are crazy!**" But **she insisted** that it was so. They said, "It is his angel." But **Peter continued knocking**. When **they had opened**, they **saw him**, and were **amazed**. But he, beckoning to them with his hand to **be silent**, **declared to them how the Lord had brought him out** of the prison. He said, "**Tell these things** to James, and to the brothers." Then he departed, and went to another place. (Acts 12:1-17)

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone **hears my voice** and **opens the door**, then I will **come in to him**, and will **dine with him**, and **he with me**. He who **overcomes**, I will give to him to **sit down with me** on my throne, as I also overcame, and **sat down with my Father** on his throne. He who has an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit says** to the assemblies. (Revelation 3:20-22)

What might **God want us to learn** from these passages as we **pray for Ben's release** from prison?

Is God faithful to answer prayers?

Did God release Peter in **answer to their prayers**, or because it simply was **not time for Peter** to die? Remember, Jesus told Peter that **when he was old** they would lead him where he did not want to go. **Peter was not yet old**, so he could **sleep soundly despite the evidence** around him that he would die.

There is a way of praying so **fixated on begging God** that we find it **hard to trust His heart** and **receive** the answer He provides. James calls this double-mindedness that disables our capacity to receive anything from God.

Why would people **resist believing** their prayers are answered **despite the knocking** outside?

Could it be that **the way we perceive God prevents us from receiving** what God already has for us?

There are actually **two very different ways to pray**, and they make a big difference.

Both might involve praying and praising God, but there is a significant **shift in emphasis** in prayers engaging the **New Song format** that has a **deeper impact internally** more than externally.

This is not to suggest that God is petty and refuses to answer prayers if we don't get them just right.

Rather, the issue is whether or not our prayers and testimony **draws attention beyond our traditional agenda in religion** to break through the glass ceiling and **thrive in the rich atmosphere of heaven**, where many also have been learning to **recognize the powerful difference** between the two songs.

The two songs actually have **identities linked to them**. The titles symbolize the difference of content between the **old familiar way of praying** and a way that can **often feel new, strange and almost disappointing** if we don't have large enough perspective.

*I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and **those who overcame** the beast, his image, and the number of his name, **standing on the sea of glass**, having **harps of God**. They sang the **song of Moses, the servant of God**, and the **song of the Lamb**, saying, "Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God, the Almighty! Righteous and true are your ways, you King of the nations. Who wouldn't fear you, Lord, and glorify your name? For you only are holy. For all the nations will come and worship before you. For your righteous acts have been revealed." (Revelation 15:2-4)*

The first song was the **song of Moses**, identified here as the **servant** of God. If we study the literal songs of Moses in the OT we notice a **distinct pattern** that differentiates it from the **song of the Lamb** which by contrast is **new and almost strange**. What we witness throughout history and culminating in our day, is an increasing **urgency to learn and engage** in this war, relying more and more on the **New Song, the song of the Lamb** until becomes the **default way** in which we pray, think and reflect the real truth that **brings salvation to our Creator** and Father in heaven.

***No longer do I call you servants, for the servant doesn't know what his lord does. But I have called you friends, for everything that I heard from my Father, I have made known to you.** (John 15:15)*

*After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! **Salvation, power, and glory belong to our God**: for true and righteous are **his judgments**. For he has **judged the great prostitute**, who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality, and **he has avenged** the blood of his servants at her hand." A second said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke goes up forever and ever." The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne, saying, "Amen! Hallelujah!"*

*A voice came forth from the throne, saying, "**Give praise to our God**, all you his servants, you who fear him, the small and the great!" (Revelation 19:1-5)*

*I heard something like the voice of a great multitude, and like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of mighty thunders, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our **God, the Almighty, reigns! Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad**, and let us **give the glory to him**. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and **his wife has made herself ready**."*

***It was given to her** that she would array herself in bright, pure, fine linen: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. He said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" He said to me, "**These are true words of God**." (Revelation 19:6-9)*

The New Song Adjustment

*Now when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. **They sang a new song**, saying, "**You are worthy** to take the book, and to open its seals: **for you were killed, and bought us for God with your blood, out of every tribe, language, people, and nation, and made us kings and priests to our God, and we will reign on earth.**" (Revelation 5:8-10)*

Why is this called a new song this early in the narrative in Revelation? The **previous chapter** portrays **what was normal before sin** ever entered the universe, so **without the dissonance** caused by sin, distrust, unbelief, doubt about God's integrity or anything causing a disturbance in the pristine atmosphere of love, **praising God was the natural thing to do** all the time.

So **what would make normal praise something new?** Actually it is **not new in reality**, but after **sin introduced distortions about God's motives** and the accuser **infected the whole universe** with scandalous **accusations** about God's intentions, methods and plans, this **normal way of living was diluted** until the testimony of the Lamb of God came to salvage God's reputation. Now the **original design** of creation has been **revived and is available** to all who are willing to participate.

*I saw another angel ascend from the sunrise, having the **seal of the living God**. He cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Don't harm the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, **until we have sealed** the bondservants of our God on their foreheads!" I heard **the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty-four thousand**, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel: (Revelation 7:2-4)*

*After these things I looked, and **behold, a great multitude**, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands. They cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation be to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels were standing around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before his throne, and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might, be to our God forever and ever! Amen." (Revelation 7:9-12)*

*I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a number, **one hundred forty-four thousand**, having **his name**, and the **name of his Father, written on their foreheads**. I heard a sound from heaven, like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of a great thunder. The sound which I heard was like that of **harpists playing on their harps**. **They sing a new song** before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders. **No one could learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand**, those who had been redeemed out of the earth. These are those who were **not defiled with women, for they are virgins**. These are those **who follow the Lamb wherever he goes**. These were **redeemed by Jesus from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb**. In their mouth was found **no lie, for they are blameless**. (Revelation 14:1-5)*

The song of Moses has been celebrated by God's people. But **it lacks** the kind of power needed to bring **full closure** to the war. **Salvation to our God** requires **full exoneration of His reputation**. The **New Song of the Lamb alone unleashes the power** strong enough to **eliminate evil** for the rest of eternity.