

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Alpha and the Omega

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1222

What is Christmas? Is it anything important at all? There is certainly nothing important to begin with about December 25, the date, because you see December 25 came from a Pagan observance of the birthday of the unconquered sun. It certainly isn't biblical. During that time the Pagans held two weeks of feasts, parades, special music, gift giving, lighted candles and green trees. Some ambitious church members living in that Pagan culture decided to Christianize the holiday and in 336 Emperor Constantine declared Christ's birthday an official Roman holiday.

There were some protesters such as Chrysostom, who rebuked Christians for adopting this Pagan thing, but it stuck. You see, we really don't know when Jesus was born. Some say January 6. Others say March 9.

Some say April 20 or May 20. Some even say September 29, but nobody really knows. December 25 is strictly a grab bag date. It really belonged to a Pagan celebration. It has nothing to do with Scripture.

So it isn't the date. It's not like the 4th of July or something that has historical significance. Well, what about the name? Maybe there is something significant about the name if not the date. Well, it's a short form of Christ Mass, a Catholic Mass, which grew out of a specific feast day called Christis Masse, which was established in 1038. So it certainly has nothing to do with Scripture. No, Christmas is not a holy day. Christmas is not a divinely prescribed day. In fact, it was in 1224 that St. Francis of Assisi really started the baby manger thing when he started a new cult of the worship of Mary, surrounding her in the manger with the baby?. You say, "Well if it isn't the date and it isn't the name, maybe it's Santa Claus." (Laughter) No, I don't think so. You see, it can't be all about Santa Claus because he never existed. The idea of Santa Claus is the result of a 4th Century bishop's activity. This particular 4th Century bishop gave his possessions to poor people. .Supposedly he brought back to life two children who had been cut into pieces. His name was Saint Nicholas . So it became a kind of tradition for people to look at Saint Nicholas as a giver of gifts and the one who was particularly important to children. Well, Saint Nicholas became very popular in Holland and he got imported to America by way of Holland. Dutch children expected the friendly saint to visit them on December 5 and the custom grew that on December 5 they placed their wooden shoes by the fireplace to be filled with goodies.

Of course, we very capable and fastthinking Americans know that you can get a lot more in a sock than you can in a wooden shoe. (Laughter)

So we made some adaptation.

A man by the name of Clement Moore really perpetuated the idea of this Santa Claus and he really made it a thing in America, because you see it's Clement Moore who wrote the poem, "The Night Before Christmas."

It was published in 1823 in the Troy New York Sentinel, and it became kind of the format for Christmas. It doesn't seem to bother anybody that in recent years Pope Paul defrocked Saint Nicholas. You say, "Well, if it isn't Santa Claus and it isn't the name and it isn't the date, maybe it's the cards. Christmas cards." No. Christmas isn't Christmas cards because you see, that started less than 100 years ago.

It can't be that. This year America's 50 million families will spend \$800 million on Christmas cards. We'll spend \$200 million to mail them.

You say, "Well, if it isn't the cards, then maybe Christmas is the spirit of giving." Well, I'm afraid it isn't the spirit of giving anymore. It's the spirit of indulgence. Have you been to Toys R Us lately? \$10 billion will be spent on 1,500,000,000 gifts. \$10 Billion. Incidentally, it will all be wrapped in \$150 million worth of paper. You say, "Well maybe it's it's the tree." No. The tree didn't arrive until the 16th Century.

The first person to have a lighted tree was Martin Luther. You say, "Well, what about Christmas as Christian?" None of it. None of it is Christian. None of it is biblical. Not a bit of it is commanded by the Lord. None of it is Scriptural. None of it is apostolic and none of it was ever observed by the early church. In fact, the Puritans even in early America called Christmas Romish rags. They deliberately worked on the first December 25 in order to show disdain for the Pagan holiday, and in 1644 (this is an interesting note) English Puritans passed a law making Christmas Day a working day. It became illegal to cook plum pudding and mince pie. You say, "John, that's a little much." Sure it's a little much. But what is Christmas? Strip off the date, the name, Santa Claus, the cards, the presents, the tree and the food, and what have you got? Nothing. That's precisely what Christmas is nothing. It is absolutely nothing. It isn't historical. It isn't biblical. It isn't Christian. It isn't anything.

Worse than that, it turns out to be sort of bedlam, doesn't it? You know, it's an interesting thing that the very word "bedlam" comes from the word "Bethlehem." In 1247 the priory of St. Mary of Bethlehem was founded in London, and by 1330 had become had become a hospital and by 1401 was a hospital for the insane.. The noise and confusion of that insane asylum was known throughout England, and it became a byword.

St. Mary of Bethlehem was shortened to Bethlehem, and then by contraction and corruption it became known as bedlam. Bethlehem and bedlam, historically and semantically are related. You say, "Well, John, what about the birth of Christ? That's something." Sure that's something. But that's not something to be celebrated once. That's something to be celebrated every day. Well you say, "If Christmas is nothing, then are we wrong to recognize it?" Not necessarily, if we recognize that it is nothing.

Enjoy the time with family and friends and sharing.

Secondly, if we enjoy our love and being together it's good. But mostly I think Christmas is important because it gives Christians the opportunity to catch the world at least aware of Jesus, and give them the truth. That's really what we want to do today. Christmas isn't anything to me. It isn't anything at all. It isn't anything to you if you know Jesus Christ any different than any other day, because every day is a celebration for us who know and love Him. In fact, Christmas is a depressing time for most people. Did you know that? I read an article and this is what it says. It was written by J. M. Stubblebein who is the director of the California Department of Mental Hygiene. This is a quote: "The Christmas season is marked by greater emotional stress and more acts of violence than any other time of the year." Christmas is an excuse to get drunk, have a party, get something, and give a little, leave work, get out of school, spend money, overeat, and (I'll buy it) Christmas is an excuse for us to exalt Jesus Christ in the face of a world that is at least tuned in to His name. I'm ready to take advantage of it.

Spurgeon said, "Look, Christmas is here. We might as well live with it and take the opportunity to exalt Christ." Our prayer is the same as it is for every time we meet that our Lord Jesus Christ be lifted up. I've entitled the message this morning which departs from our continuing study in the Book of Acts which we are normally involved in on Sunday mornings, "An Apocalyptic View of Christmas." I don't know whether you've ever had a Christmas message taken from the Book of Revelation, but you're about to have one. The reason that I desire to do that is because I think that we're a lot closer to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ than we are to the first one.

Jesus came 2,000 years ago. I am quite confident that it will not be another 2,000 before He returns. I am confident also that the world is happy to let Jesus Christ be a baby in a manger, but not willing to let Him be the sovereign King and Lord that He is. So my approach this morning is to see Jesus Christ as He shall be and as He is and will be revealed in His Second Coming in contrast to the first time He came.

At the end of the Book of Revelation (and you need not turn to it) we read the words of Jesus as He summarizes the Book of Revelation: "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David." The question is always asked, "Who is Jesus Christ?" Here at the end of Revelation He says, "If you're wondering who that offspring is, that one

born in Bethlehem of the lineage and the house of David, I am the offspring of David." But He also adds, "I am the root of David," which is an astounding statement. For in it He is saying, "Not only am I the one born of the seed of David, but I am the one who made David in the first place". Now, if the Book of Revelation is, then, to be a presentation of this child, this root, and this offspring of David then we need to back up into the Book of Revelation and see clearly who He is, and that's what we want to do. The Lord Jesus Christ whom we exalt today is not just a baby / in a manger. He is not a children's story. He is far more. The first time He came He came veiled in the form of a child. Not too many really knew it. The world didn't take much notice. Some did, but most did not.

The second time He comes, the next time He comes, and soon we believe it will be, He comes unveiled. He comes without the robe of human flesh in terms of an infant, and when He comes it will be abundantly clear and immediately clear to all the world just who He really is. The first time He came, a star marked His arrival. The next time He comes the whole Heaven will roll up like a scroll and all the stars will fall out of the sky, and He Himself will light it. The first time He came, wise men and shepherds brought Him gifts. The next time He comes, He will bring gifts, rewards for His own. The first time He came there was no room for Him. The next time He comes the whole world won't be able to contain His glory. The first time He came a few attended His arrival some shepherds and some wise men. The next time He comes, every eye shall see Him. The first time He came as a baby. Soon He comes as sovereign King and Lord.

Now, in Scripture there are many portraits of Christ. We could approach Christmas perhaps as we did in years past from the Old Testament, seeing Him presented in Isaiah as the Messiah, the child, the wonderful counselor, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace, the Father of Eternity. We could look at all the Old Testament pictures. We could study Him as the angel of the Lord, as the one coequal with God in the Old Testament, or we could go into the gospels and we could study Matthew, Mark, and Luke and John and we could see Him there as a gentle baby, as a unique child, as a humble man, as a loving friend, as a powerful miracle worker, as a suffering Savior, as a risen Lord, as an ascending Lord. We could study the gospels and see the Christ whom we exalt, or we could study the epistles. We could read about all those marvelous things about Him as a sustainer, as the strength of His saints, as the mediator, as the great high priest, as the kind shepherd, all of those things that He is to us, the head of His church. But for this morning we have chosen to go to the Book of Revelation and see Him as we see Him there. I'm convinced that there are no more powerful and no more vivid portraits of Jesus Christ than those found in the Book of Revelation. Meant, meant by the word of our Lord Himself, so stated, to show us who is this child, this offspring of David.

Now I want to share with you five things from the Book of Revelation about Him His person, His preeminence, His praise, His promise, and finally His plea. As the Book closes there is an invitation.

Notice first of all His person. Chapter 1. Revelations. Time does not permit us to go into great detail, but just to pick out those things directly in reference to Christ. Verse 5, Revelation 1, beginning with

the words, "Jesus Christ." "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness." The first of three titles in Verse 5. The faithful witness. "Who is this babe? Who was this one born of the seed of David? First of all, the Revelation says "the faithful witness." In Isaiah 55:4, God predicted that there would come a witness to the peoples. In Psalm 89 God said of him, "I will make him a faithful witness." That means reliable, trustworthy, able to be believed, always speaking truth, and Jesus spoke truth. You know that. He came into this world not to learn truth, but to deliver truth. He is no baby who must be taught. He is no cooing child. He is the son of God who speaks the mind of God. Jesus Himself said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness to the truth." That's why He came. That's John 18:37.

He is secondly called the first begotten of the dead, the first among those resurrected. Now the term "first begotten" does not mean of all people resurrected He was the first one in line. No. He was not the first raised from the dead, was He? Some of the Old Testament were raised from the dead. Jesus Himself raised some from the dead before He ever died. What it means is that of all those ever raised, He is the chief.

You say, "Well who was raised?" Listen, before it's all over, every person who ever lived in the history of the world will be raised from the dead. Every one. Some will be raised to the resurrection of life, John 5:29, and some to the resurrection of damnation, but all who ever lived in the history of the world shall be raised from the dead.

Among all of those, the chief one is Christ, the exalted. For the sake of truth which He spoke He was willing to die and rise again. So this is not just a born baby. This Jesus is not just a born baby but a resurrected God man.

Thirdly He has another title. The Prince of the Kings of the Earth.

He is the supreme monarch in the world. Oh, yes. Some wise men assuming to be kings in their own right bowed to him as a baby. Every king and every man in the Earth and under the Earth shall ultimately bow to Him as they did. He ranks over all. In Daniel 4:37 He is called the King of Heaven. In Matthew 2:2 He is called the King of the Jews. In John 1:49 He is called. the King of Israel. In First Timothy 1:17 He is called the King of the Ages. In Psalm 24:7 He is called the King of Glory. In Revelation 15:3 He is called the King of the Saints, and in Revelation 19 He is called in summary fashion King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So His kingdom is a superior kingdom to any other. Listen, this is no helpless infant. This is the sovereign ruler of the universe.

Now notice, having given three titles it then goes on to speak of His work in Verse 5 "Unto him that loveth us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." I love that. You know, Jesus could have come into this world and been all of those things, but. if He had never paid the penalty for sin it would have done none of us any good. So He washed us with the only detergent that gets sin out His own

blood. I like one little thought and I could spend a lot of time on just that one phrase but I won't. I like one thought "Unto Him that loves us..."

Present tense. You know, I think that when we think about the love of God we think of it in the past sense. We kind of think God's love peaked out at Calvary.. We always say, "He loved us" in past tense "so much that He died." Listen, He doesn't love us any less now. He loves us and washed us. He loves us, present. If He loved us when we hated Him, could He love us any less now that we love Him? No. That's why being saved is one thing and dying on the Cross is one thing in point of history, but living the Christian life is ever and always the same expression of His love as was the point of our salvation or the point of His crucifixion.

Now notice Verse 6. Beyond His redemptive work is His transforming work. He made us a kingdom of priests unto God and His Father. You know, in the Old Testament the only people who could get into God's presence were the priests, and Jesus Christ changed us into priests threw open the holy of holies and invited us into the presence of God.

Oh,.no. This was no baby. This was no baby subject to the religious structure. This was no baby structured by the ceremonies of Judaism.

This is the one who had the access to God Himself and who could tear the veil from top to bottom and open the way for everybody. He was no one subject to a religion. He was the one who framed truth. Look at Verse 8 "I am Alpha and Omega." Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last. "I am the beginning and the ending."

In other words, He is the eternal God. Before there was anything He was. That's what He is saying. Eternity belongs to him. Listen, that life didn't begin in Bethlehem. That wasn't the beginning of the life of Christ. He was alive for all eternity prior and shall live forever.

He says, "I am the one who is and who was and who is to come." The Almighty! If you can even imagine the power that it takes to be eternal and to create and destroy as He is able. You understand something of the term "Almighty." Now look at Verse 10 "I," said John, "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet." It's interesting that God sounds like a trumpet in many places in the Bible because of that piercing, brilliant, loud, clear cry that a trumpet gives. God is like unto a trumpet. For example, at Mount Sinai the thunders and the lightnings and then he heard the voice as of a loud trumpet. What is the thing that is going to be picturing the voice of the Lord at the Rapture but a trumpet? So here John hears this blast of a trumpet. It's the voice of God (and it's really Christ speaking) saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." Here comes this dramatic statement that He is eternal God.

Anyone who ascribes to Jesus less than absolute deity blasphemes His character. This is no baby. This is God incarnate. Well, John heard this voice and he naturally turned to see where it came from, in his vision. That's Verse 12 "And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. Being turned I saw seven golden lampstands." . These represent the church. You can check that in Verse 20. The seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches. So he sees in his vision the seven lampstands representing the church, seven being the number of completeness.

This is the picture of the total church. He sees the church. In the midst of the seven lampstands, in Verse 13 "one like the son of man," here is Christ ministering to His church. As the priest went through the lampstand trimming the oil and making sure it was lit and going, so Jesus Christ moves in and out among the believers in the church. He sees Christ in the church.

Now, this is not just as I said earlier. This is not a man subject to a religion. This is the head of the church. This is not just one presented at the temple to be blessed by the priest, as in the case when Jesus was brought and Simeon was there. This is the one who dominates, who rules, who controls, who gives life' to the church through all the ages. He is not a subject. He rules. Now let's look at Verse 13 and see what He had on: "He was clothed with a garment down to the foot and girded around the breast with a golden girdle." Now He has on a floorlength robe and a girdle of gold about Him. That's a pretty glorious attire. I want to show you something interesting. The word "garment" there is the word for robe. That word "poderase" appears in the Old Testament several times. The same word in the Greek form of the Old Testament which is called the Septuagint. Now I want to show you what this means. You say, "What's so significant about that?"

I'll show you something exciting. When someone is clothed with a garment down to the foot and with a golden girdle or golden belt it symbolizes three things: Number one, that is exactly the garb of an Old Testament priest and the high priests. So what you see here is Jesus Christ as priest. You see, He is mediating. He is moving in among those in the church and in the priestly work, caring for the lamps, lighting and trimming, you see Him as a priest. He is our great high priest. Oh, what a high priest He is. He can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, because He is hurt where we have hurt. He can be a sympathetic mediator.

But there's more to it than that. The same word "poderase" and the same kind of robe and the same indications of costume appear in the Old Testament in the case of Saul, and Saul was not a priest. He was a king. King Saul. So it not only is the robe of a priest but it's the robe of a king. So Jesus is not only seen in priestly character but He is seen in the robe of royalty. Now, I found an interesting passage.

Daniel, Chapter 10. Daniel has a messenger and the messenger comes from God. Verse 5 describes what the messenger was wearing and it says he was wearing a "poderase." in the Septuagint. The same robe, and he was wearing a belt of gold from Euphras. That's the same robe worn by a

messenger. God's messengers are prophets. So we see Jesus here as a prophet, a king, and a priest. That's His character, isn't it?

Listen, beloved. When you look at Jesus this is not a baby to be presented to a priest. This is a high priest. This is not an infant to be hunted by a wicked king. This is the king of all kings. This is not just a child to be prophesied by prophets, but this is the greatest prophet who ever lived. Prophet, priest and king without equal, and all of it seen in the simplicity of just the fact that He wore a robe and a gold belt. Then John begins to describe the vision of Jesus detail by detail.

Look at Verse 14 . "His head and His hair were white like wool and as white as snow." Let's stop right there. He sees, first of all His head and His hair and it's just white. You know, back in Daniel, Chapter 7 and Verse 9, it describes God as having that white likewool hair. He's called the ancient of days. To the Jew, white hair was a symbol of wisdom.

But it also is a symbol of purity because it's so highly emphasized. It's 's not only His hair was white (wisdom) but His head. In other words, He absolutely personified, as well as wisdom.

Now listen. This is not a baby to be taught to obey. He is absolute righteous. He cannot obey. This is not a baby to be taught facts and truths. This is God who is wisdom personified.

It's far more than the manger. This is God. Verse 14 at the end. So, it

end says, "His eyes were like a flame of fire." What does that mean?

SearchIng, penetrating, nothing hidden. In Hebrews, Chapter 4 there is a very interesting verse. Verse 13 "Neither is there any creature that is not manifested in His sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Who is it? Seeing then that we have a great high priest. It's Jesus Christ. Listen. You know that nothing in your life escapes His gaze? Absolutely nothing. His eyes penetrate and they are the eyes of judgment. They penetrate to the deepest recesses of your heart. He reads you like a billboard. He is God. In John's gospel it was said that no man needed to tell Him anything, for He knew what was in the heart of a man. He reads you.

He reads you like a book held in your hand. You say, "Well, that bothers me." It bothers you? Then it's two reasons. One, you don't know Jesus Christ. Two, you're a Christian living in sin.

Look at Verse 50 "His feet like fine bronze as if they burned in a furnace. You know, there's something about little babies that I like. There are a lot of things, but one thing I think is really cute are the feet of little babies. Now my wife strictly goes for hands, but I like feet. You know, you see those little pink, tender, soft, chubby feet. I know that when Jesus was born it was so with Him.

But beloved, that's a far cry from what you just read, isn't it?

"His feet were like fine bronze as if they were burned in a furnace."

Have you ever seen a blacksmith with a piece of steel or a piece of metal pull it out and it's white hot? That's the way His feet are.

You say, "What is that?" That's the feet of judgment. The feet of a ruler or monarch representative of judgment, because kings are always elevated and when a subject was brought beneath His feet, it was the symbol of authority over him. So feet held the position of judgment.

Even the Bible talks about the footstool, the enemies of Christ being His footstool. Here are feet of flaming fired brass, or bronze, ready to stamp out judgment. That's a far distance from those little feet wrapped in swaddling clothes in Bethlehem. Verse 1 of Chapter 10 of Revelation "I saw a mighty angel come down from Heaven, close the cloud and a rainbow was upon his head and his face was as though it were the sun. His feet were like pillars of fire." That's Christ. "And he had in his hand a little scroll opened. He set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the Earth and he cried to the loud voices when a lion roars and when he cried seven thunders uttered their voices."

There's Christ with His burning feet, stamping one on the land and one on the sea as He takes back control of Earth from Satan. Feet of Judgment.

Look at Verse 15 in the second part "And His voice like the sound of many waters. When He spoke, He spoke with authority and majesty and dominance." Listen, that little voice that whimpered and cried in the stable was the same voice that settled the sea and was the same voice that called the dead out of the graves. It's the same voice that someday is going to speak and the universe will go out of existence just as fast as it came into existence when He spoke the first time. Look at Verse? 16 "And He had in His right hand seven stars." Those represent the ministers of the churches. of the churches. He controls the pastors. He controls His church, and out of His mouth went a sharp, twoedged sword. Now, the word "sword" here is "ramphia" and it refers to a great huge, broad sword that was wielded with two hands. It was used to just chop heads off or split people. Here He is seen with this sword going out of His mouth. This is judgment, friend. This is judgment.

There's another sword, the machira, which is a little dagger, and that's used in Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any twoedged sword." You see, in that Verse it means it convicts. But here it judges. Jesus Christ can use the word to convict, but He can open His mouth and another sword comes out, and that's the sword of judgment. Listen. This is not just a baby subject to His mother and father. This is the sovereign and the whole universe is subject to His judgment.

John reacted to this vision. How could he not? At the end of Verse 16 it says "His countenance was as the sun shineth in its strength."

He saw His face. "Countenance" means face. It was glowing like the sun.

He saw Him in the blaze of glory "and he fell down at His feet as though he were dead," Verse 17 says. If it hadn't been that he was in the spirit, Verse 10, he probably would have died. Then the Lord tapped him. It says, "He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, 'Fear not. I am the first and the last. I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore. So let it be, and have the key to Hades and Death,'"

The grave and Death. This is the one who conquered Death. This is the one who can be victorious, as He always has been. I like the statement, "have the key to Hades and Death." Listen, this is no baby. This is no little child susceptible to childhood diseases. This is no child that needs to be fed and wrapped and kept warm lest it die. This is the sovereign who rules Death and calls Death to His own summons. So we see His person and what a person!

Secondly, we see His preeminence in Verse 5 of Chapter 5 "That's who He is and there is none like Him." Secondly. Before we come to Verse 5, let me just set the stage. God is on the throne. The church has been raptured. It's time for the tribulation to begin. A sevenyear is the time when Christ takes back the Earth from Satan. The scene is Heaven and God is on the throne. He is holding in His hand a scroll, and the scroll is the title deed to the Earth. God is waiting for the rightful heir who will take the scroll and take back the Earth. Here is Verse 1 just as a background "I saw on the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a scroll. Written within and on back and sealed with seven seals." The Roman said you had to seal a will seven times. "I saw a strong angel proclaim with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and loose its seals?'" Who is going to take back the Earth from Satan? Who is going to bring it back and get the kingdom on the way? "No man in Heaven," says Verse 3, "nor in Earth nor under the Earth was able to open the scroll and even look on it." Who is going to take back the Earth? In Verse 4 John got all upset and started crying.

"I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and read the book, or even look on it." Verse 5 "Is there anyone worthy? Anybody who is possibly so righteous, so powerful, that He has the right and the power to take back the Earth from Satan?" Is there one?" One of the elders (the elders represent the church) said, "Weep not." John, don't cry. "Behold! The lion of the tribe of Judah, the ruler of David hath prevailed to open the scroll and loose its seven seals." There is one.

Yes! A preeminent one, a one above all others who can take back the Earth. He has the power to do it. Who is it? Well first of all, he calls Him a lion. "The lion of the tribe of Judah." Judah was the lion: the Messiah.

tribe and Jesus is the lion of the lion tribe. This is Notice that He is called the root of David. In other words, He wasn't only born of the seed and lineage of David, he was the one who created David. I don't see how people can get away from the deity of Jesus Christ and His absolute nature as God just from phrases like this. The root and offspring of David. Here is the root of David. He created David.

This is a lion.

We think of the manger and there's a little baby all warm and cuddled up in there and we see a whole lot of gentle little animals.

Throw that scene out and imagine Him not as a baby amid some gentle animals, but as a lion amid some men. You see the apocalyptic Christ.

John turns around and sees this lion, and do you know what he sees?

It's fantastic. Verse 6 "And I beheld a lamb in the midst of the throne under the four living creatures," (those are special angels, not just ordinary ones but special ones) "and in the midst of the elders stood a lamb." It wasn't a lion. It was a lamb. A lamb stood as though it had been slain, and the word in the Greek "slain" there is "violently slain." There was a lamb that was violently slain and bleeding. It had seven horns and seven eyes, and the horns most likely represented its power. The horn of an animal was its power. The seven eyes are representative of the sevenfold Holy Spirit. You can compare Isaiah 11 with that if you want to get into it deeper.

But he turns and sees this lamb. That's interesting. Let me give you a little footnote. There's a Greek word for lamb which is "omnos." It's just a regular word for "lamb" as opposed to sheep. But there was another word. That's the word "arnios." "Arnios" was used only twice in the New Testament, and it refers to a little, tiny baby lamb. It refers to a pet lamb. The difference between the "omnos" and an "arnios" was that the omnos would be running around in a herd. The arnios would be in the house with the kids, part of the family. Incidentally, "arnios" is used here, the little pet lamb.

Do you remember that in the directions for the passover what the family was to do? They were to go out and not just slay any lamb, right?

They were to find the little pet lamb, and they were to find one that was without spot and without blemish. They were to bring it in the house and leave it there for four days. For four days they were to fall in love with that little lamb. That little lamb was to become a part of their lives, to be cherished and adored and given over to the hearts of the household. Then at the passover they were to take that little beloved pet lamb and slay it. You say, "What in the world was that for?"

That was a perfect picture of Jesus Christ. Do you remember what it was like for those disciples when they gathered around and saw their master slain "whom they had grown to love." What a picture of Jesus, the violently slain pet lamb who came into the world to offer His love, and men slew Him. No. This is not a cared-for baby. This is a slain lamb. This is not a baby cherished and kept from injury. This is a little pet lamb that was violently bloodied in death. But you see, it wouldn't have been any good to have just been the lion if you weren't the lamb, right? Because the only way Jesus could activate His power in our behalf was when He gave sacrifice for our sin, right? So He had to be a lion. That's His strength. But He had to be a lamb. That's the sacrifice for sin. So He has the right because He was the lamb, and He has the power because He is a lion. Oh: the preeminence. Now in Verse 7, He came. He took the scroll out of the right hand of God and sat on the throne. He got ready to take back the Earth. Well, that fantastic scene of the preeminence of Christ leads, thirdly, to His praise. Look at it in Verse 8. How could you comment on this?

It's overwhelming! I mean, I can't even imagine it myself. Verse 8 "And when He had taken the scroll of four living creatures and four and twenty elders," that would be those super angels who are around God and the four and twenty elders who represent the church, "and they all fell down before the lamb." John sees this whole bunch fall down before the lamb, and every one of them had harps. Golden bowls full of incense, which represents prayer, was there. They were all praying and they were there with their harps and all of a sudden they start to sing.

Verse 9 "They sang a new song." Listen, friends. Something new has happened! Something new has happened! You say, "Well, what's so new?" Those four angels are singing. You say, "What's so new about that? Angels always sing." No they don't. You can't find anywhere in Scripture, really, where angels sing except here and one other place.

You say, "What about when the angels singing when Jesus was born?"

It doesn't say they sang. It says they said. "What do you mean by that?" Two times you find the angels singing. One is way back in: the Book of Job. I think it's Chapter 38 and Verse 7, and it says this: "The morning stars sang together." Do you know when that was? Before the curse. Before the Fall.

Now watch. Here the angels start to pick up a song again. Ah, they don't get into it too heavy. Just these four super angels begin to do it. When the rest of the angels join, look at Verse 12. Does it say singing with a loud voice? What does it say? "Singing with a loud voice." But there's a little bit of an opening here. Least these four inside angels are singing again. You say, "What's happening?"

Listen! It was before the curse that they sang and it will be after the curse that they'll sing again. When Jesus comes and takes back His Earth, removes the curse, conquers sin, the angels are

beginning to leak a little bit right here and begin to sing. In the meantime, they've just been saying and chanting.

Well, I like to think they're going to be singing a song. You could just apply the new song to the four and twenty elders, but I think the angels would just really like to sneak in a note or two.

They know what's coming. The song says, "Thou art worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, for Thou was slain, and was redeemed to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and made us unto our God a Kingdom of priests and we shall reign on the Earth." They're singing because the kingdom is coming, and they glorify Christ because He was slain and redeemed us to God by His blood. He made us a kingdom of priests and kings to reign on the Earth.

What a song! Well, that's 24 elders and the four living creatures singing. The church is singing and They get joined by these four angels, and then in Verse 11 says "I beheld and I heard the voice of many angels round the throne and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was 10,000 times 10,000 and thousands of thousands of thousands."

John doesn't have one of those little handy, dandy pocket machines, so he just threw in a whole bunch of thousands there. (Laughter) Verse 12 "And they were all saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.'" I'm going to be in that chair and sing it.

Those are gorgeous words. "And every creature that is in Heaven and on the Earth and under the Earth, and such as are in the sea and all that are in them heard 1 saying, 'Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb forever and ever.'" The four living creatures said, "Amen! So let it be." The four and twenty elders fell down and worshiped Him that liveth forever and ever. Boy, that's a scene of praise, isn't it?

What are they praising Him about? Because He conquered sin as a lamb, and He will conquer Satan as a lion.

So Jesus Christ is no helpless baby. He is a lion. He is no child to be doted on. He is a lamb who was executed for us. All of Heaven sang. It's amazing to me that there was such a large choir.

Why even bother to come down and redeem us just to add us to the chorus?

But that's what He wants. He wants the praise of all His creatures, so He came and redeemed us that we might sing with the rest: His praises.

"So let it be and let it be forever," it says in Verse 14. So we see His person, His preeminence and His praise. Look at His promise in Chapter 22. His promise.

You say, "Well John, that's all fine about who He is, but what does that do for me?. I mean, if I approach Jesus Christ, what am I going to get out of it? How do I get involved?" Look at this in Verse 7 "Behold I come quickly." Verse 12 "Behold I come quickly."

Verse 20 "Surely I come quickly." The word means "suddenly." Now watch. Jesus is coming again, and we believe it's soon don't we?

He's coming again, and He's coming suddenly when you don't think about it and when you're not ready. In a twinkling of an eye He will come, that's right. You say, and He's going to take those who are His own. That ?? / c??/ "Well what's in it for those who know Him?" Look at Verse 7. First of all, blessing. "Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." The word "keep" means to "obey." If we're obedient to this word, this book does one thing. It exalts Christ. If we join that exaltation and make Him the Savior and Lord of our lives, we've kept the words of this book, right? This is the revelation of Jesus '

Christ. If we believe that and we accept Him as revealed in this book and imply His death in our behalf by faith, then we have kept the words of this book, and blessed is he.

Secondly, not only blessing but reward. Verse 12 "My reward is with Me to get every man according as His work shall be." God is not only going to bless us for coming Jesus Christ, but He's going to reward us for serving Jesus Christ. So blessing and reward, but thirdly (and I love this) we as Christians have not only the promise of blessing and reward, but hope. How could we live without hope? Look at Verse 20.

"He who testifies these things saith, 'Surely I come quickly,.'" Here's our hope. "Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus." The only person who could say that is a person who has hope. Hope maketh not ashamed. I'm not ashamed that He's coming. No, no. This isn't a baby. No. This isn't . an infant. This is king. the King of kings and Lord of lords. Oh, what a promise. Blessing, reward and hope.

Lastly, His plea. Not only His person, His preeminence, His praise, and His promise, but His plea. You know, with all the majesty of revelation, He closes this out with a plea to everyone who reads.

Listen: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that wash their robes," and what did I say is the only detergent? The blood of Christ? "That they may have ?? ,?"

??c?right to the tree of life." Where's that? In Heaven. "And enter into the gates into the city," that's the heavenly Jerusalem. You say, "Oh. You mean if we wash our robes in the blood of the lamb we'll be in Heaven?" That's what it says. But outside are dogs, sorcerers and fornicators and murderers

and idolaters. Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. His plea is, "Look. There's blessing if you wash your robes in the blood of the lamb, but outside." Outside.

What a word. Outside God's presence forever.

Then in Verse 16 He says, "I Jesus have sent my angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David." I love this: "And the bright and morning star." One of the promises to the church in the early chapters of Revelation is that the Lord says if you are really an overcomer I'll give you the morning star. Christ is ours. That day in Bethlehem a star announced His coming.

That was a star announcing the birth of a star. Jesus Christ is the dawn star before the Kingdom. But He says, "I am the root and the offspring." You're looking at a manger and saying, "Who is it? Who is it? Who is it?" "It is I who have been presented through these 22 chapters. It is I." You say, "Well that's fine Jesus. I appreciate your person, I see your preeminence, I understand the praise of all those in Heaven, I even hear your promise about blessing and reward and hope, and I can even hear your plea that I need to wash my robes and all this, but what do I do? What do I do?" He comes with the closing invitation, the last one God ever gave in Revelation, Verse 17. He says this (and I love this): "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Keep the Ten Commandments.'" Is that what it says? The Spirit and the bride say do your best! The Spirit and the bride say be religious.

The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' On him that heareth say, 'Come. Come.' We want to repeat that, and let him that is at thirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.

Don't you like that? Listen. There are some things there that you need to see. First you've got to be thirsty. Then you've got to come. Then you take. Right? First you're thirsty. Then you come.

Then you take. Jesus is available, if you're thirsty. All He says is come and take. Nothing to do, nothing to earn. It's free. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Father, we thank you for the revelation of Christ. We thank you for what we've seen this morning hour. Even though we recognize that Christmas in itself is nothing, Thou art everything. Father, protect us from seasonal occupation with you. Help us to be occupied with you every waking moment of every day. Father, we thank you for the unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ. Thank you for all that He means to us and for all that He is in Himself. Father, we would recognize that there are some friends and dear ones gathered in our auditorium this morning who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior and they do not know the promise of blessing and reward and hope, and they have not come and taken of the water of life. We pray that this might be that hour when they do, that Jesus may not be some historical baby but that He may be the living Christ reigning within them. Lord we pray to this end, in

Christ's name and alone for His glory. Amen.

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