

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

### **Worshiping the Worthy Lamb**

Scripture: Revelation 5

Code: 80-202

I am in the process of going through the Book of Luke. We're still at the very beginning. We've been doing that Sunday by Sunday now for a number of months. But because we're in the details of that, it would be very difficult to sort of get you up to speed. And so I've set aside the Gospel of Luke for this morning. And I want to direct your attention to the fifth chapter of Revelation.

In the ongoing spirit of worship I want to draw you to that great scene of worship in which the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted in anticipation of His second coming. I'm so concerned that we never lose our focus on the return of our Christ. I'm convinced that Christians today are far more concerned about Y2K than they are the return of Jesus Christ. That concerns me greatly.

Not too long ago I had the opportunity to fly to Kazakhstan, which is one of the former Soviet Republics that now a nation, Kazakhstan, is in Central Asia on the backside of Tibet, the backside of China, 15 time zones away. I was invited to go there for the first pastors' conference that had ever been held in Central Asia. Sixteen hundred pastors came together for an intense week of study, and they asked if I would come and if I would teach them everything that the Bible says about the church in one week through a translator, which is always a challenge.

I started on Monday. In fact, I landed about six o'clock in the morning after a 30 to 35-hour sequence of flights. I landed about six o'clock or so in the morning, and by eight o'clock, I was full at it. I was staying the humblest of homes in Almaty, a very humble home, the home of a dear widow lady who had lost her husband in recent months. And she had offered her home for me to stay.

It was the humblest of humble homes, just the barest of necessities in that rather bleak and forsaken and barren place. She went to great, great length to provide for me little pieces of horse meat, which is quite a delicacy in that part of the world, and even was able to find eggs somewhere to feed me, because she wanted to honor me in that way.

I had the privilege of ministering to these precious people the Word of God about the church. And I was waxing eloquent, as eloquent as I can in a situation of being translated. And I was having a great time going through this. And a little committee of people came to me on the third day, which was Wednesday, and they met me in one of the little rooms outside the auditorium. And they said, "We have a question," through the translator. And I said, "Well, certainly. What is it?" They said, "When are you going to get to the good part?" (*Laughter*)

Well, you really don't want to fly 15 time zones away and be carrying on for two or three days and not having gotten to the good part. That can be a little distressing. And I said, "Well, just exactly what is the good part?" They said, "Well what we really want to know about is the future of the church. We want to know what God has prepared for them that love him."

And I realized that they were very much different than people here who are very caught up with felt needs and human needs and human comfort and satisfaction in this life, which is really irrelevant to them because they live in hope. This life really has little to offer and they wanted to know about the good part. So I said, "Okay. I need to keep giving you foundations. I need to keep going through what I'm going through."

But on Friday from the crack of dawn 'till as long as you can endure me, we're gonna go through the good part, and I'm gonna tell you everything that I can in a day about what God has prepared for them that love him." And we spent all of Friday in this incredible time of studying the future of God's plan for his beloved church. And it was an exhilarating day.

I took them right through this era, right through the time of the gathering of the Lord's people in the rapture, through the time of the establishment of the millennial Kingdom, and characteristics of the Kingdom and the glories of the return of Christ and what awaits us in the Kingdom and then the dissolution of this world and this universe as we know it, and the uncreation described by Peter, as "The elements melting the fervent heat," and then the creation of a new Heaven and a new earth. We went through the whole thing and it was an exhilarating time of celebration.

There were so many people who showed up, they didn't have enough soup for them, so they just put more water in it. *(Laughter)* That's the way it was. And they cook the soup in these huge cauldrons, the kind you boil a missionary in. *(Laughter)* But they wanted to know about the future. They wanted to know about what's coming.

Bill Johnson sent me an article on the internet. There's a new movement in quote unquote, "evangelicalism," that now is saying, "There is no second coming." It doesn't surprise me. Peter said, "There would come false teachers who would say, 'Where is the promise of His coming?'" They're saying that the only second coming the world will ever know occurred at 70 A.D.; that what is described in the Book of Revelation is simply a sort of metaphoric way to describe the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and that's when Jesus actually came and that's the only second coming there will ever be.

Well that is ridiculous and indefensible scripturally and it would put us in limbo, because if all of redemptive history and the whole Book of Revelation was ended in 70 A.D., then we don't have a relevant Scripture. But we're still looking for the glorious hope and the blessed appearing of Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ, are we not? We're living in that hope.

I'm not gonna wow you this morning with my homiletics or my hermeneutics, for that matter. I'm not going to attempt to be clever or say things you've never heard. I just want to see if I can't pull you into the worship of Revelation 5 and let it speak for itself. It's one of those chapters that needs very little embellishing.

In fact, it seems to me that whatever I may say about may tend more to diminish it than to add to it. So I do so with a bit of reluctance, but I think the way to culminate our time this week and the way to culminate our worship this morning is to just join in the praise of Heaven itself. The second coming of Jesus Christ is a major theme of Scripture.

In the Old Testament, one of Messiah's great names used, for example, in Daniel 7:13, is, "the coming one." The coming one. And always coming to establish a Kingdom. Come in great glory. Nine times in the Book of Revelation, Jesus Christ is called, "The coming one." Seven of the nine, out of his own lips. This is the heart of the Book of Revelation. It is the glorious end of redemptive history. It is the culmination of the life of the church. It is the climax of all of God's saving purpose. It's where we're headed.

Prophecy occupies one fifth of Scripture. And of that one fifth, one third of that focuses on the second coming. There are over 650 general prophecies in Scripture of which half of them concern Christ. And out of the 330 or so that concern Christ, 225 of those point to His second coming. Of the 46 Old Testament prophets, less than 10 speak of His first coming. Thirty-six speak of His second coming.

There are over 1,500 passages of the Scripture that refer to the second coming, one out of ever 25 verses in the Bible. For each time the Bible mentions the first coming of the Messiah, it mentions His second coming eight times. For each time the Bible mentions the atonement, it mentions His second coming two times.

Jesus referred to His return 21 times and over 50 times in the New Testament we're enjoying to be ready for His return. Yet convocation of church leaders and theologians met in Evanston, Illinois for a conference. And it was reported at that conference that only 10 percent of American Protestant ministers find any significance in the doctrine of the second coming.

Now we wouldn't deny the second coming. But there's an awful lot of Evangelical indifference to it. But Jesus is coming. The promise of God demands it. The words of Jesus demand. The guarantee of the Holy Spirit demands it. The plan for the church demands it. The plan for Israel demands it. The plan for the nations demands it. The humiliation of Christ demands. The exaltation of Satan demands it. And the expectation of the saints demands it.

One of the most breathtaking passages on the second coming is Revelation 5 and I want you to look at it. This looks at the second coming from Heaven's vantage point, from the side of Heaven in anticipation of it. Here we meet the conqueror of the world as He is about to come to take over the universe, to redeem it, to destroy the wicked and to establish and bless His people.

The scene as Chapter 5 opens is the same as Chapter 4. The scene is Heaven. In the center of the scene is the throne of God on a crystal platform with diamond and ruby glory splendor, and an emerald rainbow, lightening and thunder and glorious worship from the hosts of Heaven, all of that in Chapter 4.

The scene is Heaven and the focus is God on His throne being worshiped and shining forth in all His glory and all His splendor. And the scene is the same in Chapter 5. There's no break. All that glorious action, all that glorious praise described in Chapter 4 directed at the All Mighty God becomes directed in Chapter 5 at Christ who is worshiped in the same way God is worshiped, who is described in the same way God is described.

Now in general, let me just give you this idea. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of Revelation anticipate the tribulation that breaks forth in Chapter 6. Chapter 6 to 19 is the record of the exploding judgment of God in the world. And it comes through seven seals that unrolled. It comes through seven trumpets that are blown, and seven bowls, saucer-like, that are dumped out on the earth, used to describe facets of this judgment which ultimately culminate in the return of Christ, described in Chapter 19. So 6 to 19 is the judgment of God poured out on the earth.

At the same time judgment is being poured out, salvation is taking place to a degree never before known in the history of redemption. So many are saved from every tongue and tribe and people and nation, they can't even be numbered. The nation Israel is saved and 144,000 of them are sealed as ministers and missionaries and witnesses. Angels are preaching the Gospel as they're flying across Heaven. Two witnesses are raised from the dead to preach the Gospel so that the City of Jerusalem repents. It's an incredible time described from Chapter 6 to 19. But what you have in four and five is a glimpse into Heaven as the divine war machine begins to move.

These are the first machinations of that divine war machine that is going to bring about judgment, the end of which will be the establishment of the glorious Kingdom of Jesus Christ in His great return as described in Chapter 19. So as we come into Heaven in Chapter 5, we're beginning to see the judgment machine starting to move. It's very much like Ezekiel 1 where you see the war machine of God described as "wheels in wheels and shining fire and sparkle" that's coming off of that as God begins to move in judgment and in glory.

And so Chapter 5 begins, "I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, a book or better a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals." Now this is God who's seated on the throne in the midst of the Heavenly scene. And John is caught up into this vision and says, "I saw," in Verse 1. He says, "I saw," in Verse 2. He says, "I saw," in Verse 6. He says, "I looked," in Verse 7.

So he's literally watching what is transpiring in front of him in this vision form. And he sees upon, literally, epee, upon the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. It's as if the Almighty has, in this vision, extended His arm, and is holding something on the palm of His hand. It's a document. It's a scroll. It's made of papyrus or parchment or animal skin, as ancient scrolls were. It's called biblion, in the Greek. It was a time before there were books, often called, codex, C-O-D-E-X. This is a scroll.

Now this particular scroll that John sees in the vision is written inside and on the back, and then rolled up and sealed with seven seals rolled a little bit and sealed, rolled a little more and sealed, rolled a little more and sealed, rolled a little more and sealed. Now this gives us a clue as to what it is. Roman wills were sealed seven times.

This is God's last will and testament. This is God holding out the title deed to the universe. This was typical of a contract in the ancient world. They would write the details of the contract on the inside and then would write a summary of the contract of the contract on the outside so that one would know what it was all about.

It would be summarized on the outside, but in careful detail on the inside. So you could generally know what it was about by seeing what was written on the back of it. But you really couldn't understand the fullness until you were able to unroll it seal by seal by seal. This kind of contract was known all over the Middle East in ancient times and had been used, as I said, by the Romans since the time of Nero. The full contract on the inside and some representation of it on outside was very typical.

Marriage contracts were done in this fashion. Rental contract, lease agreements, release of slaves, contract bills, bonds, all kind of legal documents were done in this way. Also, it was done with Hebrews. Prior to the Roman and the New Testament time, the ancient Hebrews did this. In Jeremiah, you will find such a title deed to a piece of land that was similarly designed as in this fashion. So this is a very familiar scene to the original readers of the New Testament and those who understood the world at that time.

Here is an official, legal document. In this case, seven sealed indicates that it was a will and testament. In fact, that is what it is. It is God's will and testament. It is the title deed. It is the title deed, really, to the universe. And God has the ownership and He is passing it to His heir, to His rightful heir to take possession of what is His. The details of the inside unfold from Chapter 6 on.

In Chapter 6 the first seal is broken and there is a bloodless coup, or a war. The second seal and you have pestilence. The third seal and you have famine. And the fourth seal and you have death. And then the seals go on. And finally, when the seventh seal is opened, that's the last one.

The judgment of the seventh seal is described as "seven trumpets." And the seventh trumpet which is blown is described as "seven bowls" poured out at the end of which time Jesus comes to establish His Kingdom, to destroy the ungodly. And the final judgment of Armageddon and establish the Kingdom of peace and righteousness on the earth, at the end of which it is the dissolution of the universe as we know it, even in a renovated form, for the Kingdom and the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth.

So this scroll describes the process by which possession of the universe is to be retaken by God through His rightful heir, back from the usurper who took it when paradise was lost in the garden. The scroll then, is the full account of how the rightful heir will take back what is His through severe wrath and judgment. It is the scroll of doom. It is the scroll of terror. It is the scroll of judgment.

But it is also a scroll of glory. And it is a scroll of hope because as it unfolds, you find that there is salvation going on during that period of time. There is the salvation of innumerable nations. There is the salvation of Israel. And in the end, there is the establishment of the Kingdom.

That's why John, later on in a vision in Chapter 10, says he took the little book and he ate it and it was sweet in his mouth because God was going to be vindicated. Christ was going to be exalted instead of being humiliated. The righteous would be lifted up. The Kingdom would come. Righteous, peace, and joy would reign, and that was sweet. But he said it went into his stomach and it was bitter because people would perish and be doomed and damned to the lake of fire. That's all in that little book, in that scroll in the palm of the Almighty.

He holds out His plan to judge the wicked and to bring the Kingdom. In Verse 2 John says, "I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?'" Who can bring about what Paul in Romans 8 calls "the glorious manifestation of the Sons of God?" This is a strong angel. This is a strong angel with a loud voice, because his voice, as it were, is symbolically going to every corner of the limitless universe, to the farthest reaches of the universe.

And the question is asked, "Who is worthy? Who is worthy?" This is the first point I want you to see in the chapter of the search for the worthy one, the search for the worthy one. Neither man nor angel stirs. The glorified spirits of just men made perfect. The saints in Heaven don't stir. The holy angels don't stir. Who has the right to take the universe back? Who has the power to take it back? Who has that privilege to overthrow the intruder, the interloper, Satan, the prince of the power, the heir, the ruler of this world, the prince of darkness?

Michael was there. He didn't say anything even though he was super angel who had contended with Satan over the body of Moses, as Jude tells us. Gabriel was there. As glorious an angel as he was, given the privilege of enunciation as to the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias and Elizabeth, and then, of course, to Mary, and even to Joseph, most likely. Gabriel was there, but he doesn't speak.

And then there were 10,000 times 10,000 angels who were there and they didn't say anything. And thousands of thousands, and the four living creatures were there, those very unique cherubs that surrounded the throne of God. And they didn't say anything. The spirit of Abraham was there, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, Elijah, Elisha, Moses. Job was there. Ezekiel was there. Daniel was there. They didn't say anything. Peter was there. Will and James was there. Even when John was writing this, they were dead.

And of course, when the scene unfolds reality-wise in the future, John will be there, and all the apostles will be there. And all the saints of all the ages will be there. And all the great reformers will be there. And no one will speak. Verse 3 says, "And no one in Heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it." Udes, not even one, udes, not even one. No one; no one in Heaven, no one on earth, no one under the earth, no one. Anywhere and everywhere in the entire universe, and there was no one. From hell to Heaven and all parts in between there was no one. No to open it; no one to look and examine its contents. No one who had the legal right, no one who had the authority, no one who had the power to execute it effectively.

Well this was a great grief to John in his vision. John really is in the vision. It's a spiritual reality and he gets caught up in it with unrestrained emotion in Verse 4, "And I began to weep greatly." Same verb used in Luke 19, I think Verse 41, where it talks about Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, sobbing. John begins to weep and weep and weep. Why? Because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it. Now why was he weeping?

Well you gotta understand the background. John was a Jew, and a hopeful Jew. John was a Jew who believed in the true Messiah and expected the Messiah to establish the Kingdom. John had all the hopes that everybody else had that followed Jesus. John was the one, along with his brother, that sent their mother to say to Jesus, "Can we sit on the right and the left hand in the Kingdom?" They were expecting the Kingdom to come. They were expecting the Romans to be destroyed. They were expecting exaltation. Didn't happen.

Instead, the Jews rejected their Messiah. They executed their Messiah. John was there, of course, for the resurrection. He was there. He was restored wonderfully at the end of his Gospel, he describes that wonderful meeting with Peter, and how the Lord even restored Peter. He was restored to faith.

But I think he still expected maybe the Kingdom would come soon. Because in Acts 1, you remember what they said? "When is the Kingdom gonna come? At what hour is the Kingdom gonna come? Is it near? Will you tell us? Will you tell us?" And instead, in 70 A.D., the whole nation of Israel was destroyed. In 70 A.D., the Romans came into their Titusbespasyand and they sacked the City of Jerusalem and massacred, according to historians, 1,100,000 Jews. Just to desecrate them, they took 100,000 bodies and just pitched them over the wall.

Within the next number of years under Hadre, in particularly, 985,000 Jewish towns were destroyed, the people massacred. And the nation literally was decimated. John had lived through that, and John was weary of it. When was the messianic promise gonna come to pass? When was the Kingdom gonna come? When was Satan gonna be stopped? When were the demons gonna be stopped? When were the ungodly gonna be stopped? When were the people who had intruded into that Holy land gonna stop? When was God gonna intervene? When was there gonna be an end to this? When was righteousness and peace and joy gonna to prevail? When was it gonna happen?

And then the church -- I mean the church had been begun on the day of Pentecost, and John was there. The church grew rapidly in Jerusalem. And the church grew beyond in Judea and then into Samaria and then into the outer most part of the world. And John was very familiar with the church in Asia Minor. John knew that church very well, served that church in his old age. All the other apostles were dead.

It was 96 A.D. and only he was alive. He was the last living apostle. And he had watch the church in Asia Minor, that wonderful church in Asia Minor, those seven great churches that were born out of the Ephesians church. He'd watched those churches decline and decline and decline and decline and decline until the Lord of the church is writing seven letters to them in Chapters 2 and 3, and he's on the brink of coming into those churches, in five cases, and shutting them down.

The church wasn't powerful. It was weak. The church wasn't changing the world. The church wasn't ushering in the Kingdom. Five of those seven churches were on the brink of extinction, one way or another. And only two of them had any strength at all. John had seen that. He knew he was at the end of his life. And John was sitting on a rock called the Island of Patmos in the Mediterranean Sea. I've sat there myself. It's a bleak stone that rises up out of the water. You can sit at the highest point and see all the way around it, the surf. It's very small.

He sat on that rock as an exile. That place was a prison from which one couldn't escape. The crashing waves against the rock would assure that. And John was sitting there realizing that this was not the glory he had anticipated when he sent his mother to ask if he could sit in the glory with his brother. It all seemed to be unraveling in a tragic, serious ending.



And now the little glimmer of hope, perhaps filling his heart was dying because there wasn't anybody who could make a difference. There wasn't anybody who could take back the earth from the present condition. And so he starts to sob because no one is found worthy to open the book or look into it.

I understand the sadness of his heart. It's really the sadness of God's people through all the centuries. Those are the tears of that first couple. They're the tears of Adam and Eve driven out of the Garden of Eden, the tears of Adam and Eve as they bowed over the first grave, as they watered the dust of the ground with their tears over the silent, still form of their son, Abel, who'd been murdered by his brother, and they began to see the curse unfold.

They're the tears of the children of Israel in bondage in Egypt as they felt the pain of the curse and they cried to God in their affliction and slavery, the tears of the children of Israel who'd died in the wilderness and never saw the Promise Land, the tears of God's elect through the centuries as they've cried on into Heaven and God has heard their sobs, the sobs that had been wrung out of their heart by the pain and sorrow and sadness and unfulfillment of life, the tears of all those who've looked on their silent dead and stood behind their bodies as they opened the grave to place them there, the tears of trial and suffering and heartache and pain and sorry, the tears of those who have made war with demons and with Satan in this world. They're all those tears all gathered up in John's eyes, and he weeps for all of us. You mean it can't change? You mean it's always gonna be this way? You mean never will there come a restorer?

In Verse 5 we move, though, from the search for the worth one, to the selection of the worthy one. The scene changes in Verse 5, "And one of the elders said to me, 'Stop weeping. Stop weeping.'" Weeping because he wanted to see the world redeemed. Weeping because he wanted to see the Kingdom come. Weeping because he wanted to see the power of evil broken.

He wanted to see retribution on Satan and demons. He wanted to see Christ rejecting people dealt with. He wanted Israel saved. He wanted Christ to reign. He wanted the curse reversed. He wanted glory to fill the universe. And so he was weeping, and the elder says, "Stop weeping." He calls a halt to it in very straightforward and commanding tones. "Why? Look. Behold the lion that is from the tribe of Judah. The root of David has overcome so as to open the scroll and its seven seals. Look, John. There is someone. It's not an angel. It's not an elder."

And as I look at this idea of the elders, I believe the elders are believers who are in Heaven in their spirits, who have been gathered there -- I should say elders who are in Heaven and have been gathered there in their spirit and their body in the rapture of the church. I see the 24 elders as the raptured church. And they're there and they're saying, "Look, John," one of them is saying, "Here is the lion from the tribe of Judah."

That's a title for Messiah taken out of Genesis 49:8-10. And it's designed to show Messiah as menacing, as threatening, as vicious, as destructive, as deadly, powerful, strong. That's what the Jews expected. They really did. And that's one of the reasons why they rejected Christ the first time He came, because He just wasn't like that. They expected the Messiah to come with ferocity. They expected the Messiah to come just destroying the ungodly, the reprobates, destroying the apostate gentiles that had polluted the Holy Land.

They expected a fierce and destructive work by the Messiah. And when the Messiah came, Jesus, He was the lion, but he didn't act like it. His lion-like work has yet to come. He was the lion of the tribe of Judah. But they didn't know it, because His lion-like judgment still has yet to come. He's called "the root of David." That's another messianic title taken out of Isaiah 11.

He's not only the son of David, as he is in the genealogies and as the angel, Gabriel, announced to Mary. He's not only the son of David that is in the royal line, He is the root of David. He not only comes from David, but David comes from Him. He bears royal blood and He bears the right to rule the throne. But He was not just from David. David was from Him.

They expected the Messiah to be connected to the Davidic line. They expected Messiah to be from Judah because it says in Genesis 49, "That from Judah He would come." They expected Him to be a lion. He was all of that. "And so the worthy one is here," says the elder. "He has overcome," Verse 5, "so as to open the scroll in its seven seals." He has earned the right to take back the earth. He has proven Himself to be a worth heir to the Father. He has overcome. When? In His death and resurrection.

He has conquered Satan and death and sin at the cross and through the resurrection. The lion is here. The king is here. The overcomer is here. And most amazingly, John does look -- notice Verse 6 -- and he looks and it says, "I saw between the throne," with the four living creatures, those four special angels and the elders, "a lamb." Wait a minute.

The elder said, "The lion has overcome. Look." And John looked for a lion and found what? A lamb. What a revelation. The lamb is the lion. The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, is the lion of Judah who will usurp back from the usurper, the universe. And this lamb is standing, which means it's alive. But it appears as if it had been slain. And that's exactly the way it was. The lamb was slain. But the lamb is alive.

Here is this magnificent imagery of the lamb. And believe me, the Jewish people understand that. Going way back, all the way back to the time Adam and Eve, they understood animal sacrifice. They understood that. And they understood that all those animals, all those lambs that died couldn't take away sin. But there would, one day, come a lamb.

John announced that lamb, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." This is messianic. This is the Messiah in his substitutionary role as the sacrifice for sin. And John looks and sees what he thought would be a lion. It turns out to be the lamb which is the revelation way of saying, "The lion is the lamb. The lamb is the lion." And the lamb is alive and He's ready for conflict, this time with the dragon as Satan is discussed in Chapter 12.

Here is the picture of Christ. He has died. He is alive. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He stands alive. And He moves to the conflict. He is the lamb who is also the lion. Notice further, it's an usual lamb. Seven horns. Horns are symbols of power. Seven is the number of perfection or completion. So you have the powerful sovereign, almighty, all powerful warrior lamb. Horns are what animals use to fight, and that's why the horn is always associated with power.

Seven eyes, seven eyes. Eyes are always associated with understanding or with knowledge. And these eyes are the seven Spirits of God, or better, the seven-fold Holy Spirit. In other words, you have here a lamb that is all-powerful, the number seven showing the perfection of his power that is omnition. Number 7, showing His perfect understanding. And His eyes are described as the seven spirits of God, or the seven-fold spirit of God.

The seven-fold spirit is described in also Isaiah 11:2 where it gives the attributes of the Holy Spirit. Here, the Holy Spirit in his omnitions is informing the lamb as to His work. The usual gentle comforter is coming in the future to provide information for the lamb and the lion to destroy. So this is the one who has won the right to take the universe. This is the one who was killed and is alive. This is the one with all power and all knowledge supplied by the Spirit of God.

Verse 7 says, "He came and took it out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne." Boy, this is a monumental moment. I wish I was enough of an orator to make of this what should be made of it. Just a simple little Verse "He came and He took it out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne." This is monumental. This ought to somehow rise out of your Bible to become a mountain peak of relief.

The final monumental act in the Heavenly scene is the great culminating act in human history. This is what precipitates the second coming. This is what precipitates all the judgments that precede the second coming described in Chapter 6 to 19. The goal of redemption is about to be reached. Paradise is to be regained. The ungodly are to be destroyed. The godly are to be taken into the glory of an eternal Kingdom. Christ is coming back. Satan will be conquered. Demons and the devil cast into the lake of fire. And only the righteous will prevail. The Son of Man starts all that, inaugurates all that, initiates all of that, pulls the trigger on all of that. Sets it in motion when He reaches over and takes the scroll out of the hand of God.

The appearance of the lamb taking that scroll means that Jesus Christ is taking the title deed to the universe and He will begin to break those seals immediately, in Chapter 6, and as each of them breaks, the sequence of steps takes place as He takes back the universe step by step, seal by seal by seal. The seventh seal is broken and described by seven trumpet blasts that occur over a period of months. The seventh trumpet is blown and describes a series of seven bowls that occur over a period of days. And then Jesus comes at the end of that great unleashing of judgment to establish His Kingdom. But it is all set in motion in this one act in Verse 7 when He takes it out of the Father's hand. Believe me; God didn't give it to Him if He didn't deserve it.

That brings us really to worship. The search for the worthy one, the selection of the worthy one becomes the song to the worthy one, in Verse 8. It's little wonder that everything in Heaven broke loose in praise, isn't it? This was it. The end could be seen in sight. When this scene takes place in the future -- and this is a prophetic vision -- when this takes place, all Heaven bursts forth.

When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lord. And it says that's at the time when they began to praise Him. And the praise goes all the way to the end of the Chapter I find it well \_\_\_\_\_ impossible to improve on this. I'm even hesitant to invade it. It is what it is. Just a few things to note: The end of sin, the end of Satan, the end of demons, the end of the wicked, and the glorious establishment of the reign of Christ in righteousness all takes place when this scene unfolds.

First of all, you have the four living creatures who are always mentioned. Because apparently, there are four angels who surround the throne in some intimate act of worship that goes on all the time. And then you see the 24 elders. And again, for many reason which we don't have to go into in detail this morning. I don't have time to.

But I believe these are the members of the church, the glorified saints that have been raptured into Heaven. They fall down before the lamb and they have harps and golden bowls full of incense. This is very interesting imagery here. The harp is associated generally with music and with praise, and rightly so. It was the traditional musical instrument used in praise, and you could see that through the Psalms and 1 Chronicles and various places in the Old Testament.

But there's something more to harps. And I don't have time to develop it. But suffice it to say that harps in the Old Testament are also associated with prophesy, with prophesy. I could give you a number of Scriptures. Suffice it to say for this morning, 1 Samuel 10:5 gives an illustration of it.

The prophet, Samuel, says to Saul, "It'll come to pass when you come here to the city, you'll meet a company of prophets coming down from the high places with a saultry and a harp before them, and they shall prophesy. Again, later in that same passage, it gives the picture of them coming down

prophesying and so forth. And they have with them the harps.

Harp, interestingly enough, were associated with prophesy. Here we could say then that the 24 elders and their harps would certainly use their harps to praise God. But also those harps would be associated with praise connected to fulfilled prophesy, fulfilled prophesy. So the 24 elders are praising God that this arrival of the lion/lamb, the root of David, taking the title deed, beginning to move toward a second coming and establishment of righteousness, this fulfills prophesy for which they are sort of catapulted into praise.

And then it mentions golden bowls full of incense. And lest you be confused about what that means, the interpreter tells you what it means; the interpreter being the Holy Spirit, which are the prayers of the saints. So what happens here is the praise of the 24 elders is praised based upon the fulfillment of prophesy and the prayers of the saints. Prophesy said that this would happen and the saints have been praying it would happen, and when it happens the 24 elders burst forth in praise.

Fulfillment of prophesy and the answer to all the prayers of the saints. Later in Chapter 6, you see more of the saints under the alter doing that kind of praying. Everything that we have been promised in the Scriptures, everything that we have believed in and hoped for, all that believers have cried for to be delivered from sin and disease and Satan and flesh and demons and the curse, has come to pass. All that God promised is about to take place.

All that we've prayed for is about to happen. And the praise is launched by the 24 elders. Verse 9, "And they," referring to the 24 elders, "sang a new song." "New song" is a term used for the song of redemption. It's used many times in the Psalms. New song, song of redemption. By the way, this very song may be the song in Isaiah 42. I'm skipping a lot of things, but I can't skip that. Isaiah 42 may be this song. Isaiah 42:9, "Behold the former things have come to pass and now I declare new things."

Verse 10: "Sing to the Lord a new song. Sing His praise from the end of the earth. You will go down to the sea and all that is imminent. You islands and those who dwell on them, let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voices and the settlements where Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud.

"Let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains. Let them give glory to the Lord and declare His praise in the coastlands. The Lord will go forth like a warrior. He will arouse His zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout. Yes, He will raise a war cry. He will prevail against His enemies." That may well be the song.

They sang a new song. "Worthy art thou to take the book and to break its seals." They may start out with Isaiah 42, or this may be a variation on Isaiah 42. "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and break

its seals. For thou were slain at its purchase for God with thy blood, men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." What a great verse that is. What a great verse that is. It refers to the death of Christ. It refers to the death of Christ paying a ransom, purchasing for God, men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

And then Verse 10, "And you have made them to be a Kingdom and priests to our God. And they will reign upon the earth." The Kingdom has come. The Kingdom has come. This priestly nation, this group of kingly priests is finally going to enter into their destiny. The 24 elders sing the song of redemption. They know it because they're the redeemed.

And that's what goes on in Heaven, I think probably in its crescendo. It's probably going on all the time in Heaven. This may be what Heaven is always doing. But there's an element of crescendo that occurs just before the Lord returns. And John says, "I looked and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures who are always there around the throne, and the elders, and the number of them was 10,000 times 10,000, and thousands of thousands."

And if you do the arithmetic, it's 100 million plus. But I think it's beyond that. And all these angels join and they say, with a loud voice, "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive." And there are seven characteristics, power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. Again, there's a sort of a seven-fold perfection in the lamb. It speaks of His authority, His supernatural wealth, His omnitions, omnipotence, respect, majesty, and adoration.

They're all true of God. And they're all true of Christ. And that's because Christ is God. And all this praise of the 24 elders stimulates the angels to join in. And then the praise of the angels just goes further in Verse 13. I don't even know how even to explain this. "Every created thing which is in Heaven on the earth and under earth and on the sea, and all things in them."

I guess this is the fulfillment of Psalm 1:50, "Let all that has life and breath do," what? "Praise the Lord." All animate creation, and maybe even inanimate creation somehow is given a voice. Certainly everything that has life and breath. "Every knee will bow," as Philipians 2 said, "wherever it might be. All creation will rejoice." The same creation in Romans 8 that's groaning in travail will be rejoicing. All the whole universe will begin to ring with the joy of praise as the lamb begins to take back the universe.

And the four living creatures who again are central to the throne of God. They are the resident Heavenly Baptists because they kept saying, what? "Amen." (*Laughter*) And the elders, who are already down, fell down and worship. They must have gone from a kneeling position to a prone one. Soon this great assembly of redeemed, glorified saints from the church, and also saints redeemed out of the tribulation time, and the angels, this entire assembly will leave Heaven soon after this. Why?

Because when Jesus comes, He will come with 10,000 times 10,000, won't he? He'll come with His holy angels. And when He comes, He'll come with His saints, won't he? And all of this great throng is getting ready to come out of Heaven when the Messiah returns riding on that white horse in Chapter 19 as He is described, with all those dressed in white behind Him, angels and saints alike, to come to earth, executing judgment, and gathering His elect from the four winds to establish his earthly Kingdom and after that, the glory of His eternal reign.

That's the good part, folks. That's reality. That's not fantasy. That is reality. The worthy lamb will come and conquer the sinful world and reign forever, and we will reign with Him, glory upon glory upon glory. I don't know about you, but I say with John, "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

"Father, we thank you this morning for this glimpse of glory that lifts us from our normal trivial, mundane life. May we ever and always live in the light of Heaven. May we always look for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior. May we never become earthbound, but always setting our affection on things above and not on things on the earth. May we having this hope in us, be purified, even as He is pure.

"May we rejoice in pressing toward the mark which is the prize of the upward call, and the prize of the upward call is to be with you and to be like you. That's the prize when we're called up. May that be the goal when we're living here. May we live for that great day. May we be consumed with that blessed hope, thus loving His appearing, and waiting the crown which is life, the crown which is rejoicing, the crown which is righteousness, the crown which is glory. We say with John, 'Even so, come Lord Jesus.' For that, we wait and hope and trust and rejoice. Amen.

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