

02b REV

Let's resume our study now in Revelation chapter 4. We have seen this great door open in heaven and John is the recipient of a command that says, come up here, and he goes. This is not the only place in Revelation where the heavens open up. In this case, you have it opening up and John ascends, but toward the close of the book, you have the door opening again and the Lord Jesus emerges.

He comes down. In chapter 19, verse 11, I saw heaven open and behold a white horse and he who sat on him was called faithful and true and in righteousness he judges and makes war. So, that's the difference between the door opening for the rapture, for us to go up, and the door opening for the second advent, the return of the Lord Jesus on the white horse, accompanied by his armies to come down and wreak all kinds of havoc.

So, two open doors, seven years apart, as it were. Also, we've seen that when he does get up there, he sees the throne set in heaven and one on the throne. It's the first thing that attracts his eye.

And the one sitting there is like a jasper and a sardius stone. I've talked about those and how they are transparent. And another thing which I forgot to mention is, remember when we studied the breastplate of the high priest? He's got those twelve stones.

Well, the first stone is the jasper and the last one is the carnelian or the sardius that you see here. So, these two stones sort of comprehend the whole spectrum of stones that are in the breastplate of the high priest. And once again, this speaks of the priestly function.

The priest is standing there, the high priest, with that breastplate and those stones, which in his case represent the twelve tribes of Israel, also represent the fact that they have a relationship to God, that this is their avenue of approach to God. So, the carnelian or the sardius, as you have it spoken of here, is red or ruby, red in color. And so you have the spectrum of colors represented here that go all the way from clear through red to blue and finally to green.

Emerald is typically considered to be green, though not always. And so you have the complete spectrum of colors, what is suggested here by these three specific stones that are mentioned. The primary colors are blue, red and green.

You have green for emerald. You have sardius or the carnelian here, which is red. And then you have the jasper, which is typically clear.

You know this also by going to chapter 21, verse 18, where it says the construction of the wall of the city is of jasper and the city is pure gold like clear glass. You get the idea that the gold and the jasper is all transparent. Of course, gold in nature is not

transparent, and so the jasper may or may not be.

But that's the suggestion. So, there is the glassy sea like crystals surrounding the throne. We talked about what that symbolically represents, God's complete control over the forces of evil.

This ought to be a comfort to us, because sometimes it seems like evil is like a bad moon on the rise, that it's got the influence and got the power, and we don't seem to have much by way of power to resist it or power to escape it, especially when you look at the national and international scene, and you say, I'm just a flea riding on a cork in a great ocean of forces greater than me. Not so. God knows each of us individually.

You have those seven spirits that surround the throne. God ministers to us individually. He knows each of us by name.

And evil literally doesn't rear its head in God's presence. Nothing happens without His say-so. And you might have a tempestuous sea on earth, but in heaven that sea is as smooth as glass and as clear as crystal.

It's not dark and foreboding, and it's not out of control at all. Then we saw the living creatures, and we've seen these recently in Ezekiel. I'm not going to take you to the Ezekiel passages, but I will take you to Isaiah chapter 6. If you keep your finger on Revelation 4, I just want to point out real quickly an interesting fact here that you may or may not have thought about.

Isaiah chapter 6, we have a very similar description from many hundreds of years earlier. In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, this is Isaiah talking, sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim.

Each one had six wings. With two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. One cried to another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of his glory. And then that train coming down to the temple, of course, in Isaiah's day, you have a little bit different situation than in John's day because Israel is the people of God, and so the connection of the throne of God to earth is the temple. That's where the Ark of the Covenant is, and the Holy of Holies, and so this symbolic picture gives us the connection.

The train of his robe goes down and fills the temple, and that's the connection. That's what links and ties together the heavenly throne of God with the earthly manifestation. But you have these creatures, the seraphim with six wings, and then you have one of the seraphim flying to Isaiah with a live coal in his hand, he touches his mouth, and you have the whole rest of that scene.

Well, here you have these four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back, and in

verse 8 it says, The four living creatures each have six wings, full of eyes around and within. They do not rest day or night, saying, and the first part of the song is the same, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty. But now they say, Who was and is and is to come.

And remember back in Isaiah, of course naturally I lost my place there, but in Isaiah chapter 6 they say, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. And that's a present tense statement.

The whole earth is full of his glory. Now they say, Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord of hosts, or the Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come. And this is the Alpha and Omega first and last idea.

Verse 9, Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne. Once again, no human beings are going to have any crowns until the judgment seat of Christ where they are awarded, right? So this has to be after that, and yet this is before all of the events of the tribulation. So I think the judgment seat, God is efficient, he's not going to waste a lot of time in terms of earth time on that process.

We're going to pretty much be weighed in the scales and either found acceptable and faithful or found wanting, we'll get our judgment there. And then if we are worthy, if we are overcomers, it is we who are represented by these twenty-four elders. If we are not found faithful, we are going to be those who are on the outside weeping and wishing we had done something different.

So, these living creatures, and my point is, by going to Isaiah chapter 6, you may have heard the distinction before that in classes of the holy angels, you have the cherubim, and you have the seraphim, and then you have your messenger angels, guardian angels and the like. I believe that the seraphim are the cherubim. I don't think this is two different classes of angels.

The only place where the word seraph used as a designation for angels occurs is Isaiah chapter 6. Seraphim. Seraph is the Hebrew word that means to burn. The seraphim are the burning ones.

Well, every other place we've seen the cherubs, they are associated with the coals of fire, the flames of fire that surround. Both in Isaiah and in Ezekiel and in John, there is a flame associated with the throne of God. And the fact that you have these creatures, their faces, their wings, and the rest of the description is the same.

The seraphim are the cherubim. This is my view. And why are they given a different name by Isaiah? Well, there are slight differences in every description.

Even Ezekiel's two descriptions, if you remember chapter 1 and chapter 10, slight differences in the description because their presence is always given in symbolic terms. And depending on the context and the point of the symbolism, you have different aspects of them emphasized. In some cases, you only see four of the six wings.

In other cases, you don't see all of the four faces. It just depends on what is in view. So, these living creatures in Revelation chapter 4, verses 6 and 7 are cherubim.

Same faces we saw in Ezekiel. What do the faces remind us of? You have the lion, the calf, the man, and the flying eagle. We talked about these before.

The lion is a ruling, dominating symbol. Jesus, very shortly, is going to be referred to as the lion of the tribe of Judah in 5.5 of this book. Who's the lion? Well, Richard the lion-hearted.

You look at the coat of arms of the kings of England. They have a lion rampant up on its hind legs on one side. I saw a special the other day on the Learning Channel.

I saw about 45 seconds of it. They were talking about dragons in mythology and dragons in history. I didn't get all the history, but at some point, one of the kings of England was real fascinated with dragons.

So, he replaced one of the animals on the coat of arms of the king of England with a dragon. So, you had a lion on the left side and you had a dragon on the right side, as you all look at it here, each coming up. Then, when it comes to King James, the guy of Bible fame, well, he thought the dragon was kind of silly and he was from a different outfit.

So, he put a horse, in fact, not a horse, he was Welsh or something, I think. So, he put the Welsh unicorn in the place of the dragon. But on the other side, there's always been this lion because the lion is the regal ruling symbol and has been for centuries and cultures down into the infinite distant past.

So, the lion. This speaks of power, of who's going to go up and rebuke a lion or stir up a lion. You have that spoken of in the Old Testament.

So, this speaks of ruling power. The second one is like a calf. And the calf, of course, is the ox, the domesticated animal.

So, the lion speaks of wild, untamed power. The ox, or the calf, speaks of tamed and domesticated power, strength under control, plowing straight furrows, pulling ox carts and the like. The third has a face like a man.

This, in distinction to the beasts, man versus the animals, what's the difference? Sentience, intelligence, wisdom, applied knowledge. This is administrative power. Man is in dominion over the earth.

He has been given that dominion by God. It's yet another kind of power. And then the eagle is the fourth face.

And this is yet another kind of power because the eagle, why is it our national symbol? No thanks to Benjamin Franklin, who wanted the turkey. We have the American bald eagle. I mean, can you imagine? Really? Ben might have been a wise man, but that was just a real bomb of an idea, in my view.

But you have the bald eagle, and what does the eagle do? It's graceful. It soars. It comes down and strikes out of the sky.

It's predatory. It's not a scavenger. It's not a carrion bird.

It's not like the vulture or the buzzard or the, you know, out there eating dead things. It's a bird of prey, and it has that power. It's untouchable.

It gets up in the air, and it's above all things. It's notable for its eyesight. It can spot a field mouse from however many thousand feet in the air.

So all four of these are symbols of power. You say, well, the calf doesn't seem very powerful. Just think ox.

There's not as big a distinction between calf and ox in Greek as there is in English. So four different aspects of power. But if you remember the cherubim, these are four faces all on the same head, right? So the head of all things to the church is Christ.

He is the power. He is the ruler. He is the authority.

And these are different aspects of one thing. So you see this represented in the four living creatures. And you have them on all four sides.

Whenever you have the number four, typically it refers A, to the earth, and B, specifically to the cardinal directions, north, east, south, and west. It speaks of comprehensiveness in the same way that when Paul talks, he says, comprehending the height and the depth and the length and the breadth, dimensions in four directions, comprehensiveness. So this is the comprehensive nature of God's power.

That's what it speaks of. And it's represented in these who reflect His glory. They have the six wings full of eyes around and within.

Now this is symbolic, just as the wings are symbolic and the faces are symbolic. God's throne is not surrounded by hideous, mutated, bizarre creatures. This is a symbolic picture.

You've seen the kings and the queens in a deck of cards. Well, real kings and queens don't look like that. That's a caricature.

It's a representation. This is a picture just as chapter one showed the Lord Jesus with hair white like wool, feet like burnished brass, a sharp sword issuing forth. Jesus doesn't have an actual steel two-edged sword hanging out of His mouth.

It's symbolic language. This is the same thing. There are not hideous, frightful creatures around the throne.

There are four cherubim, but to human comprehension, this is what they speak of. Full of eyes around and behind. What does that tell you? This doesn't mean that they're on CBS.

It means that they are aware. They are constantly alert and watchful. And there is nothing that they do not see.

You can't get behind one and sneak up on him because they've got eyes before and behind. We talk about having eyes in the back of your head. Well, in symbolic terms, so do the cherubim.

Full of eyes around and within. They do not rest day or night saying, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty. Now, this doesn't mean that they never take a breath or they never stop saying this.

Because we know there are intervals where they don't say this. How do we know that? Verse 9. Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks, the 24 elders fall down before them. Well, they would be constantly falling down if they constantly gave out this praise.

So constantly means regularly. Do they do it every hour? Is there such a thing as an hour in this context? I don't know. But there are appointed times at which they give this praise.

And at those appointed times, the 24 elders fall down and worship as well. Was and is and is to come. There's a lot of emphasis in these early chapters of Revelation on the past, the present, and the future.

Why? That's the nature of the message of this book. It looks back at what has been. It concentrates on what is now.

And it looks ahead to what will be. And the good thing about that is there's never time when this book is not applicable. Even for us who won't be here for the events of chapters 6 through 19.

Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, I could talk about those three elements, but I think you can think about them and figure that out on your own. There is a difference between glory and honor. Glory has to do with an inherent attribute, an inherent characteristic.

Honor is that which is ascribed to you by others. You can be in an isolated place and still have glory, but you cannot be isolated and have honor. Honor is the view that others hold of you.

And no matter what context you want to talk about, a man of honor or a man without honor, we use that term rather loosely, but honor is the view others have. So glory, God's innate holiness, righteousness, worthiness. Honor, that which is recognized, seen, and appreciated by others.

And thanks is given for both of the first two. We are grateful for whom and what God is. Aren't you glad that God is not some sort of evil genius who enjoys pulling the wings off of flies? Because He is, after all, omnipotent.

And if He were evil, there's nothing any of us could do about it. And He might be up there just laughing Himself silly, putting us through all kinds of torturous life for no good reason. And we ought to be glad that He is holy and righteous and just, and that He's not Satan and that we don't have a diminished God of evil.

Honor and glory and thanks are given to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever. You can't outweigh God. You can't get in front of Him.

You can't get behind Him. You can't get before Him. And you can't get after Him.

Whenever they do this, the 24 elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever and cast their crowns before the throne. Now, and I don't mean to be facetious here, but there's a sense in which these must be sort of like yo-yo crowns because they regularly cast them down, and yet the next time the creatures give praise, they're down there casting their crowns again. So although, what does this speak of? It's an attitude.

I have nothing that did not come because of the grace of God. Obviously, in literal terms, there's only so many times you can cast the crown down before it doesn't, I mean, do they cast it down and then after a suitable interval, they creep out there and grab them and put them back on, get back on their thrones and wait for the next iteration. You know, is there a little police crew that goes out there and sweeps up like the Zamboni that goes around between periods in a hockey game and smooths everything out and gives everything back? You know, in a tennis match, you have the people that crouch down by the net and whenever the ball hits the net, they run out there and grab it.

Well, you'd have to have crown boys or something to run out there and grab the crowns and give them back to the elders. But obviously, this is symbolic. And what does it mean? The 24 elders, every time God is praised, they recognize that everything they have, symbolized by their crowns, but including their thrones, their white robes and so on, their ruling power is all due to God.

And they say, you are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power for you created all things and by your will they exist and were created. Well, we see angels in heaven. We see church age believers represented in heaven.

We see God Himself represented. Now in chapter 5, John says, I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, who's that? God the Father, a scroll written inside and on the back sealed with seven seals. Interestingly, John makes no attempt to describe the visage or the appearance of Him who sits on the throne.

He just says it's like gemstones that run the spectrum from the first to the last in the breastplate of the high priest. And there's this aura, the rainbow of glory. But he doesn't say, I saw a face, I saw a head, I saw a body.

But we know that it was anthropomorphic because he says, in the hand of the one who sits on the throne, I saw. So from somewhere in the vicinity of the glorious appearance on the throne, he sees the hand holding a scroll written inside and on the back sealed with seven seals. And the word translated as scroll here is biblios.

We get the word book or Bible from this, but it is obviously a scroll. It's the only kind of book they had in those days. Written on the inside and the outside.

Why? It's sealed up and you can't unroll a sealed scroll and see what's written on the inside. But you can read part of what's written on the outside. Right? If it was only written on the inside, it's sealed up and the outside of the scroll would be blank.

But it's got writing on the outside and because it's sealed, John knows that it's written on the inside. It would be kind of silly to seal a blank scroll and only write on the outside. So he says it's written on both sides.

What does this tell us? There are parts of God's plan, there are parts of God's purpose that are apparent, that are knowable, even before these seals are broken. There are other parts that are unrevealed and unknowable. I had an interesting discussion.

I think some of you all were involved in a similar discussion not long ago talking about if Satan is so smart and he can read the Bible, why hasn't he figured out that his struggle is pointless? You've got the book of Revelation telling him he's going to be thrown in the bottomless pit even when he gets out and he leads the Gog Magog rebellion. He's going to be defeated. He's going to be cast into the lake of fire.

Why does he bother to resist if he knows that God is omnipotent and all of these things are written down and plain to see? Well, there are aspects of God's plan and purpose that are sealed and not even Satan knows what they are. He's operating off of what he does know and what is revealed. And he thinks he's got a shot.

He thinks he's got a case. He thinks if he can make a certain set of points, if he can

establish a certain case before God, the remaining elements of what are written and revealed in the Word of God will become void and moot. And he thinks in his creaturely wisdom that he can pull it off.

He thinks he's got a shot at it. Obviously, if he didn't, he wouldn't bother to continue his struggle. But what he doesn't know, what no one knows, is what's written on the inside of the scroll.

And even though the book of Revelation shows these seals being broken and this scroll being unrolled, it is given in symbolic terms and much of what is written on the inside of the scroll is not in the book of Revelation. We see through a glass darkly. The account of the breaking of these seals is cryptic.

And I can tell you right now that when we finish this study, we will not know but a small fraction of what is actually written on the inside of the scroll because that scroll is in heaven and that scroll right now has not been opened. And those seals have not been broken. This is a preview.

It would be like trying to judge the whole movie. My family loves to do this. You rent a movie, you get a DVD or something and at the beginning, they've got a preview for six other movies.

Well, that's one of their favorite parts. I would just skip over that and go straight to the feature presentation. But no, we have to watch the previews.

And so in the preview, they show some of the best special effects, some of the most teasing and tantalizing scenes. But you can't just watch that and get the whole movie, can you? The book of Revelation, what we're about to see in these next 14 chapters or so, is just a tantalizing preview. It is not the whole thing by any stretch.

Just remember, the scroll is in heaven and the seals have not been broken and nobody knows what's written on the inside. The only hint we have of what's written inside is what God reveals to John in this trailer, this preview. Of course, what gets me is they still call them trailers, but they come at the beginning now.

So you talk about having the cart before the horse or the trailer before the truck or whatever, that's what we have now. So, scroll written inside and on the back. And written on the back, there are some things that you can tell.

And really, what we see in Revelation is kind of the writing on the back. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals. Now, why a strong angel? Why not a featherweight, skinny angel? Why not just an average angel? Why is it a strong angel? Well, it's the same reason that he speaks and proclaims with a loud voice.

You don't tend to look at some wimpy, little, shriveled, dried-up person and then hear some booming, thunderous, stentorian voice, right? You tend to think... In fact, it's really comical when you have some great, big, giant, weight-lifting guy or some big, muscular boxer like, say, Leon Spinks or... who's this that just got his rear end kicked again? Tyson, Mike Tyson. You look at the guy and you expect him to have at least a reasonably deep voice and he sounds like a cartoon character when he talks. And it's comical as a result because you expect somebody big and strong to have a big, strong voice.

That's the idea here. It emphasizes the fact that this proclamation is important and it is entrusted to an angel who is capable of broadcasting this question throughout the entire heavens. There's no corner of the symbolic heavens here that doesn't ring with the question that this angel pronounces.

Why is that important? Because it's the most important question asked. Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals? It's the most important question in the book. Who is worthy? It's the question that every human being has been faced with since the dawn of time.

Who is worthy? Who is worthy of our trust? Who is worthy of our worship? Who is worthy to be praised? Who is worthy to be served? And we tend to answer that question in the first person. I am worthy. It is my interests that count.

It is my desires that should be met. It is my plan that should be fulfilled. It's my purposes.

It's my appetite that should be filled. But if you find the true answer to that question, you realize that everything in history revolves around God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is worthy.

Worthy of glory. Worthy of honor. Worthy of praise.

Worthy of worship. Worthy of service. Worthy of our self-sacrifice.

Worthy of our faith. That's why this question is given to a strong angel. God emphatically makes this point not only through the message and the messenger, but through His Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Himself comes and convicts the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. And this is the question that is expressed in that threefold conviction. Who is worthy? What do you think of Christ? And it's a question that we have to answer not only at the point of salvation, but day by day by day.

It's easy to just live like anybody else. It's easy to get caught up in the affairs of this life. All of us do.

We can hardly help it. But we have to keep bringing ourselves back and asking ourselves this question. Why am I living what I live? What's going to be the long-term effect? You think about people 100 years ago, 150 years ago.

They lived, they had their passions, they had their desires, they had their experiences. You think about somebody that dies. All of the knowledge that they've accumulated, it's especially tragic when it's like our servicemen that we just lost a group of Marines over in Iraq and it made me think about this again.

Their parents raised them from tiny babies through toddlerhood, through elementary school and junior high and high school, sent them off to boot camp. And they have 17, 18, 19 years of experiences and they were focused on and there was training and there was love and there was encouragement and there was teaching lavished on them and focused on them. Many of them are well-known in their communities and well-known to their family members.

And there's a lot of investment in each human being. And then death strikes and all of that in an instant is seemingly erased. And you think, what a tragedy, what a loss that is.

And it reminds us that that really is not the end. If someone lives their life and undergoes their training and pursues their goals with one eye on eternity and with one eye on the Lord and if we do what we do to please God, it doesn't vanish in an instant. It is written down.

God is not unrighteous to forget your labor, it says in Hebrews, if we are people of faith. It's amazing. God in Christ has given us the ability to redeem the time, to convert the mundane daily events that normally blow away in the wind and are lost forever into eternal glory, into eternal treasure.

It is converted, it's preserved, it counts and it lasts. This is the thing Solomon struggled to comprehend and to understand in the book of Ecclesiastes. This is what mankind has always longed for.

Man thinks, well, you've got to try to find immortality, you've got to find the fountain of youth, you've got to just stay alive so that your accomplishments are not forgotten. You've got to find a way to live on in a monument or in your children or in accomplishments or in fame. But ultimately, the only way to make the seconds and the minutes and the hours count is to convert them into eternal things, things that survive the rolling up of the heavens and the earth.

You and I have been given that power, we've been given that privilege and that's why when the question is asked, who is worthy? When we answer that question for ourselves and we say, you know what? The Lord Jesus Christ is worthy. I can live my life to glorify Him and to please the Father to whom I have been brought. Jesus is the way, the truth

and the life.

We come to the Father through Him and we come to eternal things and we come to inheritance and to reward and to eternal possession and eternal inheritance through the one who is worthy. It is remembering the answer to that question, who is worthy, that helps us convert our time and our effort into something that lasts. Otherwise, it won't.

And you might as well be an unbeliever in terms of everything you do and everything you think and everything you strive for just going up in smoke. Most of us would like to make a mark, would like to do something that has significance. In the human realm, people look at fame.

In our realm, we look at making Christ the repository, the treasury of our efforts, of our faith. And that lasts. It's written down.

It is not forgotten. So, who is worthy? To open the scroll and to loose its seals? No one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look at it. Now, why those three places? This is a scroll that deals with human history and the seals are to be broken by someone who is human.

It's not a matter of an angel opening the scrolls. It is as though the angels are not even under consideration. How do we know this? Because when it says no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look at it, who is in view here? Well, who's on the earth? Who's under the earth? And who's in heaven? In heaven, at this point, you have the 24 elders.

You know you've got humanity up in heaven. You know that on earth, you've got living human beings. What about under the earth? Who's under the earth? What's anybody that's ever lived in the past that's not resurrected yet, right? You could bring back Moses.

You could bring back Noah or Daniel. You could bring back Abraham. You could bring back Seth or Enoch or Adam or somebody.

Under the earth implies those who have succumbed to death. And when the landscape of human beings is surveyed, no one is found worthy to loose the seals. If you want to see that angels are considered and dismissed, it really doesn't matter.

But it's earth that is in view. So John wept much because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll or to look at it. Why does John weep? I mean, I have difficulty with this because he's just been caught up.

He sees this great scene. Then he sees this scroll. He sees it held in the hand.

And this strong angel says, who is worthy to open it? And when no one shows up to open

it, John is greatly saddened. What does he know? What does he see? What is he thinking that makes him sad enough to weep? I mean, men typically don't just weep. I certainly don't.

Most men I know don't just weep for no good reason. If you're watching Old Yeller or something, you might kind of have to work at it a little bit. But most of the time men don't just weep.

But John weeps. Why? John understands that because this scroll is in the hand of God, and because the question is asked that it needs to be opened, it's vital and certain things can't take place. Without the opening of the scroll, certain things that John is looking forward to are not going to happen.

If the scroll is not opened, a consummation is not going to take place. If the scroll is not opened, the ultimate plan and purpose of God is not going to be fulfilled. And you get the idea that John senses here, this is the John that wrote the Gospel of John.

These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name. And if this scroll is not opened, God's plan of redemption is not going to find its fulfillment and its completion. Israel has not yet been completed.

Israel has not been fulfilled. The covenant promises of God have not been made to come to pass. And this is a sad thing.

And there is a lot comprehended in the fact that John weeps. It's interesting that John is the apostle that recorded the fact that Jesus wept in John 11:35. John wept much because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, Do not weep.

Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals. Highly significant. What are the titles given to the one who is worthy? One of the elders said, Behold, the Head of all things to the Church, the Groom of the Bride, the Jesus Christ of the Day of Pentecost, the Jesus Christ of the Road to Damascus.

It doesn't say anything related to the Church, does it? It says, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. This is Jesus' Israelite identity. This is His role related to Israel.

The Root of David, same thing. This is all about Israel. This is all about the fulfillment of Old Testament promise.

The Church is raptured. The Church has been judged. The Church has got its white robes and its crowns and its thrones.

Not Israel. John is, after all, Jewish, is he not? And like Paul, he's not going to be happy until Israel has received all of the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. Don't weep.

The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals. And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Now, where is Jesus right now? Where is the humanity of the Lord Jesus situated? He's at the right hand of the Majesty on High, isn't He? So, it would make sense that if you're going to see Jesus, you would see Him at the throne.

And that's exactly where John sees Him. Of course, in this symbolic vision, you just got through seeing Him down on the Isle of Patmos, didn't you? Where He was a completely different picture. He was glowing hair, white, burnished brass feet, the sword, the whole picture there.

Now, He's up here, and this is a different vision, but here's the Lord Jesus. Notice in verse 5, He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and in verse 6, He is the Lamb that had been slain. This is why He is worthy.

This is why He has prevailed to open the scrolls. If Jesus had not passed the test of the cross, He wouldn't be able to break the seals and open the scroll. The two are inextricably related.

The only one who has died for the sins of the world, the only one who has fulfilled the plan and purpose of God in salvation, the seed of the woman, the root of David, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, is the Lord Jesus. And because He succeeded, and because He was victorious in the first advent, He is qualified to open the seals that are going to lead to the second advent. That's why He's pictured as the Lamb as though it had been slain.

It reminds us that it is through His death as the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world that He is qualified. Seven horns. Horns represent power.

Seven horns. Perfect power. It's another aspect of the power represented by the four living creatures.

But seven is the number of perfection. There is no power. All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth, Jesus says.

And seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God. We already saw this. The seven flames that are before the throne.

This is perfection in judgment. Here's seven eyes. Perfection in perception.

The Holy Spirit is a flame of fire. What did John the Baptist say about the Lord Jesus

coming the first time? I baptize you with water. He will baptize you with what? The Holy Spirit and with fire.

The Holy Spirit comes. One of two things is going to happen. We're either going to get perception, or we're going to get judgment.

Seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. God the Holy Spirit is the one that translates our prayers for us. Remember Romans chapter 8? Communicates them to God in groanings that cannot be uttered.

He is the channel of communication. It is the Holy Spirit that links the presence of God upon the throne to what's going on on the earth and so on. Well, he came and took the scroll out of the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

This is a beginning point now. We're going to see the seven seals broken one by one. A total of 21 judgments are going to fall on the earth over the seven years that are upcoming.

And that's where we'll pick up verse 8 next time. Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the wonderful revelation of heavenly things that we see in this book.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will give us understanding, help us to understand its application in our daily lives. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.