

The sealed book

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[0 : 00] We turn our attention this morning for a little while to Revelation chapter 5 at the beginning. I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back side sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof. And no man in heaven nor in earth neither under the earth was able to open the book neither to look thereon.

And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me weep not.

Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah the root of David hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld and lo in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts and in the midst of the elders stood a lamb as it had been slain.

Having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. Now in the previous chapter John tells us of the vision that was given to him of heaven.

[1 : 22] And as he looked into heaven he saw the glory of God. The glory of God the creator. And now the attention of John is turned to the glory of Christ the redeemer.

And the verses before us speak here of the sealed book and the lamb. The only one who was able to open the sealed book and to put into effect what the book contained.

It says I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back side sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof.

You see in this vision it would seem as if John saw the hand of God. And in the palm of God he saw this book.

Now the books in John's day are not like the books of our day. Here I have the Bible before me just like any other book.

[2 : 40] It's written pages enclosed within these hard covers. But in John's day the books were scrolls. You know a scroll is a piece of wood.

And the parchment was wound round the roll. And you held the roll in one hand and you pulled the parchment down and you read it.

And then you turned it to wind the book up again. Well this is the kind of book that John saw. And he saw not just one scroll but seven scrolls to make up the book.

The one book. The one volume. And each of these scrolls was sealed. And no one could break the seal.

No one could unfurl the roll to see what was in the book. And you see this is where our curiosity is awakened. And we long to know what does that book contain.

[3 : 50] And like John you see we are confronted by our inability to open that book. And to discover the contents. John tells us here I wept much.

Because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book neither to look thereon. And so the question arises in our mind what is the meaning of this book.

And what are its contents. It's a book that we are told was written on both sides. That is the writing was on the underside as well as on the top side of the scroll.

And it was in as I've said seven sections. And each section was sealed. Now in our day we are used to hearing about manifestos.

And the Conservative Party have their manifesto. They are indeed at this present moment so they say. Implementing the manifesto that was produced at the general election of 1979.

[4 : 58] The Labour Party are in the process of drawing up their manifesto for the next election. The Liberal and the Social Democratic parties who are now in alliance.

They soon will produce their manifesto. And what is a manifesto? It's a set of proposals. Which will be put into effect.

When a mandate has been given. For that purpose. When a mandate to govern has been given. Now strictly speaking.

The proposals in the manifesto. Are a pledge. Of the way in which the life. Of the people of our nation.

Is going to develop. Now God has. Proposals. God has his manifesto.

[6 : 04] And this manifesto is going to be brought into effect. And indeed it is at this present moment in time. Being brought into effect. What is God's manifesto?

It is just this. That the power of evil must be subdued. And that good must emerge.

And that the kingdom of God must be set up. A kingdom in which he is at the very centre. And everything is in perfect harmony. God's will is not that evil.

Should triumph. And good be discredited. God's will rather is the opposite. God's will rather is the book of God's decrees. And this is what God's book is all about.

And this book which John saw in heaven. Was the book of God's decrees. God's decrees. God's decrees. God's decrees. God's decrees. God's decrees.

[7 : 13] God's decrees are his fixed purposes. And God's decrees. God's decrees are his fixed experiences. And God's decrees are his fixed purposes. And God's decrees are his fixed convictions.

And God's decrees are his fixed purposes. with the complete overthrow of Satan and the ultimate triumph of Christ and his church.

We have already on other occasions referred to the symbolic character of numbers in the book of Revelation. And as we have said, seven is a combination of three and four.

Four is the number relative to the human side, isn't it? We speak about the four corners of the earth, the four winds that blow on the earth.

Three is relative to the number of heaven, the three persons of the Godhead. And when you combine four and three to make seven, you are really speaking about the purpose of God in its entirety as it is going to affect the earth and as it is going to affect heaven itself.

[8 : 33] And so that's why this book has seven seals. It's in seven parts. And these seven parts have to do with this world and have to do with heaven.

And God's decrees and God's purposes are that Satan is going to be overthrown. Evil is going to be subdued.

Christ is going to be victorious and all in all. But if this book of seven seals is God's manifesto, the question arises, how is God's purpose effected in heaven and upon earth?

And this was the question that was proposed by the strong angel. Now, it's not that some angels are stronger than others. That's not the meaning at all.

In John's estimation, this particular angel seemed to be stronger than the other angels. But really what it means is that this particular angel was superior to the other angels.

[9 : 53] And this particular angel cried with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof?

Who is worthy to put into effect God's purposes, God's decrees? In other words, who is now going to effect God's purpose in the realm of human destiny?

And who is going to effect God's eternal purpose in the realm of grace? Who is able to accomplish the defeat of the forces of death and of hell?

Who is able to accomplish the ultimate triumph of God and his church? That's the question. And in response to the angel's question, it tells us, No man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

And John says, I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. You see, John was well aware, and he was made to be well aware, that God's grand overall design in grace, according to his eternal decree, can only be effected by Christ.

[11 : 36] It distressed John that there was no one in his human horizon, no one in his human horizon who could put into effect God's plan and purpose for the subjugation of evil and the promotion of good.

And it's made perfectly clear to him that the overthrow of Satan and the triumph over sin and death, which is beyond human power, is not beyond God's power.

Let's consider now the one who alone can unseal the book. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof.

Now here, John is introduced to the risen and the ascended Christ. And the designations of Christ are revealed to John.

What are these designations? And what do we infer from these designations? Well, first of all, our Lord is introduced here to John as the one who is the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David.

[13:11] Judah. You remember Judah was the fourth son of Jacob. And not only was Judah the fourth son of Jacob, but he became one of the prominent sons of Jacob.

prominent among his brothers. And Judah gave his name to his descendants. You remember how just before Jacob died, the old man gathered his sons around him.

And he took each son, singled him out, pronounced upon him a blessing. And when Judah came up to his bedside, he looked at Judah and he said to Judah, Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise.

Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies. Thy father's children shall bow down before thee. You're going to be a powerful man, Judah.

Judah. And not only that, but Jacob goes on to say, Judah is a lion's whelp. From the prey, my son, thou art gone up.

[14:30] He stooped down, he couched as a lion and as an old lion, who shall rouse him up? And then Jacob makes this remarkable prophecy about his son Judah.

Ah, you're a strong man, he says. Your brethren are going to bow before you. You're going to be one of the prominent ones in the tribe.

And he goes on to say this by way of prophecy, the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come. And Shiloh is the Messiah.

And unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Now as time went on, the tribe of Judah did emerge as the strongest and one of the most powerful of the tribes of Israel.

And in time, this tribe of Judah produced unquestionably the greatest of Israel's kings in the person of David.

[15:42] And it was understood that a greater king than David was yet to arise. And indeed, the prophets of the Old Testament pointed out to this greater son of David that was going to come, the Messiah.

It was predicted where his place of birth would be, Bethlehem. How he was going to be virgin born. How he was going to become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And when our Lord did eventually make his advent in Bethlehem and brought up in Nazareth, he was the Shiloh.

He was the lion of the tribe of Judah that Jacob had spoken of not so long ago. He was the one of whom the writer to the epistle to the Hebrews says that he came from Judah.

For it is evident, says the writer to the Hebrews, that our Lord sprang out of Judah. And of course, if you care to trace the genealogy of Jesus as it's given in Matthew and as it's given in Luke, Matthew it is given from the point of view of Joseph.

[17:05] Luke it's given from the point of view of Mary. And when you trace back through Joseph and Mary, you come to David and David back to Judah.

He is Shiloh. Shiloh. And in his letter to the Romans, Paul states that Jesus Christ our Lord was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.

So that Jesus was of the line of Judah. He is the lion of Judah, the root of David.

And that designation, you see, bespeaks the courage of Christ. The fierceness of Christ. It's an indication, isn't it, of the character of Christ as he will one day be judge of all who can stand before him if once his wrath begin to burn.

And because of his might and because of his power and because of his greatness and his glorious achievements, only he and he alone can open this book and put into effect the purposes of God and the decrees of God that have to do with earth and heaven.

[18:37] only Christ as the lion of the tribe of Judah can overthrow Satan. Only Christ as the lion of Judah can triumph in grace.

Now suddenly John sees our Lord in another form. The picture is switched. And this time in more contrast to the lion John sees Christ as the lamb.

And I beheld and lo in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts and in the midst of the elders stood a lamb as it had been slain having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

in the lion we have strength courage victory. What do we have in the lamb?

Gentleness patience suffering and innocence. Now in the old dispensation that's the old testament I'm talking about the lamb figured prominently in the sacrificial system.

[20 : 07] The lamb was used for propitiating an offended God. Offended because the law had been breached and because the law of God had been negated.

But this sacrificial system was a temporary expedient for satisfying the wrath of God. The once for all sacrifice had to be made by God's Son.

And that is why the Son of God was born of a woman. The Son of God took human nature. Why did he take human nature?

Why did God's Son have to come and be born of this virgin woman? Why did God's Son have to have a body like mine with bones and flesh and blood?

Because he had to suffer and you can only suffer in a human body like this. And he had to die and you can only die in a human body like this. And so in the fullness of times the Son of God became one of us being born of a woman made under the law made to suffer made to die in our humanity.

[21 : 30] He came to be the sacrifice the propitiation and John the Baptist called him this the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

And now in heaven John sees not the dead Christ of the cross but the ascended and the risen and the glorified Christ.

And this is the point that as he sees Christ in heaven he sees Christ bearing the marks of his wounds, bearing the scars of his achievements.

I saw in the midst of the throne a lamb as it had been slain. Now if by the grace of God you and I get to heaven the malformations if you have any will disappear.

And the marks that disfigure you at this present moment will disappear. We talk about a process of rejuvenation.

[22 : 50] My, what a rejuvenation is going to take place when we are rid of all the scars and the marks that are upon us at this present moment. Oh, but you may say there aren't many scars in my body really.

I've never had any operations or anything like that and I've never had any malformations thank God.

Ah, but there are the scars on your mind and the scars caused through sin and the sorrows of life.

They will all disappear. But you see our Lord is different and he carries the marks of his sorrow of the indignity that he suffered of the death that he went through and he carries these marks into heaven in order that they may present him to you and to me to be indeed wonderful.

What a saviour. So John sees the lamb as it had been slain. Now his time is up and I don't want to keep you in this building for very long.

But I would like just to make a remark or two about the seven horns and the seven eyes. You know that the horn on the animal is the emblem of the animal's power.

[24 : 20] And throughout the Old Testament there are references to the horns of animals indicating their strength. The horn of the unicorn for instance indicating the unicorn's strength and power.

And so when John sees the lamb here with seven horns again you see it's seven horns the perfect number indicating the power that belonged to the lamb all power is given unto me in heaven and on earth.

That's why Jesus is able to give the commission to his disciples go into all the world preach all power belongs to me. So John sees them with the seven horns but he also sees them with the seven eyes and the seven spirits of God.

what are the seven eyes? Well again isn't it just a matter of symbolism? He sees the Christ who knows all things and who sees all things.

The Christ who knows all things in heaven and all things on earth. Who sees all things. Nothing can be hid from the omniscient eye of our Savior and our Lord.

[25 : 48] And Christ is in complete possession of the Holy Spirit in his sevenfold character. You know long ago the prophet Isaiah predicted that with the arrival of our Lord upon earth there would

also be the arrival of the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

and there shall come forth to the prophet Isaiah a rod out of the stem of Jesse and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

Now here is the sevenfold character of the Spirit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. That's the Spirit of the Lord. One The Spirit of Wisdom Two The Spirit of Understanding Three The Spirit of Counsel and Might Four The Spirit of Knowledge Five The Spirit of the Fear of the Lord Six The Spirit of Understanding Seven So when Christ in heaven is seen by John in his royal and priestly glory he is seen in all his power and in all the fullness of the Spirit.

In heaven then Christ is revealed in his kingly glory and in his authority. He is the lion of the tribe of Judah the root of David. He is also revealed as the lamb as it had been slain having seven eyes and seven horns.

Now you know how in our day today 1981 there is a broad a fierce a proud a nationalistic spirit and to identify themselves as distinct people nations have adopted emblems that they feel are suitable for them to describe their power and their superiority.

[28 : 01] For instance take Russia what is the emblem that Russia uses? It's the bear. Take for instance Britain what is the emblem that Britain uses to describe its power?

It took this emblem in the days when the mighty British Empire extended from sea to sea and shore to shore. It was the lion the rampant lion. What is the emblem of France?

It's the emblem of the tagger to show its fierceness in the day of battle. What is the emblem of the United States? It's the spread eagle.

And so we could go on now all of these creatures are cruel and ravenous. But the kingdom of God is different and what is the emblem used of the kingdom of God?

It's the symbol of the lamb. Do you know Christ as your saviour? And are you proud of him?

[29 : 16] The Russians are proud of their bear. The British are proud of their lion. The United States are proud of their eagle.

Are you proud of the lamb? And are you prepared to go about with him whithersoever he goeth? I close with this.

Let's remember that Christ is only a lamb to his people. and he treats them gently and kindly.

But to those who are not his people he is the lion of the tribe of Judah. And who can stand before him if once his wrath begins to burn?

the book has been opened. The decrees of God are now in the process of being effected.

[30 : 20] Put you your trust in Christ and let me put mine in him as well. Let us pray. we thank thee O God for thy goodness to us and for the revelation given to us of thyself in thy majesty in thy grace.

May we know thee as the lamb who was slain for us. Forbid that we should know thee at the end of the day as the lion who in judgment exercises vehemence and wrath.

Be with us now. Take us to our homes in safety and blot out our sins. For Jesus' sake. Amen.