SECTION III

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

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Part III
"THE THINGS WHICH SHALL BE HEREAFTER"
Rev. 4:1-22:21
Chapter IV

THE CHURCH TRANSLATED—"ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE"

Rev. 4:1-11

We have seen, in our introductory lecture, that the book of Revelation falls logically into three main divisions, as outlined in 1:19. We have already considered the first vision of the glorified Son of Man, to which the risen Lord referred when He said to John, "Write the things which thou hast seen." We have observed that in chapters two and three the inspired writer gives us an outline view of all church history, from Pentecost to the translation of the church. And now we are ready to study about "the things which shall be hereafter"; that is, after the church meets the Lord "in the air." This is the subject of the third main division of the book, and it covers chapters four to twenty-two.

In this series of studies we shall use these words of our risen Lord as the general theme of each lesson on this third and last division of this prophecy—"the things which shall be hereafter." Again, even a casual reading of this section will reveal definite sub-divisions of this remarkable portion of God's prophetic Word. These we shall try to present in separate lectures, seeking to follow the Holy Spirit's orderly unfolding of the startling events which are to begin to run their course after the church has been caught up to be with Christ.

Before we consider in some detail chapter four, which is our lesson for today, let us try to get a bird's-eye-view of this division of the book. To do this we need to read the section as a whole. First we see the door "opened in heaven"; and we hear a voice, saying, "Come up hither," a remarkable prophecy of our Lord's call for His church at the rapture. The description of His glory, His throne, and His redeemed ones "round about the throne" creates within us an increased longing for His soon return. This chapter we shall study today.

But let us go on in our outline view of these remarkable chapters. Chapters five and six have to do with the seven-sealed book and the opening of the seven seals; chapters eight, nine, and part of eleven, with the seven trumpets; chapters twelve and thirteen, with the seven personages; chapters fifteen and sixteen, with the seven vials of the wrath of God; while chapters seven, ten, part of eleven and all of fourteen have to do with highly significant events, treated here in a parenthetical way. Chapters seventeen and eighteen describe the terrible doom of apostate Christendom during the tribulation period. Chapters nineteen pictures the triumphant return of Christ in glory with His saints, to rule upon the earth. Chapter twenty outlines the thousand years' reign of Christ, the doom of Satan and the wicked dead; while chapters twenty-one and twenty-two give us a beautiful picture of the new heaven and the new earth and the eternal state of the redeemed.

In brief, these are "the things which shall be hereafter," following the translation of the church, which is His bride. They occupy the time designated in prophecy as "the seventieth week of Daniel," the millennial reign of Christ, and the judgment of Satan and all his followers. They give us also a foreview of the eternal bliss of the saints in glory. Before we attempt to study this section of the book of Revelation in detail, let us read it repeatedly, prayerfully, fixing in our minds these outline facts. And as we read, surely we shall thank God that we shall be with Him before the terrific judgments of "the great tribulation" begin to fall upon a godless world. Surely we shall take courage also, even in our own day of apostasy, as we meditate upon the joys of heaven—"the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Now let us turn back to chapter four, which pictures the church translated, "round about the throne." We have seen from our previous study that all indications seem to point to the fact that the church is now in the Laodicean period. The apostasy, which began early in the history of the church, is growing by leaps and bounds; and many a so-called Christian church has shut its doors in the face of the risen Christ.
leaving Him standing outside of the very church which bears His name.

Beginning with chapter four, the scene changes. We are no longer occupied with the church of Jesus Christ, either past or present. The church age is over, and the true church is no longer seen upon the earth, in the place of testimony. The apostate church remains for judgment, but all true believers are caught away. That is why the word “church” disappears entirely from this book after the third chapter. Saints we do find mentioned, but they are Jewish saints, and not members of the body of Christ.

THE DOOR “OPENED IN HEAVEN”

Now let us read again the first verse of chapter four: “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.”

John hears a voice; he sees an open door in heaven; and, being “in the spirit,” he is caught up into the very presence of God Himself. There he is given a marvelous vision of the future. He sees the seals opened, hears the trumpets sounded; witnesses the terrible, astounding events which are yet to come to pass in the earth, after the true church has been caught away.

What is the significance of the door “opened in heaven” and the voice “as it were of a trumpet” which John hears? These are symbolic of the fulfillment of the “blessed hope” of the church, which is set forth in I Thess. 4:16-18. John is a representative character; and his hearing the voice and being caught up speak of that day which is the next great event in God’s plan—the day when “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.” Perhaps those very words will be the commanding invitation to the church of God to “come.” And in that day every believer, the dead as well as the living, will be caught up “to meet the Lord in the air.”

That door in heaven has been closed for nearly two thousand years, but one day it will open again! It will open to admit the “redeemed of the Lord.” What a day that will be! The world will know nothing of His coming; the unsaved will not see Him. Only His own will look upon Him. The world will know only that something strange and mysterious has happened, that every child of God has disappeared. Do you ask me, “What are you looking for day by day?” I am waiting for a door to open in heaven, and for a voice to say, “Come up hither.” When that door opens, and when that voice bids the children of God “come,” the countless saints, those who are dead and those who are living, will rise to meet Him in the air.

WHY THE CHURCH WILL BE TRANSLATED

1. That Sin May Come to a Head. As long as the church is in the world, sin cannot come to a head. The church is the salt of the earth, the light of the world; and there can never be complete apostasy while the salt is in the world, while the restraining influence of the people of God is in the earth, while the Holy Spirit hinders Satan’s work through the saints in whom He dwells. Sin will come to a head in the person of Antichrist, but Satan cannot put the Antichrist into the world while the church of the Lord Jesus and the Spirit of God are in the earth. Therefore, when the church is complete, the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the world with the church. Then sin will begin to mount up to its climax.

2. That the Church May Escape the Judgments Which Will Sweep the Earth. When a nation goes to war with another nation, it always withdraws its ambassador. It sends word to him, and he goes home. That is the first step, the first declaration of war. Before the great judgments of God begin to sweep the earth, God is going to take His church out of the way. What a hope that is! Is anyone discouraged? Is anyone at a loss, which way to turn? My Christian friend, does life seem too hard to bear at times? The blessed hope is yours. Take courage, and look up, for the Saviour is coming again! The return of the Lord for His church has been the pole star of the saints through the ages; and God wants us to keep our eyes looking upward, expecting at any moment and at any hour the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One day I stood beside the bed of a dear, white-haired saint of God. He had his sons called in, and with his dying
breath asked me to lead them in singing, "Shall We Gather at the River?" I shall never forget the look on that old man's face as he lifted his voice and sang with almost his last breath:

"Yes, we shall gather at the river,
The beautiful, the beautiful river,
Gather with the saints at the river
That flows by the throne of God."

The next day I called on the family. The old man had gone to be with the Lord. When I came out of the house, I walked down the street. Passing a little cottage, I saw seated on the veranda a young man, about twenty-six years of age. Every bone of his body was shaking. He seemed to have no control over his members at all, as there he sat, puffing away on a cigarette. I passed by, but the Spirit of God seemed to impress upon me that I should go back and speak to that young man. When I reached the gate, he spoke to me, saying, "I can not get up to open the gate; but if you can get over it, I should like to talk with you." I went in and sat by his side.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I am waiting for the old man with a long beard and a scythe in his hand," was his reply.

"I can give you something far more blessed for which to wait than that, my friend," I said to him. So I began to tell him about the death of Jesus and how one day He was going to return for those who put their faith in Him. I told him of those who were not waiting for the "old man with a long beard and a scythe in his hand," but were waiting for the Lord.

If Christ comes in our day, we, like John on the Isle of Patmos, shall see "a door ... opened in heaven." We, too, shall hear a voice "as it were of a trumpet," saying, "Come up hither." We shall be caught up into the presence of our Lord without seeing death.

**THE LORD UPON THE THRONE**

The first thing John beholds, after being translated from earth to heaven, is a throne, and One sitting upon the throne. He tries to describe for us that One. He writes:

"And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald" (Rev. 4:2-3).

"He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone." What does that suggest to you? A jasper is a clear stone, like a diamond. A sardine is blood-red, like a ruby. As the jasper suggests the resplendent glory of the risen Lord, so also the sardine stone reminds us of Calvary. The Christ of the cross is the Christ of glory.

Dr. H. A. Ironside offers a striking suggestion in regard to this description of our Lord: "Remembering that many of the first readers of the Revelation were converted Jews, we might ask, What would these stones suggest to them? Surely every instructed Hebrew would instantly recall that they were the first and last stones in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28:17-20). As these stones bore the names of the tribes of Israel, arranged according to the birth of the twelve patriarchs, the one would suggest at once the name 'Reuben,' 'Behold a Son': and the other, 'Benjamin,' 'Son of my right hand.' It is Christ enthroned, the Son about to reign in power who is before the Seer's vision. Round about the throne a rainbow, like an emerald, the stone of Judah ('Praise') is seen, suggesting the perpetuity of the Noahic covenant, and God's unchanging goodness, despite all man's failure, folly, and wickedness."

God also made covenants with Abraham and Isaac. In the day when His throne is a throne of judgment, He will remember the promises and covenants that He made with Noah, Abraham, Isaac; He will not forget them. Israel will be back in the land of Palestine when that day comes, and the devil will be doing everything he can to wipe them off the face of the earth. But in that day God will remember His covenants with His chosen people. He will deal with them in judgment, but His judgment will be tempered with mercy for those who come into covenant relationship with Him. Not only will He be merciful to Israel; the green of the emerald speaks of mercy which He will show towards the earth itself.
"THE FOUR AND TWENTY ELDERS"

"And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment: and they had on their heads crowns of gold" (Rev. 4:4).

The word "seats" in the Revised Version is translated "thrones." But who are the four and twenty elders? When we come to the fifth chapter, we read that the four and twenty elders sang, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred." Therefore, we know that they are not the holy angels, who have never sinned, but that they are those whom Christ had redeemed with His shed blood. You will remember the account in the twenty-fourth chapter of I Chronicles of the appointing of twenty-four elders; that is, the division of the Levitical priesthood into twenty-four orders, so that each order could minister for "two weeks at a time in the temple that was to be built." The priesthood numbered thousands. Of course, all of those priests could not go into the temple at one time; so the priesthood was represented every two weeks by an order of twenty-four priests—twenty-four elders. When those twenty-four were in the temple and were ministering, they were a representative body. What John saw, therefore, was a representative body, standing for the entire company of men and women who had been washed in the blood of Jesus. In the Old Testament days, there were twelve patriarchs; in the New Testament days, twelve apostles. Likewise, here we have a representative body of the saints of the Old Testament and the saints of the New Testament, translated, washed, clothed in white raiment, and singing praise to God.

"And they had on their heads crowns of gold." Why did they have crowns on their heads? Because John was projected into the future, and it was as though the judgment seat of Christ had already taken place, and the rewards for service had been given. There are five crowns for service: the crown of righteousness, the crown of glory, the crown of life, the crown of rejoicing, and the incorruptible crown. Our Lord will not be "unmindful" of the "work and labour of love" of His faithful servants!

A THRONE OF JUDGMENT

"And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne" (verse 5).

John beheld a throne, not of grace, but of judgment. Our Lord now is seated upon a throne of grace, and He is dealing with the world in grace. Have you ever wondered why God allows things to go on as they are in the world today? It is because He is seated upon a throne of grace. But one day, when the last member has been added to the body of Christ, and the church has been translated, the Son of God will rise from His throne of grace and take His seat upon the throne of judgment. It is that throne which John sees, from which proceed "lightnings and thunderings and voices."

THE HOLY SPIRIT

"And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

Again we have the reference to the Holy Spirit in the fulness of His Person and power.

Seven is the complete number, and Isa. 11:2 describes the seven-fold attributes of the Third Person of the Trinity. When John sees Him here, He is back in the presence of God. His task of calling out the church is finished. He has been in the world now for almost two thousand years. He will never leave till the last member is added to the body of Christ, and the church is translated. But one day He will return to the presence of God. John is given a glimpse of that day, a view of what will take place in the future, when the church and the Spirit of God shall be in heaven with the Lord. During the tribulation period, the Holy Spirit will empower the Jewish witnesses, but His relationship with the tribulation saints will
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be of a different character from His relationship to believers in the church age.

THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

As we read verses 6-8, let us note that the Revised Version here and always translates the word "beasts" "living creatures," and correctly so:

“And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second living creature like a calf, and the third living creature had a face as a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

Who are the four living creatures? One is like a lion; one, like an ox; the third has the face of a man; and the fourth is like unto a flying eagle. These living creatures are not created beings, because John says they are "in the midst of the throne." They are one with it, round about it, and seem to guard the throne of God; but they are also in the midst of it, and are part of it. These four living creatures are none other than the attributes of the great God who sits upon the throne.

“The first living creature was like unto a lion,” speaking of majesty, not only of the throne of God, but also of the One who sits upon the throne.

The ox speaks of strength, and suggests to us our Lord as the faithful servant of Jehovah.

The "face as a man" speaks to us of the fact that God is a person: He has personality; He lives, moves, and has His being.

“The fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.” The eagle looks out over the earth with its far-seeing eye; it makes the heavens its home; it looks into the face of the blazing sun. The eagle is symbolic of the omniscience of God—God who see all, knows all, whose eyes "run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (II Chron. 16:9).

THE CHORUS OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP

“And when those living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (4:9-11).

Who is the Creator? In John 1:1-3, we are told that “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.” In this same chapter, verse 10, we read: “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.”

Again, in Col. 1:16 Paul tells us that “by him were all things created”; and in Heb. 1:1-2, that “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” The One who said, "Let there be light," was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who was God manifested in the flesh. Christ is here worshipped as the Creator. He is worshipped in respect to this fact because God is about to deal with the physical earth.

John sees the Son of God glorified. The multitudes, represented by the twenty-four elders, cast their crowns at His feet. They worship Him. If the church were caught away tonight, the first thing we should see would be the Son of God in His glory. When that day comes, when the "lightnings and thunderings and voices" are proceeding forth from the throne, we shall not fear. Why? Because the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ will be our shield. We shall see the
rainbow, which will remind us not only of the promises God made to the patriarchs, but also of the promises He has given us.

HOW TO ESCAPE THE JUDGMENTS

The Son of God is the One who created you, my friend. If you put your hand upon your heart, you will feel it beating, one stroke at a time. There is only one stroke between you and eternity. The One who first made your heart to beat is the One who keeps it going. Have you ever bowed your knee, and given honor and glory to Him who gave you life and who keeps you alive?

We are living in terrific days—solemn days. The Bible is full of signs by which we may know that these days are coming to a close. This very night, if the last member should be added to the body of Christ, those who have been truly redeemed would be caught up into the presence of God. To be among that company, one must be more than a church member. Baptism, unless it follows real regeneration, will be of no value. You may be a philanthropist, as the world rates philanthropy; you may fight for the prohibition ticket; you may do many things which the world would pronounce good, and yet be "spewed out" of the mouth of the Lord in that day.

The only thing that will help is for you to have the living Christ enthroned in your heart—that One who gave you life, that One who gives you breath, that One who stands at your heart's door, knocking, knocking, and waiting the invitation to enter. Think of a man's keeping out of his heart the very Christ who created him and who keeps him alive! Are you that man? If you are, my brother, will you not receive Him tonight? Will you not allow the Son of God to take your heart, and wash away your sin? The day is coming when He will take Home all who have received Him. If the trumpet call should come tonight, those who accept the Lord Jesus even now will be among those who will rise to meet Him in the air. Will you be among that redeemed company?

Chapter V

THE SEVEN-SEALED BOOK AND THE ONE WORTHY TO OPEN IT,

Rev. 5:1-14

As we enter upon our study of chapter five, let us remember that it is a continuation of the third and last main division of the book, the beginning of which we considered in our previous study of chapter four. We saw in our last lesson that the translation of the church will bring to a close "the things which are," and will usher in "the things which shall be hereafter." In other words, it will mark the end of the present age of grace; and then, in rapid succession, the events which shall be "after these things" will surely come to pass.

Before we take up chapter five in detail, let us remind ourselves once more of the fact that, from Rev. 4:1 to the end of the book, the church is seen no more upon the earth in her present ministry: she is ever afterwards in the presence of God. We cannot emphasize this truth too much—that John's translation, as recorded in 4:1, is a picture of what will take place when I Thess. 4:16-17 is fulfilled. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." Only the redeemed will hear that shout. Only "the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

That is the translation of the church. To believers, it will be the greatest day the church of Jesus Christ has ever seen, and she has seen some great days! She saw a great day at Pentecost; she saw great days in the time of Moody, of Torrey, and of Whitfield; but the greatest day of all will be that day when the translation takes place. Then we shall be
reunited with those we have "loved long since, and lost awhile."

Do you remember, my friend, when the hearse drove up to your door and took away a little casket? Do you remember when you looked upon the white face and silent form of husband or wife, of father or mother? In that day—the day of the translation—you will see again those loved ones who died in the Lord. Then mortality shall put on immortality, and corruption shall put on incorruption. Then "death shall be swallowed up in victory!"

While it will be a day of rejoicing for believers, something to which we can look forward with joy, yet we cannot help but feel sad when we realize what it will mean to unbelievers. Homes will be rent in twain. Ungodly husbands will lose godly wives; boys and girls, setting out gaily to school, perhaps, in the morning will not return home. But those who are left will not ponder the mysterious disappearance very long. Their minds will quickly revert to everyday affairs, and they will be occupied with the rise to power of a strange and sinister man. That man will appear in Europe after the translation of the church. He will talk as no other man has talked; he will present undreamed of solutions for the world's problems; he will have the attention of all men centered upon him. That man will be the Antichrist. We shall learn more of him as we enter further into the study of the things which shall be hereafter."

Today, however, we are to continue the study of the heavenly scene, to take place as soon as the church is translated. We learned in our previous study that when John was projected, as it were, into the future, he saw in heaven a throne, and God sitting upon that throne. He saw the elders—symbolic of the redeemed church—sitting, "clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold." And out of the throne he saw proceeding "lightnings and thunders and voices," because it was a throne of judgment which John saw, judgment soon to be meted out upon a God-defying world. Before the throne the aged apostle beheld "seven lamps of fire burning," a symbol of the Holy Spirit. He saw the four living creatures, representing the attributes of God. And he heard the chorus of worship and praise "to him that sat on the throne."

The Seven-Sealed Book—"The Title Deed to the Earth"

five, which we are to study today, continues the picture of the heavenly scene, without even the slightest break in thought. Let us read verse one: "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals."

In those days, "books" were scrolls, made of parchment, and rolled up just as the orthodox Hebrews keep their Scriptures today. It was a scroll which John saw in the hand of the One who sat upon the throne.

The key that unlocks the real meaning of this chapter is found in a remarkable story recorded in the thirty-second chapter of Jeremiah. Dr. H. A. Ironside refers to it as a significant explanation of the passage before us; and we shall do well to read carefully this Old Testament incident in the life of one of the Hebrew prophets. As we have said before, many of the symbols of Revelation are explained by other portions of the Word of God; and here we have an illustration of that fact.

According to Jeremiah's prophecy, he obeyed the word of the Lord in purchasing a piece of property from Hanameel, his uncle's son (Jer. 32: 7). Evidently Hanâmeel wanted to sell his "field" because Jeremiah's prophecy of the coming captivity meant a depreciation in the value of the land. It meant more; it involved the giving up of the property altogether during the years of captivity in a strange country. It meant that Nebuchadnezzar would not only confiscate the land, burn and destroy, as he laid siege to Israel's possessions, but that he would also carry away the rightful owners of the land.

Thus Hanameel must have reasoned with himself. What good would his field do him if Jeremiah's prophecy was soon to be fulfilled? But the prophet of God looked beyond the captivity to the promised restoration. With the eye of faith he saw the day when one of his heirs would regain the land that was his by rights. And had the Lord not told Jeremiah
that his uncle's son would offer to sell him the field? Evidently God meant for His servant to buy the land, possibly as an example in faith.

So it was that Hanameel went to see Jeremiah in his prison, where he had been placed because he had been faithful in warning Israel of the approaching captivity. There, "in the court of the prison," the business transaction was made. To quote the prophet:

"Then I knew that this was the word of Jehovah. And I bought the field ... and I subscribed the deed, and sealed it ... So I took the deed of the purchase ... and I delivered the deed of the purchase unto Baruch ... in the presence of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the deed of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the guard" (Jer. 32:8-12, R.V.).

As we have observed, this deed was written upon a scroll, rolled up, and sealed, pending the day when God's promise was to be fulfilled: "For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall yet again be bought in this land!" (Jer. 32:15, R.V.).

Now this scroll which was "sealed" was Jeremiah's title deed to the field which he had purchased; and the day came when his heir took the scroll, broke the seal, and claimed the land.

We have gone into detail to consider this incident recorded in Old Testament prophecy—now an historical fact—because it shows us the meaning of the seven-sealed scroll, or book, which John saw "in the right hand of him that sat on the throne." This seven-sealed book represents the title deed to the earth. When God created the earth, He gave it to Adam. He gave him, as it were, the title deed. He gave him dominion over the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the beasts of the field; and He made him lord over the whole earth. But when Adam sinned, he lost not only his dominion, but the title deed to the earth as well; for it reverted to God. Now, in this fifth chapter of Revelation, we see what will take place when the church age is over, and God begins to deal with the earth once more. In His hands John saw the title deed to the earth in the form of a seven-sealed book. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (Psa. 24:1); and to Him alone is given the right to open the seals of the title deed to His own possession.

ONLY ONE WORTHY TO OPEN THE BOOK

Plainly the vision which John saw set forth this fact, for he wrote: "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" That cry rang out over the universe; but "no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." Not a man stirred, for none was worthy; that is, none had the right. And John "wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon."

As John stood weeping because none seemed worthy to open the book, he heard one of the elders speaking to him and this is what the elder said: "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

John wept because he knew that if no one was worthy to open the book, to take the title deed and deal with the earth, then the earth, whose history is written in blood and tears, in sorrow and tragedy, would be in the hands of the devil and the Antichrist indefinitely. So he wept. But as we have seen, one of the elders entreated him not to weep, telling him that there was One who was worthy, "the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David."

He alone is worthy to rule over the dominion which the first Adam lost through sin: for He purchased it with His own redeeming work on Calvary. It was ever His by right of creation; He gave it to Adam, a beautiful Paradise; Adam lost it through sin; and the Lord Jesus, the second Adam, redeemed it from the curse. He and He alone is "worthy" to claim His purchased possession. This fact we shall consider more in detail, but first let us note a very significant truth.
"The Lion of the Tribe of Juda" Is "The Lamb of God"

When one of the elders told John not to weep, that "the Lion of the tribe of Juda" had "prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof," the apostle "beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain ... And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne"—the Lamb of God, the only begotten Son of the Father, is One with the Father and with the sevenfold Holy Spirit "sent forth into all the earth." Thus we see here a vision of the Triune God—"him that sat on the throne" (verses I. 7), "in the midst of the throne ... a Lamb as it had been slain" (verse 6), identified with the Holy Spirit of God (verse 6).

But let us look again at the three highly significant names: "The Lion of the tribe of Juda," "the Root of David," "a Lamb as it had been slain." There are many beautiful names of our Lord, each given to teach us some phase of His Person and work. Through these divine titles our finite minds can grasp, a little here and a little there, something of the infinite Being whom we see now by faith, but whom having not seen with our physical eyes, yet we love because He first loved us. "The Lion of the tribe of Juda" speaks to us of the kingly character of our Lord. This official title takes us back to the familiar prophecy recorded in Gen. 49:8-10. Jacob was giving his last blessing upon his sons, looking forward to the then future history of the tribes of Israel; and to Juda he said, among other things: "Judah is a lion's whelp ... The sceptre shall not depart from Judah ... until Shiloh (the Lord Jesus) come: and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

We need turn only to the New Testament genealogy of Christ, as recorded by Matthew and Luke, to see that "our Lord sprang out of Juda" (Heb. 7:14). Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, is the only rightful "Heir of all things," the only One who is "worthy" to rule and reign over the earth which He created and which He redeemed from the curse! But again John is reminded of yet another Old Testament prophecy, that Israel's King was to come through the house of David. Among other passages, we turn to II Sam. 7:12-16 and to Isa. 11:1, where we read the same prophecy, that there was to come forth "a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch ... out of his roots"—none other than "the Root of David," whose glorious kingdom is described in the verses which follow in Isa. 11:2-9.

And this Son of David, of the kingly line, is "the Lamb ... slain"! Every born-again soul knows that a lamb brings to mind a picture of sacrifice. This earth had to be redeemed and when John saw the One "worthy," he saw "a Lamb as it had been slain." Something about His Person reminded "the beloved disciple" of Calvary. The marks of death were there, the marks of the cross. The Scriptures plainly teach that all through the eternal ages, the Son of God will bear the print of the nails in His hands and feet and the mark of the spear in His side. Does it mean anything to you, my friend, that God's Lamb was slain for you? Have you ever grasped the overwhelming fact that the Son of God bore the agony of the cross, not only to redeem an earth which had been cursed, but to redeem your soul from the consequences of death as well? Have you ever gone apart, and tried to picture to yourself the scene which took place outside the walls of Jerusalem many centuries ago? Have you ever heard the sound of the nails being driven into His hands and feet, for you? My friend, how can you contemplate that divine love and sacrifice without saying:

"I do believe, I will believe,
    That Jesus died for me;
That on the cross He shed His blood,
From sin to set me free."

The Lamb's Right to Possess the Earth

Already we have referred to the Lamb's right to claim the title deed to the earth. Let us now examine more closely the reason why "he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne" (verse 7).

1. He Created the Earth. "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made
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... He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John 1:3, 10). "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:16, 17). "God... hath... spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (or ages)... for whom are all things, and by whom are all things" (Heb. 1:1, 2; 2:10).

The Son of God created the earth; then He gave it to Adam; but Adam sold it to Satan and sin. And only the Lamb of Calvary could buy it back; this He did when He delivered it from the curse.

2. He Redeemed the Earth. There were no thorns in Eden; but when sin entered, God said to Adam: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee... In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3:17-19).

The centuries passed. And then Christ came; He died; and in His death He wore a crown of thorns, the symbol of the sin-cursed earth. Thus He "bore in his own body on the tree" the burden of your sins and mine; and thus He bore away the curse upon a marred creation. True it is that He has not yet claimed His possession over the earth. He is patiently waiting for His bride to be complete. But just as surely as John saw Him claim the title deed to the earth, just so surely will He one day take the reins of government over His purchased possession.

Meanwhile, "the earnest expectation of the creation (R.V.) waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God... The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:19-22).

When Israel's King and the world's Redeemer takes His throne over a purified earth, then "the desert shall blossom as the rose." Then "Paradise" will be "regained" with a plus—with an added multitude of blood-bought men and women and boys and girls, forever to share His Kingdom and

Men Are But Stewards of God's Property

One day the Son of God shall return to the earth, and He will take possession of everything that the people of the world are so willfully calling their own. Literally thousands of people today utterly ignore the rightful Owner of all things. They are like the man in Australia, with whom I talked one day as we stood, surveying his ranch.

"It embraces more than 700,000 acres," he said to me. And as we looked out over the vast possessions which that man called his, we could not see to the end of the land which made up his ranch.

In the course of our conversation, he began to take the name of God in vain. Then I said to him:

"You say that all of this land is yours? You may think so now; but the day is coming when the One who created it, the One who redeemed it, the One to whom God has given it, will return to the earth, and He will take possession of everything which you so pridefully call your own!"

One day there will be a great transfer of property, for the Son of God owns this earth. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psa. 24:1). Thank God, there are still some folk in the world who hold what they own in trust for God, and use it as good stewards.

You remember the account of how, when our Lord was upon the earth, He "sent two of his disciples, saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him" (Luke 19:30, 31). In the Greek, the words "owner" and "lord" are the same; and our Lord was, in effect, saying this: "If any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the owner hath need of him."

We are owners of things, only provided the Son of God
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does not need them; but when He does need anything which you or I possess, then our right of possession ceases immediately, because His is the primary right.

This very afternoon, at the close of our Jewish meeting, a Hebrew Christian came up to me and said, "Mr. Talbot, I own in this city of Los Angeles $70,000.00 worth of business property; yet in a sense I do not own it, for every square inch of it belongs to the Son of God. I want you to pray with me that I may be successful in disposing of it. If I sell it, I am going to buy a radio and give it to the Bible Institute of Los Angeles and the Church of the Open Door, in order that in these last days the Word of God concerning redemption may go out to the lost world." That, my friend, is real stewardship of temporal things. And such stewardship the Lord will not fail to honor when He comes to claim the title deed to the earth.

"UNIVERSAL ADORATION OF THE LAMB"

1. The Song of the Redeemed. "And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation: and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (verses 8-10).

When the Lamb of God took the title deed to the earth, there was a great hallelujah chorus in heaven. He has the right to the book, the right to break the seals. What is the connection here? When the Son of God takes the seven-sealed book from the hand of the Father, what does it mean? I am confident that one of these days I shall stand upon this earth in my resurrection body, and that I shall reign, with every other believer, who has been redeemed by the shed blood of the Lamb of God. But, you ask, how can you be so confident of that, when the world today is in the grip of greedy, capitalistic governments, who are warred against by another greedy class claiming to have the interests of the working class at heart—in the face of that, you ask me, upon what do you base your hope of one day ruling with Christ over the earth? Well, let me tell you. The Lord Jesus Christ is the rightful King. One day He is going to take the title deed to the earth, and return to break the power of the enemies of God. And when He sets up His kingdom, we shall reign with Him, "kings and priests unto God and his Father."

2. The Worship of the Angels and of All Creation.

What a vision greeted the aged apostle! It led him to write further, saying: "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (verse 11).

Have you ever tried to figure out how many were around the throne? Have you ever wondered how many angels there are in heaven, to say nothing of the hosts of redeemed saints? Here is your answer: "Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," myriads of myriads! No one will be lonely there. If you refuse to accept this wonderful Christ, and put your trust in His blood, my brother, when that blessed day comes, you will be the one to lose. I once heard a minister tell his congregation that heaven is like a vast auditorium with many seats, that God has made provisions for every man and every woman, but that through the eternal ages some of those seats will forever be vacant, because the one to whom the seat belonged did not go in. I do not believe such a thing. Do you? Every place will be taken. If you will not enter in, someone else will have your place.

John heard the vast multitude saying, with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (verse 12).

When I think of that glorious scene, where our Lord is worshipped, not only as Creator, but as Redeemer also, my heart is filled with the desire to get there as soon as possible!

"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living crea-
tutes said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever" (verses 13, 14).

What a sight to behold that will be! A crowd always interests me. To see a multitude, and especially a multitude with eyes all turned in one direction, grips my attention. I remember well how, years ago, when I was returning from Australia to America, the ship sailed toward the Hawaiian Islands on the tropical sea, passing the equator. One day, in the late afternoon, I strolled along the promenade deck. The wind was blowing gently in a westerly direction, and the great expanse of water which stretched before me was covered with millions of tiny waves. On top of each little wave was a white cap. They were all rolling in one direction, toward the horizon. The sun, blazing in its afternoon glory, was just dropping below the horizon; and as it gradually sank, its golden beams lighted the tiny white-capped waves, dancing there in the light of the setting sun. As I watched that beautiful sight, the thought came to me: "Some day I shall see a more wonderful sight than this when I stand in the Glor- land. I shall be in the company of a great multitude which no man can number—myriads upon myriads—and every eye shall be turned in one direction. That direction will be toward the throne of God. And upon that throne shall be seated One who walked this earth two thousand years ago, clothed with humility, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. But when He comes again, He will be robed in His uncreated glory; and the radiance of His presence will light the faces of the worshipping multitudes."

Yes, we shall see Him in that day. The nail prints will be there—the marks of Calvary. The multitudes of the redeemed shall sing, and every creature shall praise Him "that sitteth upon the throne." The burden of their song will be, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!"

What a prospect! What a hope! And that hope is for the weakest, the most faltering, of God's believing people.

THE BREAKING OF THE SEALS

In our next lesson we shall see that the Son of God takes the seven-sealed book, which represents the title deed to the earth, and breaks the seals one after the other. As He does this, God, the Father, as it were, takes His hands off the things of the earth; and strange events begin to come to pass. A white horse appears, bearing upon his back one who goes forth, "conquering, and to conquer." That one is the Antichrist. Then a red horse appears, bringing war in its wake. Then come famine and death. Things begin to happen rapidly, and to head up toward the end. And at last shall appear the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the rightful Owner of the earth, to take the reigns of government in His hands.

May God hasten that blessed day!