



**1. 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.**

John's attention is once again brought back to the One Who is seated upon the throne.

To the right of the Almighty, Who is sitting on the throne, John saw a book. The word *hand* has been supplied by the translators; the Greek indicates that the book is to the right of the Lord.<sup>1</sup> To provide further support for this, the preposition *in*, which makes it sound like God is holding the book in His right hand, is incorrect; it is more in keeping with the Greek to say that the book was *on* or *to* the right of the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

As we have already learned, the *right* side is considered to be the place of honor, power or authority.<sup>3</sup> When questioned by the High Priest at His mock trial, Jesus declared, "... Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand [literally, by the right] of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64).<sup>4</sup> Even those who opposed Jesus and sought His death, will someday see Him occupying His rightful place of authority and power. Based upon Jesus' words concerning the rich man and Lazarus, there is good evidence to support the position that those who are now in hades (the place of the unrighteous dead who are awaiting the final judgment of the Lord) are able to observe what is taking place within the spiritual realm (Luke 16:23; Revelation 1:7). Jesus' words to the religious rulers simply affirm that they (now dwelling in hades) will behold Him coming in the clouds of heaven to receive those who are faithful to Him (Matthew 24:30). When Christ comes to receive His own, it will not be a secret event that will take place in quietness and without observation: the Lord Himself will come with a shout (not a whisper), with the audible sound of the arch-angel and with the sound of a trumpet (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). His coming will NOT be silent! Evangelicals have it wrong with their claim of a silent rapture; all of the movies that they can make will not obliterate the truths of God's Word on this matter.

To the right of the Lord is a book (*biblion*), strictly speaking, a small book; it is the diminutive form of *biblos*, which comes from a reference to the inner or cellular substance found in the stem of the papyrus.<sup>5</sup> However, it is interesting to note how *biblion* is used within Scripture to refer to the document of divorcement (Matthew 19:7), to the writings of Isaiah the prophet (Luke 4:17), to the Law of Moses (Hebrews 9:19), to the Revelation (Revelation 1:11), and to the Book of Life (Revelation 20:12). Clearly there is a wide range of sizes to which *biblion* refers, and, although a diminutive form, it does not necessarily mean that it is a small book.

Although we typically envision the *books* of that day as being scrolls, there is sufficient archeological evidence to indicate that *bound* books (*codices*) were becoming increasingly popular for shorter, important legal documents, especially wills.<sup>6</sup> The materials used for the pages at this time, were primarily wood or parchment, the former being the earlier choice, the latter gaining acceptance as the process for making parchment improved. The wooden page was slightly raised

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<sup>1</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Strong's Online; Vine's "right."

<sup>4</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>5</sup> Strong's Online; Vine's "book."

<sup>6</sup> [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/secondary/SMIGRA\\*/Tabulae.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/secondary/SMIGRA*/Tabulae.html)



*Tabulae with wax writing surface, and stylus*

around the perimeter and wax was applied to the middle portion to form the writing surface.<sup>7</sup> The covers for this were wooden, and a summary of the contents and a listing of the witnesses was written on it in ink; the bound book, or codex, became known as a *tabulae*.<sup>8</sup> Holes were drilled through the wooden covers, cords bound it all together, and wax was applied to each cord; finally, each witness applied their seal to the wax on one of the cords. The scroll was still used for longer documents but it was less efficient (only one side could be used) and was not nearly as compact as the codex (the bound book). This *biblion* that John sees appears to be

in keeping with the *tabulae* of the day (it had writing that was visible to John). *Written* is in the perfect tense, speaking of something that was completed in the past.

This *book* was also sealed with seven seals. The seal was used to secure the contents of the document and to provide a means of authenticating the identity of the one who sealed it.<sup>9</sup> The importance of the seals must not be underestimated; unless the ancient legal codex was sealed, its contents were deemed to be null and void.<sup>10</sup> This *book* bears seven seals, and it would be safe to assume that God is the Author and that the seals are His. As we have noted before, seven often speaks of completeness, and so we see that the utmost care has been taken to ensure the security of what is contained within this book. *Sealed* is also in the perfect tense – a completed action.



**2. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?**

John's attention is then drawn to a mighty angel (*aggelos* – one who is sent, a messenger) presenting a question to everyone everywhere.<sup>11</sup> Is there anyone who is worthy to open the book and to break the seals? Two actions are required of the one who is worthy: 1) opening the book, and 2) breaking its seals. From this it would seem that the seals are not there to hold the book closed, and, as we will see, each loosing of a seal signals end-time events. Since this book was written and sealed by God, it would not be acceptable for just anyone to open it – he must be someone who is equal to the task.

Clearly, despite the book having been written and sealed at some time in the past, it is now time for what is in it to be revealed. We speak of the element of *time* regarding this book, which is in the presence of the eternal God in heaven, His dwelling place. Yes, God is timeless; however, John's presence in the heavens is for the express purpose of receiving revelations about what must

<sup>7</sup> [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/secondary/SMIGRA\\*/Tabulae.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/secondary/SMIGRA*/Tabulae.html)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.historyofinformation.com/narrative/roll-to-codex.php>

<sup>9</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Vine's "seal."

<sup>10</sup> [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/secondary/SMIGRA\\*/Tabulae.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/secondary/SMIGRA*/Tabulae.html)

<sup>11</sup> Strong's Online.

be *hereafter*. God will be revealing that which will take place within time; therefore, there is no incongruity to speak of it as being *time* to open the book.



**3. And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.**

No one (the word *man* does not appear in the Greek) was found who was capable of opening the book; this included those who were in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth. The search was made among the angels and the dead in Christ from all ages (*in heaven*), those who were alive on the earth, and even among those who had died without Christ (*under the earth*). Here the thought is added that there was no one found who could even look on the book; since it was written on both sides, perhaps there would be something evident on the visible side to give some indication as to what might be inside.



**4. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.**

John weeps greatly because no one is found to be worthy to open the book and to read what it says, not even someone who could look on it. Added here is the thought of reading what the book says; clearly, there's no point opening a book if you're not going to read what it says. Since this obviously has a bearing on what will be *hereafter*, John is devastated that he might not get to know what is coming.



**5. And one of the elders saith unto me, 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.**

However, John wept too soon, for one of the twenty-four elders is right there to assure him that the matter is not without hope – there is One Who is worthy. Let's consider the two descriptions given of the Worthy One.

*Lion of the tribe of Judah.* We cannot consider this unique title given to the Lord Jesus Christ without looking back to the blessing that Jacob pronounced upon his son 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. Judah *is* a lion's whelp [a young lion]: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion [generally considered to be a lioness]; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre [a sign of authority] shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver [a commander's staff] from between his feet, until Shiloh [literally, he whose it is; a prophecy of the coming Messiah] come; and unto him *shall* the gathering [obedience] of the people *be*" (Genesis 49:8-10).<sup>12</sup> Judah is given prominence among the sons of

<sup>12</sup> Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8.

Israel; he is likened to a lion, which exercises great freedom in the wild, fears very few animals, and poses a considerable threat when challenged. The royal line (*sceptre* and *lawgiver*) within Israel was established long before they demanded a king to rule over them; the heritage of David, the man after God's own heart, came through Judah (Matthew 1:2-6; Luke 3:31-33). Contained within Jacob's prophetic description for his son, Judah, is the glimmer of a perpetual authority until it is rightfully taken up by the Promised One (Genesis 3:15), the Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15), the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was born of the lineage of David and Judah, through both Joseph and Mary (Matthew 1:6-16; Luke 3:23-31).<sup>13</sup> The King of kings (the reigning ones) and Lord of lords (the ruling ones) comes through the royal line of Judah (1 Timothy 6:15).<sup>14</sup> The lion is considered to be an animal of strength, courage, and majesty,<sup>15</sup> and these are brought through to the Heir of the promise that was made by Jacob to Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

*The Root of David.* The word *root* (Greek - *rhiza* [*hrid'-zah*]) speaks of that from which a sprout will come, but it is often used metaphorically to speak of that which springs from a root – the offspring.<sup>16</sup> Isaiah wrote: "And there shall come forth a rod [branch] out of the stem [stump]<sup>17</sup> of Jesse, and a Branch [sprout] shall grow [shall bear fruit] out of his roots [root - singular] ... And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand [remain] for an ensign [a standard, a point of rallying] of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek [make inquiry]: and his rest [resting place] shall be glorious [glory]." (Isaiah 11:1,10).<sup>18</sup> Isaiah writes of a coming day when the Lord Jesus Christ (that *sprout* springing up from Jesse, the father of David) will be established as the One to Whom all people will come. Paul picks up on Isaiah's words and affirms this truth: "And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root [sprout or offspring] of Jesse, and he that shall rise [is rising (present tense)] to reign over the Gentiles [*ethnos* - nations]; in him shall the Gentiles [nations] trust [hope]" (Romans 15:12).<sup>19</sup>

Both descriptions of the Lord Jesus Christ point to Him as reigning; the former shows the royal line from which He was born, and the latter speaks of Him as a ruler over the nations, like unto David before Him. However, we must also recognize that this is not speaking of His rightful authority in the new heaven and new earth, but to a time when He will rule over the peoples of the earth. When Jesus rules over the nations during the millennium, even though everyone will be subject to Him, it does not mean that sin will be eradicated. Yes, there will be peace and prosperity under the Lord's rule, but not everyone will have a heart for Him. Isaiah speaks of the wolf and the lamb, and the cow and the bear, all living together in harmony, and a small child shall lead various animals that we consider to be predator and prey; the lion will change its diet from meat

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<sup>13</sup> Matthew's genealogy is generally accepted as belonging to Joseph, while Luke's is considered to be the lineage of Mary. Matthew's followed the legal tradition of tracing the lineage through the "father," whereas Luke's account provides the physical lineage of the Lord through Mary, who was His only physical parent. Additionally, Matthew traces the lineage back to Abraham, thereby affirming Jesus as a true Jew and qualified to be the Jewish Messiah. Luke, tracing the lineage through Mary, goes back to Adam, thereby emphasizing that Jesus relates to all men as the Savior of the world. <http://www.compellingtruth.org/genealogies-of-Jesus-Matthew-Luke.html>

<sup>14</sup> Vine's "reign."

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10001-lion>

<sup>16</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>17</sup> Strong's Dictionary.

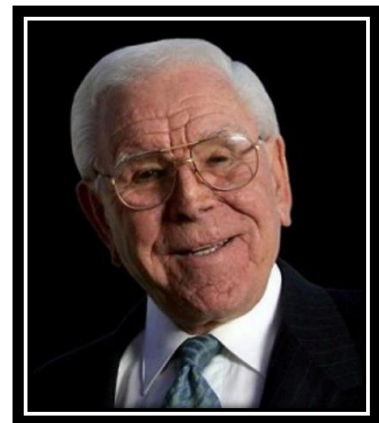
<sup>18</sup> BDB.

<sup>19</sup> Strong's Online.

to straw, and the child will play at the home of a venomous serpent without harm (Isaiah 11:6-8). Although so much will be changed for the better, sin can only be removed by faith in the sacrifice that Jesus made for us – there is no other way; the Way was established with the promise that God made in Genesis 3:15, and there is no indication that it will change. Those who are born during the millennium will have that opportunity; however, those who are remaining on the earth at the time that Jesus comes to establish His reign have forfeited their opportunity for salvation. When the righteous in Christ have been harvested from the earth (Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 14:15-16), then God’s wrath will be poured out, and we are told that “no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled [the seven vials of the wrath of God being poured out was ended]” (Revelation 15:8). I believe this to mean that no one will be saved during the outpouring of God’s wrath upon the world; this is substantiated by the negative response of those who are the subjects of His wrath (Revelation 16:9,11,21). Only unregenerate blasphemers will populate the world when Christ begins His millennial rule; those who are **in Christ** (who will now be in their glorified bodies) will be working with Him to establish His reign over all of the earth.

One of the elders draws John’s attention to the Lord Jesus Christ, Who has been victorious to open the book and to break the seals. We are not told when this book was written and sealed, but it would seem that it was in place before the promise was made that God would provide a Savior to deal a death-blow to Satan (Genesis 3:15). Why do I say that? We are told that Jesus has *prevailed*, or was victorious, so as to be qualified to open the book and to remove the seals that were upon it. Jesus’ victory came when He died and rose again, which was determined before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4; Revelation 13:8). Through His death and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled His mandate to provide man with a way to be brought into fellowship with his Creator – the promise of God had been accomplished. He dealt once and forever with the problem of sin and Satan – the penalty for sin (death – Romans 6:23) was now paid in full, and, along with that, the defeat of Satan was now established. Jesus overcame, He was victorious, and, consequently, is now seated with His Father in heaven (Revelation 3:21).

It is no wonder that no one was found who was worthy to open the book; Jesus is unique among all who have been born into this world (John 14:6). Many today believe that Jesus was a great historical figure, a good teacher, and even the Muslims consider Him to be a prophet. However, none of that will ever usher any of those “believers” into heaven. The latest spiritual philosophy to hit Evangelicals is that we are not sinners in need of a Savior; we must simply cultivate the spark of divinity that resides within each one of us in order to flourish and find our way to God, Brahma, Allah, the Great Spirit, the universal consciousness, or whatever higher power that you might happen to gravitate toward – and they are all equally relevant. The unique place that Jesus fills, as the only Way to heaven and the Father, is under attack, even within Evangelical Christianity! The long-time favorite of many Evangelicals, Robert Schuller, is quoted as saying: “The core of original sin ... could be considered [to be] an innate inability to adequately value ourselves. Label it a ‘negative self-image,’ but do not say that the central core of the human soul

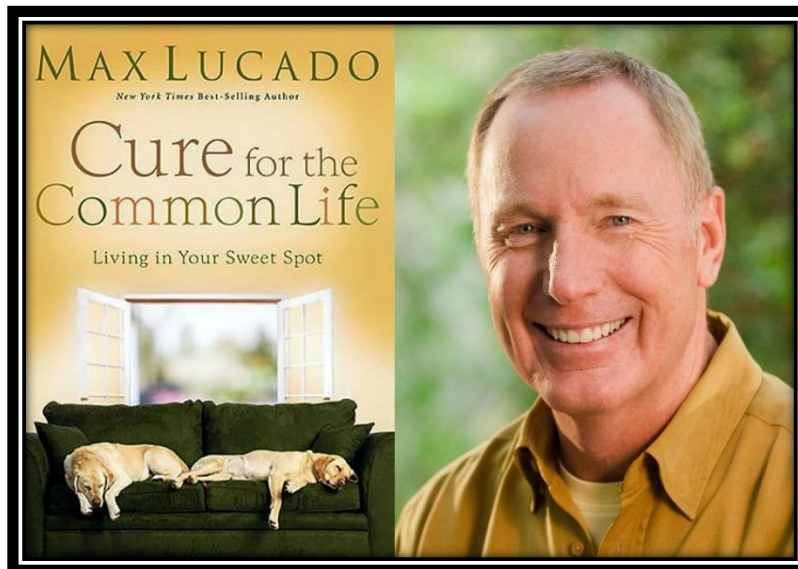


The late Robert H. Schuller



is wickedness. ... positive Christianity does not hold to human depravity, but to human inability.”<sup>20</sup> He claimed that “the core of sin is a lack of self-esteem”; “A person is in hell when he has lost his self-esteem.”<sup>21</sup> Despite these unbiblical views, Schuller continued to enjoy a significant following among Evangelicals, which meant that they either did not weigh what he said against Scripture, or they were so ignorant of the Word of God that they could not recognize when he was off the mark. Schuller’s Crystal Cathedral included offices for Christians and Muslims for Peace, now known as The Coalition for Universal Peace, Freedom and Justice, whose mission is to promote “universal spiritual values common to all divinely inspired religions,” and “to point out that there is a better way, and to help foster understanding, mutual respect and peace between all opposing individuals and groups – especially between [*sic*] the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam).”<sup>22</sup> Little wonder that Schuller openly stated that if “he [Schuller] came back in 100 years and found his descendants [to be] Muslims, it wouldn’t bother him so long as they weren’t atheists.”<sup>23</sup>

We might consider Robert Schuller to have been a Liberal, and feel much more comfortable with the more conservative arm of Evangelicalism. However, if you would include Billy Graham in that “conservative” group, then you would be sadly mistaken to feel comfortable; he is quoted as saying, “... I think Islam is misunderstood .... And I think we’re closer to Islam than we really think we are.”<sup>24</sup> Perhaps he is speaking for himself, yet too many consider him to be the pope of Evangelicalism – they hang on his every word, and he can do little wrong. However, he is not



alone in mixing error with the truth of Scripture. The very popular Evangelical writer and preacher, Max Lucado, has made this statement in his book, *Cure for the Common Life*: “You have one. A divine spark.”<sup>25</sup> His remark includes a footnote in which he quotes from the Jewish philosopher and writer, Martin Buber, to explain his position: “The **world is an irradiation [illumination] of God**, but as it is endowed with an independence of existence and striving, it is

apt, always and everywhere, to form a crust around itself. Thus, **a divine spark lives in every thing and being**, but each such spark is enclosed by an isolating shell. **Only man can liberate it** and re-join it with the Origin: by holding holy converse with the thing and using it in a holy manner, that is, so that his intention in doing so remains directed towards God’s transcendence. Thus the divine

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/schuller/quotes-se.htm>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> <http://cicmp.org/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.thebereancall.org/content/april-1998-news>

<sup>24</sup> Cathy Burns, *Billy Graham and His Friends*, p. 118.

<sup>25</sup> Max Lucado, *Cure for the Common Life*, p. 3.

immanence [the god within] emerges from the exile of the ‘shells’” (italics in the original; bold added).<sup>26</sup> Buber places this divine spark in *every thing and being*, yet denies that this is pantheism, which identifies all matter as being god; however, in his writings he emphasized that “in man, in every man, is a force divine.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, when Lucado accepts and promotes this idea from Buber, his understanding is that everyone born into this world bears within them a **spark of divinity** (this is more than claiming that man has a spiritual dimension, this says that there is a little bit of God in everyone), and that it is the responsibility of each person to then free the god within to join its source. Here are three prominent Evangelicals, and they have ALL departed from the truth of God’s Word.

Did God have it wrong, then, when He looked upon the world of Noah’s day and concluded that “the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5)? Was Jesus wrong when He said, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye [greed], blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23)? Paul declares that “... in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing ...” (Romans 7:18a) – not even a *divine spark*! Salvation comes, not from releasing the god within, but through faith in what the Lord Jesus Christ did to pay the price for our sins. Buber is a philosopher, someone who tries to explain life through his own reasoning; unfortunately, Lucado has accepted his rationalization of life, and, thereby, has turned away from the message of God’s Word. “For the time will come when they will not endure [listen to] sound [correct] doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap [greatly accumulate] to themselves teachers, having itching ears [craving to hear what they want]; And they shall turn away *their* ears from [apostrepho – remove from hearing; stop listening to] the truth, and shall be turned unto [ektrepo – turned aside to] fables [fiction, myth; i.e., lies]” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).<sup>28</sup>

There are many who labor in the name of the Lord. Max Lucado, for example, was a missionary in Brazil for five years and was then the senior pastor of Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas for 20 years; yet none of those things will guarantee him a place in heaven (Matthew 7:21-23). Jesus said, “He that shall endure [*hupomeno* – to persevere faithfully in Christ] unto the end, the same [this is the one who] shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).<sup>29</sup> Have Schuller, Billy Graham, or Lucado endured faithfully in the Lord? Anyone with eyes to see will recognize that they have each departed from the truth of God; be wary of those who are popular with so many – measure all things according to the Word of God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Truly, there is “none that doeth good, no not one” (Psalm 14:3; 53:3; Romans 3:12); it was the Lord Jesus Christ, God incarnate and the Savior of man, Who was found worthy to open the book.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but **he that doeth the will of my Father** which is in heaven. Matthew 7:21.

<sup>26</sup> Lucado, *Cure*, p. 215.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.maaber.org/issue february09/spiritual traditions1 e.htm>

<sup>28</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

<sup>29</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



**6. 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.**

*Beheld* is from the Greek word *oida*, which, in this case, means to see: *And I saw*. *Lo*, on the other hand, is the word *idou*, which is always second person singular and an imperative. It is most often translated as *behold* and means *look thou!* John saw and he wants to be sure that, as the reader, I will be attentive to what he is about to describe – *And I saw, and you behold!* John carefully tells us where it is that he is seeing what he will describe: it is in the *midst* of the throne, that place of the fullness of the presence of God, which, in turn, is surrounded by the four living creatures and the 24 elders. In the middle of this overwhelming vision of God's presence, he sees a sacrificially-killed Lamb standing.<sup>30</sup>

This is the *Lion of the tribe of Judah* and the *Root of David* referred to in the previous verse! Did the elder, who described the Lord this way to John, have it wrong? He describes a *lion*, and, when John looks and calls upon us to look with him, he describes a sacrificed Lamb standing in the midst of God's throne! Do you see the tremendous incongruity in this? John is told to look, for there is a Lion Who is worthy to open the seals of the book; so he looks, and sees a Lamb – that's the first anomaly. The royal One, God come in the flesh to fulfill the promises made regarding the posterity of David, the King of Israel, also came to be the Sacrifice Who would pay the price for sin so that all men might go free through faith in Him. Both the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God **are** the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus came the first time as the Lamb, and when He returns to establish His kingdom on earth, He will come as the Lion. The scribes and Pharisees envisioned the Messiah coming as a Lion to cast off the rule of Rome and to establish His kingdom on the earth – undoubtedly, they saw themselves as being His assistants in applying His Law. They wanted Jesus to give them a sign so that they would know for sure that He was the One Who would free them from Rome (Matthew 12:38); they wanted to be certain so that they would be ready when the moment came. They did not want to be saved from their sins (after all, they were righteous – John 9:41) – they wanted to be saved from Rome!

The second inconsistency that we can see here is that the Lamb is standing, even though it had obviously been sacrificed. The Lamb of God accepted the cruelty of being crucified, and, at the time when the Passover lamb was traditionally killed, He relinquished His life (the ninth hour – Mark 15:34-37; Josephus confirms that the Passover sacrifice was killed between the ninth and eleventh hours<sup>31</sup>). Jesus died so that we might have life through Him (Matthew 27:50), but He also rose from the dead (Matthew 28:5-6), thereby breaking the power of death, which is the just recompense for sin (Romans 6:23) – His resurrection established that sin has been dealt with in finality. What we must not miss is that, even in His glorified, resurrected body, Jesus bears the marks of the sacrifice that He made on the cross. "Then the same day at evening [the same day that He rose from the dead], being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto

<sup>30</sup> Vine's "slain."

<sup>31</sup> Flavius Josephus, *The War of the Jews*, Book VI, Chapter 9.3.



them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them *his* hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord” (John 20:19-20). His body is glorified, for He entered the room without using the door (He simply *stood* in their midst); despite His body being glorified, the scars that He bore because of the crucifixion and the spear were still clearly evident (John 19:34). As John looked upon the Lamb standing in the midst of the presence of God in heaven, the evidence that He was the sacrificial Lamb was clearly visible; for all of eternity we will see the marks from the sacrifice that He made to purchase us out of sin.

The words that are used here to describe the Lamb of God are important. The word *stood* is in the perfect tense, thereby describing a completed action; yet we see this in contrast to the position that He took when He first ascended to heaven (Hebrews 10:12; 12:2) – something has changed! Isaiah tells us that when the Lord carries out judgment, He will stand (Isaiah 3:13); as John anticipates hearing about what will come *hereafter*, he sees the Lamb of God standing, which can only bring visions of God’s judgment.

Jesus died once as the sacrificial Lamb; He has entered once into the heavenly Holy of Holies to intercede for those who have placed their faith in Him (Romans 8:34). In keeping with this, the word *slain* is in the perfect tense – it happened only once. He, as our High Priest, entered into the presence of God, not with the blood of animals, but with His own blood, which He willingly shed to cleanse us from all sin, in order to bring salvation to all who place their faith in His finished work (Hebrews 7:24-27; 9:7-12). In like manner, we can receive His cleansing only once: “For if we sin wilfully [of one’s own accord] after that we have received the knowledge [a precise and correct knowledge] of the truth, there remaineth [is left] no more [absolutely no] sacrifice for sins ...” (Hebrews 10:26).<sup>32</sup> Do not be deceived, you will reap what you sow (Galatians 6:7); if the righteous enters into sin (willingly), then his righteousness will no longer be remembered (Ezekiel 18:24).

John sees the Lord Jesus Christ standing in the midst of the throne of God; this is the same Jesus Who stood in the midst of His disciples and showed them His hands and side in order to help them to understand that it was truly Him. Perhaps to some measure, John was surprised to see that Jesus still bore the evidence of the payment that He had made for the sins of the world.

As John looks at the Lord, he sees that He has *seven horns and seven eyes*. As we have noted before, the number seven speaks of completeness (e.g., in seven days God completed the creation of all things, including a day of rest). A horn is considered to be a symbol of strength, and so we have Christ exhibiting the full strength of God – a oneness within the Godhead. The eye is our means of sight, and, when used metaphorically, it speaks of our understanding and perception. When this is applied to Christ sevenfold, this can only speak of a complete understanding, a full knowledge. We are then told that these are the *seven Spirits of God*, which serves to eloquently draw together the threefold expression of the fullness of the Godhead in heaven (1 John 5:7). Here we have the fullness of God the Father – on the throne, God the Son – standing in the midst of the full authority of God, and God the Holy Spirit – intrinsically a part of the Son, Who is in the midst of the throne of God. Once again, the tri-unity of Jehovah is evident to those who have the eyes of faith to see.

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<sup>32</sup> Strong’s Online.

The *seven horns* and *eyes* are the Spirit of God as *sent forth* into the earth; the Spirit is sent into the world only once – *sent forth* is in the perfect tense.<sup>33</sup> Jesus said to His disciples: “And I will pray the Father, and **he shall give you** another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ...” (John 14:16); “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, **I will send him unto you.**” (John 16:7). When we place our faith in Christ as our Deliverer from sins, the Holy Spirit of God then comes to abide within us; however, that must not be construed as our unqualified ticket to heaven. For “... if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [bring life to] your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not [absolute] to the flesh, to live after [according to] the flesh” (Romans 8:11-12).<sup>34</sup> From this we conclude that if the Spirit of God is abiding within us, then we are absolutely not in the flesh (Romans 8:9), and we do not think according to the flesh (Romans 8:5); however, if we are carnal (thinking according to the flesh), then we are at enmity against God, we cannot please Him (Romans 8:7-8), and we are absolutely not His child (Romans 8:9b). This serves to reinforce the reality of which Jesus spoke: “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matthew 12:30). There are only two options in life: we are either with God (being religious does not mean that we are *with* God – Matthew 5:20), or we are against Him; there is no fence to straddle and no option to walk with one foot on the pathway to life and the other in the world – the broad road that leads to destruction and the restricted pathway that leads to life are mutually exclusive (they have NOTHING in common)!

Jesus spoke of the work that the Holy Spirit would do after He was sent into the world. “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient [advantageous] for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, **I will send him unto you.** And when he is come, he will reprove [convict, with the goal of repentance] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:7-11).<sup>35</sup> Jesus says that, when He has gone (to be seated to the right of the Father in glory – Colossians 3:1), the Holy Spirit (*Comforter*) will come unto those who are His (He is speaking to His disciples) with the **intention** of abiding with them forever (John 14:16; *abide* is in the subjunctive mood).<sup>36</sup> When the Holy Spirit has come to abide within those who are His by faith, He will convict the world of *sin*, *righteousness*, and *judgment*. Do not miss this: the Spirit of God is not gone into the world (that is Satan’s domain); He has been dispatched by the Father and the Son (John 14:16, 26; 16:7) to abide within those of us who are believing in the Lord Jesus (John 14:17), and to intercede with the Father for us (Romans 8:26).<sup>37</sup> However, while He is abiding

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<sup>33</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>36</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>37</sup> Do not be troubled by John 1:9 – “*That* was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” Do not confuse the abiding presence of the Spirit of God with that which *lighteth every man*; the former is by faith, the latter is found in the conscience of man, before it is seared (1 Timothy 4:2). Jesus often spoke of the little children as being His (Mark 10:14), where the Greek word translated as *little children* speaks of the very young (Friberg Lexicon). What we can understand from this (and take comfort in) is that the very young children are His; however, there will come an age when, understanding right and wrong (the age of accountability), the

within us, He will be carrying out His work of convicting the world. We have been bought out of sin by the Lord so “that the righteousness [commandment] of the law [of God] might be fulfilled [made full] in us, who walk [are living] not after [according to] the flesh, but after [according to] the Spirit” (Romans 8:4).<sup>38</sup> If we are living in obedience to the leading of the Spirit of God, then His righteousness will be evident through us; we are to be wearing the *new man*, “which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24), in keeping with God’s predetermined plan for all of those who are *in Christ* (Ephesians 2:10).

Through us, the Spirit of God will convict the world of sin, *because they believe not on me* (John 16:9). Can you see why it is so important that we understand what the will of God is for us? As we have already seen, it is His will that we live out His righteousness and holiness; how will the world be convicted of sin if they cannot see the holiness of God in us? Just as the tabernacle was the dwelling place of God in the midst of the children of Israel, so our body is called the temple (the sacred dwelling place) of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19); the parallels are drawn within Scripture:

1. The Ten Commands of God are there (Exodus 31:18; Hebrews 10:16),
2. The presence of the Lord of glory is there (Exodus 25:22; John 14:23),
3. The bread is on the Table of Shewbread (John 6:35),
4. The seven lamps are on the lampstand – the enlightening presence of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16; Revelation 4:5), and
5. The shed blood of the sacrificial lamb was sprinkled there, cleansing from sin (Leviticus 1:2-5; Hebrews 9:12).

The Holy Place is within us, occupied by the Lord of all creation Who has written His Ten Laws upon our hearts (Hebrews 10:16)! “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works [of righteousness and holiness], and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16); that is the convicting work of the Spirit of God through us. The world will know that they are in sin when they see the Spirit at work in and through us. What is their sin? They have not been persuaded of the truth of what the Lord Jesus Christ did for them (they do not *believe*); since they do not acknowledge the Son of God, they remain in their sin (John 3:36).

Through us, the Holy Spirit will convict the world of righteousness, *because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more* (John 16:10). Would the world, left to its own devices, retain an accurate knowledge of what righteousness really is? When the Lord looked upon the world of Noah’s day, He “saw that the wickedness [evil] of man *was* great [abundant] in the earth, and *that* every imagination [purpose] of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually [all the time]” (Genesis 6:5).<sup>39</sup> Out of the millions of people who would have populated the earth at this time, only Noah *found grace* (favor) in God’s eyes. We’ve already noted, and we will underscore it here, that God

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heart must seek the right in the Lord Jesus Christ or enter a life of sin apart from the Lord. Everyone is born in sin (1 Corinthians 15:22), but, until understanding sets in, the very young (innocent) belong to the Lord; with understanding comes accountability – the word *believe* means to be persuaded of the truth of something; to *believe*, therefore, requires understanding.

<sup>38</sup> Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>39</sup> Strong’s Online; BDB.

has created us in Christ for the purpose of living out His righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 2:10; 4:24), which, of necessity, will be before the world. We must be God's righteousness before an unholy world and compromising, professing Christians who do not want to be reminded of their sinful condition. Jesus said, "And ye shall be hated [detested, abhorred] of all *men* for [on account of] my name's sake [literally, the name of Me]: but he that endureth [remains faithful through trials] to the end shall be [an emphatic, this one shall be] saved" (Matthew 10:22).<sup>40</sup> To the Corinthians Paul wrote: "For we are unto God a sweet savour [fragrance] of Christ, in them that are saved [being saved], and in them that perish [are perishing]: To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life" (2 Corinthians 2:15-16a). He preceded this by saying that God makes known the evidence of the knowledge of Christ *by us in every place*; i.e., it is through the lives of those who are born-again that the fragrance of Christ goes out into the world. To those who are saved, the righteous life of a fellow believer is an encouragement (*life unto life*), but to those who refuse to be persuaded, it is a cause of conviction and condemnation (*death unto death*). We are to be the models of God's righteousness before a lost world (which includes a compromising religious community), through whom the Spirit of God will bring conviction. It is because Jesus, Who is eternal God in the flesh, has returned to heaven that we are His ambassadors, re-born to provide a voice for the Spirit of God.

Finally, the Spirit of God will convict the world of judgment through us, *because the prince of this world is judged* (John 16:11). Through the sacrifice that Christ made on Calvary, Satan's doom has been sealed (Genesis 3:15; John 12:31); *is judged* appears in the perfect tense, meaning that this is an action completed in the past, never needing to be done again.<sup>41</sup> The devil is still active today, but his fate is without question – and he knows it. Through the presence of the overcoming Christian, the world will recognize that condemnation is a reality. When Jesus opens the sixth seal, which precipitates great calamities on the earth, we are told that the people will beg for the mountains to fall on them in order to hide them "from the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:16). They recognize that the judgment of God is about to fall upon them – they have an innate sense of doom. That is the work of the Spirit of God through us, if we are living faithfully for Him.

Therefore, when we read that the Spirit has been *sent forth into all the earth*, we must not fail to see that He has been sent forth into those of us who have been snatched from sin through faith in Christ's sacrifice (1 Corinthians 6:19). *Sent forth* is in the perfect tense, and, therefore, describes a past, completed action that never needs to be repeated. What that means, within this context, is that the Spirit of God has always been in the world, albeit in the lives of His faithful ones.

In Genesis 1:2 we read of the Spirit of God hovering (*moved*) over the surface (*face*) of the waters, which describes a general presence of God's Spirit.<sup>42</sup> It is evident that sinless Adam had several personal interactions with God: God placed him in the Garden of Eden after he was created, He brought all of the animals to him to be named and, after forming Eve, He brought her to him. Beyond that, God charged Adam and Eve to subdue (*have dominion over*) all that had been created – everything was for their use (Genesis 1:28). However, when Adam sinned, he relinquished his God-given authority over the earth to Satan, and, of necessity, there came a change in God's presence in the earth for it was now Satan's domain. Nonetheless, even before God began creating,

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<sup>40</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>41</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



He had already prepared a means of salvation for sinful mankind, and so a permanent removal of Satan's power was immediately promised (Genesis 3:15) and faith in His promise opened a relationship with the Creator. Although faith was the basis for this new relationship with Jehovah, God's requirements included blood sacrifices to be made, which 1) provided a temporary atonement (cleansing for sins) for the soul (Leviticus 17:4; Hebrews 9:22), and 2) foreshadowed the sacrifice that would be made by the Lord Jesus Christ to permanently destroy the devil's power (Hebrews 2:14; 9:23-26). Therefore, it was a **personal** faithfulness to the Lord that brought spiritual righteousness into the world again – not as a general presence of the Spirit (as before sin) but in the life of the individual who was committed to the Lord. When Elijah despaired of life and was convinced that he was the only one in all of the world who was still faithful to the Lord, God told him that there were yet 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed to Baal (1 Kings 19:14, 18). Paul uses Elijah's experience as an illustration of the fact that God always has a small group of individuals (*remnant*) who are His (Romans 11:5).

Within the OT, it is seldom that we read of the Spirit of God coming to abide or remain within a person. There are a few exceptions: Gideon was *clothed* with the Spirit of Jehovah (Judges 6:34, perfect tense),<sup>43</sup> the Spirit came upon Jahaziel to have the people of Judah wait on the Lord and witness His defeat of their enemies (2 Chronicles 20:14), upon Azariah who was used to turn King Asa and Judah back to the Lord (2 Chronicles 15:1), upon Zechariah who was martyred right after proclaiming the words of Jehovah (2 Chronicles 24:20), and upon Micah who denounced the sins of Judah (Micah 3:8). On two other occasions within the OT we read of the Spirit of Jehovah coming to abide within someone: 1) the newly anointed King Saul (1 Samuel 10:6) but as he failed to remain faithful to the Lord, we also read of the Spirit permanently departing from him (1 Samuel 16:14); 2) Isaiah makes two references to the coming Messiah (the Lord Jesus Christ) and to the Spirit remaining on Him (Isaiah 11:2; 61:1 – in Luke 4:12 Jesus specifically declared Himself to be the fulfillment of this). For the most part, the Spirit of God seems to have come to those who were faithful to the Lord so as to provide particular enablement when it was needed. A significant change with the New Covenant is that the Spirit of God is sent to everyone who places their faith in the Lord Jesus, and He comes so that He *may abide* with us forever (John 14:16). What becomes evident is that, although the Spirit has been sent into all of the world, He is only individually present in the faithful minority who will be scattered throughout the earth; we must be cautious of those movements that are very popular and teach that we are to be accepting of everyone who calls himself a Christian – the narrow and exclusive pathway to life is neither popular nor easy to find (Matthew 7:13-14; John 14:6).

As you consider that the working of the Spirit of God within the world today is through His faithful ones, can you begin to catch a glimpse of how important it is to walk faithfully according to the leading of the Spirit? The Spirit of God forthrightly declares, “come out from among them [those who are not walking according to His leading], ... be ye separate [draw a line between them and you], ... and touch not [do not cling to] the unclean [*akathartos* (*ak-ath'-ar-tos*) not cleansed] ... and [then] I will receive [welcome or accept] you ...” (2 Corinthians 6:17).<sup>44</sup> Why would we cling to that which is unclean before God when it will jeopardize our acceptance by Him? “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person [*akathartos*], nor covetous man, who is an

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<sup>43</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>44</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Strong's Online.

idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Ephesians 5:5). “For God hath [absolutely] not called us unto uncleanness [*akatharsia* – noun form of above], but unto holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:7).<sup>45</sup> Should that not be incentive enough for us to relinquish every remnant of ecumenical compromise (that which is *unclean*)? The Spirit even calls upon us to *avoid* (turn away from, to shun) those who teach a doctrine that is only somewhat different from His truth (Romans 16:17).<sup>46</sup> The classic example of this today is the Evangelical version of ecumenism; nonetheless, it is still unclean before God! God’s desire for us is that we would walk in His righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 2:10; 4:24), clothed with the garments of salvation that can come only from Him (Isaiah 61:10) – therein is our cleansing! If we rationalize our disobedience to the Lord’s command(s), how will the world around us (including the self-righteous, ecumenical Evangelicals!) ever come to understand what God desires for them? The Spirit’s expression to the world (both to the godless and the self-righteous) comes through us; if we fail to heed His voice (through the Word of God), then we are grieving Him, we are presenting a blurred picture of what it means to be a child of God, and we are risking our own relationship with the Lord. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep [attend carefully to, obey] my commandments” (John 14:15);<sup>47</sup> our faithfulness to the Lord can only be expressed through obedience to His Word!

John describes here the activities of God to reach out to mankind: the sacrificed Lamb Who paid the price for the sins of the whole world, and the Spirit of God Who has been sent forth into the lives of everyone whose faith rests in the Lamb for salvation. However, we must be aware that neither of these ensures that we will arrive safely on the shores of heaven; it is only as we remain faithful to Him to the end of our earthly days that we will be welcomed into heaven and the fullness of God’s presence (Mark 13:13; 2 Corinthians 6:17). We have been forewarned; let us be faithful!



**7. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.**

The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, and the Lamb slain from the foundations of the earth (Revelation 13:8) came and took the book *from the right* of the One sitting on the throne.<sup>48</sup> Once again, there is no *hand* in the Greek. The word *took* is in the perfect tense, and is a single, completed action that does not need to be repeated.

As the One Who paid the price for the sins of the world (the slain Lamb), Jesus is uniquely qualified to take the book; He is unlike anyone in heaven, in the earth, or under the earth (Revelation 5:3). Jesus is the only One Who has paid the penalty for sin (death), which serves to confirm that He is the **ONLY** way to the Father (John 14:6). He is unique in that He is both eternal God and man, conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit thereby bringing together the finite and the eternal in the perfect, sinless Son of God – God embodied in flesh (incarnated). Within the context of the Law of Moses, the sacrifice for inadvertent sin<sup>49</sup> had to be perfect; “If a

<sup>45</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon, *uncleanness* and *holiness* are opposites.

<sup>46</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

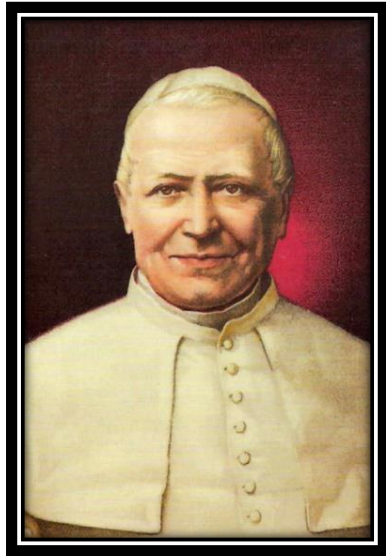
<sup>47</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>48</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>49</sup> There was no sacrifice for the presumptuous/willful sin (Numbers 15:30; Deuteronomy 17:12; Hebrews 10:26).

soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance [sin of error or inadvertence], in the holy things of the LORD; then he shall bring for his trespass unto the LORD a ram without blemish [complete; sound of health] out of the flocks ..." (Leviticus 5:15).<sup>50</sup> No descendant of Adam is, nor has ever been, spiritually sound; "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. They are all gone aside [turn away; revolt], they are *all* together become filthy [corrupt; tainted]: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalm 14:2-3).<sup>51</sup> The acceptable sacrifice for sin had to be perfect, yet there has never been a descendant of Adam who qualified (1 Corinthians 15:22). Jesus, born of the Holy Spirit and the woman, Mary (not through Adam), became the perfect Man to pay the price for the sins of mankind (Luke 1:35) in fulfillment of Genesis 3:15.

The Roman Catholics have faltered at this point, for they have created a doctrine where Mary, as the new, sinless Eve, becomes central to the defeat of Satan. The Latin Vulgate, a translation of



Pius IX declares Mary to be sinless

the Scriptures and Apocryphal books carried out in the fourth century AD, was immediately popular and became the officially accepted Latin scriptures for the Catholic Church at the Council of Trent (1545-63).<sup>52</sup> The accepted translation of Genesis 3:15 from the Vulgate is: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: **she** shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for **her** heel" (emphasis added, the emphasized pronouns are both masculine in the Hebrew text).<sup>53</sup> Out of this corruption of the Hebrew text has come their doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception; after centuries of practicing it, on December 8, 1854, the pope of Rome declared Mary to be "preserved exempt from all stain of original sin"<sup>54</sup>; this is considered to be *ex cathedra* – a divine revelation to a pope, which, by virtue of his "supreme Apostolic authority," is an infallible, irrevocable truth that bears equal weight to the Scriptures.<sup>55</sup> That was their solution to a corrupted translation of

the Hebrew; however, despite some of the more modern Catholic Bibles changing the pronouns to show the correct gender in keeping with the Hebrew text, their heretical doctrines have been pronounced and they will never be renounced. Nevertheless, when John beholds the throne of God, he sees the Lamb of God, not Mary.

In the glories of heaven, we see that Jesus is uniquely qualified to take the little book from the right of the throne of God. There is something about this book that makes Him the only One Who is able to take it and to open it: neither the sinless angels, nor those who have been purchased out of sin – only He Who paid the price for sin. He appears to John as a slain Lamb; it was the sacrifice

<sup>50</sup> BDB.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vulgate>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.latinvulgate.com/lv/verse.aspx?t=0&b=1&c=3>; also as it is in the Douay-Rheims Bible; BDB.

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07674d.htm>

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05677a.htm>

that He willingly made for the sins of mankind that has now qualified Him to take and open this book.



**8. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts 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.**

When the Lamb of God has taken the book, John tells us that the four living creatures and the 24 elders prostrate themselves before Him in worship. Once again, it is Jesus Who has done what no other being, whether in heaven or on earth, could do. I say *again*, because He was also the ONLY One qualified to pay the price for sin in order to provide man with an opportunity for fellowship with God. If, as it would appear, the living creatures and elders are representative of all those who have been purchased by the blood of Christ, then everyone who is abiding in heaven at this time will bow before Him in worship.

John tells us that each of the living creatures and elders had a *harp* (or lyre) and golden bowls (*vials*) that were full of incense (plural), and that these forms of incense (*odours*) were the prayers of the holy (*saints*).<sup>56</sup>

The *harp* is a stringed instrument, which can take many forms, and its strings would probably have been plucked. Within the Hebrew Scriptures, there are two words used for stringed instruments: *kinnowr* and *nebel*. The former (*kinnowr*) originates with a Hebrew word meaning to twang, giving the idea of plucking the strings.<sup>57</sup> This is the most common instrument referred to in Scripture; it is what David played before Saul (1 Samuel 16:23), and it was used for most any occasion. The latter (*nebel*) can refer to a jar or pitcher, but is translated as *psaltery* when the context requires a musical instrument; it is often specifically stated to have ten strings (Psalm 144:9), and some speculate that it may have had a bulging body over which the strings were stretched.<sup>58</sup> This instrument seems to have been more restricted in its use; it was used in the temple of the Lord, and by those who were charged with the music in praise to the Lord (2 Chronicles 5:12). Those who are victorious over the Antichrist will stand before the throne of God having the *harps of God* (Revelation 15:2); it would seem that God has made instruments of praise for the overcoming ones. Clearly, there will be music in heaven.



Nebel and Kinnowr

The *vials* are thought to be broad and shallow bowls, such as would have been used within the Holy Place and kept on the Table of Shewbread (Exodus 25:29; Numbers 4:7). The bowls used in the tabernacle/temple were considered to be sacrificial bowls; that is, they were used to hold the blood that was used for the sanctification of an object or person through sprinkling.<sup>59</sup> In all

<sup>56</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12412-psaltery>

<sup>59</sup> BDB.



likelihood, they would have also been used as containers for the incense that was offered twice daily upon the altar of incense that stood before the vail of the Holy of Holies (Exodus 30:7-8). In addition, once each year the incense was burned by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement – the day when he would enter the Holy of Holies to make intercession with Jehovah for the cleansing of his own sins and the sins of the people.

The Psalmist spoke of the relationship between incense and prayer in Psalm 141:2a – “Let my prayer be set forth before thee *as incense* ....” More literally, this would be: *set in order my prayer as incense before Thee*.<sup>60</sup> Even as a very specific incense was burned in the presence of the Lord, so the Psalmist petitions Jehovah that his prayer might be equally acceptable before Him. The preparation of the incense that was to be used in the ceremonies of the tabernacle was very explicitly directed by the Lord (Exodus 30:34); any deviation from this very precise recipe was dealt with harshly; any personal use of this particular formulation required the death penalty (Exodus 30:38). This was a very specific incense that was to be considered as “holy for the LORD” (Exodus 30:37).

In the Old Testament tabernacle rituals, there was only one formulation of incense to be used, and the word that is used in the OT is always singular. However, here John speaks of the bowls being full of *odours* – incense, but in the plural form. This would seem to indicate that these bowls are filled with the prayers of many, many saints of God, and not just after the OT pattern; the incense (prayers) is not restricted to the formulation under the Law of Moses, for Christ, through His sacrifice, has made the Jew and the Gentile to be one (Ephesians 2:16). This indicates that the incense formulation, like the rest of the Mosaic Laws, has been removed. Our petitions are no longer through the human priesthood but are made directly to the Father through Christ (Ephesians 5:20).

We are told that both the Son of God and the Spirit of God are interceding with the Father on our behalf: “*It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*” (Romans 8:34b); “*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*” (Romans 8:26). In the case of the Spirit, we are told that He will translate our faltering prayers to make them acceptable unto God. However, we must not overlook the beginning of Romans 8 where we are told that it is the one who is walking according to the Spirit of God who is not under condemnation. If we are not living in accordance with the leading of God’s Holy Spirit (in obedience to the Word of God), then we cannot expect Him to be interceding with the Father on our behalf. We must be very careful not to remove the promises of God from their context within His Word.

As the living creatures and elders fell down before the Lamb, it would have been a humble presentation to the Lord Jesus Christ of their music and the petitions of His people.

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<sup>60</sup> Leningrad Hebrew Old Testament.



**9. 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;**

They can only refer to the living creatures and elders from the previous verse. These who have fallen down before the Lamb of God, and who have harps in their hands, now begin to sing. It is their new song that convinces me that they are representative of mankind.

They begin by proclaiming that Jesus is the only One Who was found able to take and to open the book. *Worthy* means to bring up the other beam of a scales;<sup>61</sup> no one else, in heaven or on earth, was equal to the task of taking the book and opening its seals. They then go on to explain the reason that the Lamb of God was found worthy of the task: He was slain and purchased (*redeemed*) them to God by His shed blood. The sacrifice for sin had to give all of its blood (the lamb was killed), and, in fulfillment of this, Christ died and shed all of His blood for the sins of mankind (Luke 24:39). The only ones who can claim to have been purchased by the blood of Christ are those who have placed their faith in Him – those who are *in Christ* (Romans 8:1); therefore, the living creatures and the elders must be numbered among those who have been freed from sin through faith in Christ.

Their song proclaims that they have been purchased out of every tribe (*phule* – a group of related people, kinsfolk), every tongue (*glossa* – language group), every people (*laos* – sub-group of a nation), and every nation (*ethnos* – a nation).<sup>62</sup> One estimate is that there are over 16,000 people groups in the world today;<sup>63</sup> therefore, the elders and living creatures must be representative of those who have been purchased out of sin from every people group that has ever existed.

They (the living creatures and the elders) all sing the same song; *new song* is singular; there is only one means of salvation, and that is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6).



**10. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.**

Here we have further confirmation that the living creatures and elders are among those who have been purchased out of sin by the blood of Jesus. As John introduced the book, we read: “Unto him [Jesus Christ] that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ...” (Revelation 1:5b-6a). It is those who are washed clean in His blood who will be *kings* and *priests* unto God; they will also be included in the first resurrection, and will be priests unto God and reign with Christ during His millennial, earthly kingdom (Revelation 20:6). In the new heaven and earth, where only those whose names are in the Lamb’s Book of Life will dwell, it is noted that we will also “reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 22:5).

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<sup>61</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>62</sup> Strong’s Online; Vine’s; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>63</sup> [http://joshuaproject.net/global\\_list?listtype=continents](http://joshuaproject.net/global_list?listtype=continents)

When God created man on the sixth day, it was His determination that they were to rule over (*have dominion over*) all of the other living creatures on the earth (Genesis 1:26). As such, mankind was placed over all of the other creatures, which would live in submission to man's oversight. *Rule* or *dominion*, in this case, means to ensure compliance; the creatures that God had created would be subject to man. Notice that this was God's proclamation when He determined to make man, and, therefore, man was to be placed above the other creatures from the moment of his creation; this is in keeping with, and flows out of, man being created in the image of God.

We are told that when Jesus establishes His millennial kingdom, He "shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Revelation 19:15). The Greek word translated as *rule* is *poimaino* (*poy-mah'-ee-no*), which is a term used for shepherding a flock, and would involve tending, feeding, guiding, and generally ensuring that the needs of the flock are met.<sup>64</sup> We like to envision the sheep meekly following the shepherd, but a shepherd's responsibilities go well beyond leading the flock. We are told that Jesus will *rule* the multitudes of people who will be in His millennial kingdom, which means that He will be providing for them and safeguarding their health and safety (for example, the change in the nature of the wild animals – Isaiah 11:6-9). Will there be compliance? Of course! The shepherd does not carry his rod just to provide himself with something to lean upon and to ward off danger; it was also used to keep the sheep from becoming involved in things that would be harmful (as clearly seen by the shepherd, but not by the sheep). The conduct of the multitudes will be carefully and strictly governed by the Lord.

We are told that Jesus will *rule* (*poimaino*, govern as a shepherd) over the multitudes *with a rod of iron*.<sup>65</sup> We first read of this prophetically: "Thou shalt break them with a rod [staff, sceptre, a mark of authority] of iron [unyielding]; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:9); the Psalmist writes this concerning the Promised Messiah.<sup>66</sup> In Revelation, we are told twice that Jesus will *rule* (*poimaino*) with a rod of iron (Revelation 12:5; 19:15). In His concluding comments to the elder of Thyatira, Jesus says that the one who is overcoming (victorious) in Him will receive power from Him to *rule* (*poimaino*) in the same manner (Revelation 2:26-27); it would seem that those who are victorious in Christ will carry out His responsibilities as the Chief Shepherd.

Jesus said, "... other sheep I have, which are not of this fold [*aule* (*ow-lay*); unroofed enclosure]: them also I must bring [lead], and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold [*poimne* (*poym'-nay*) flock], and **one shepherd** [*poimen* (*poy-mane*)]" (John 10:16).<sup>67</sup> What becomes obvious from this is that there is only ONE flock, and there is only ONE Shepherd Who is the Lord Jesus Christ. However, Peter referred to the Lord as being the *chief Shepherd* (1 Peter 5:4); does this leave room for lesser *shepherds* as well? Peter has just exhorted the *elders* to carry out the work of a shepherd (feeding, watching over, and leading by example) so that they will be worthy of being crowned by the *Chief Shepherd* when He comes (1 Peter 5:2-4). In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul writes of those within the Body of Christ who are gifted as shepherds (*poimen* – *pastors*), who work for the building up of the Body. Being gifted with the caring heart of a shepherd, and being given the task of feeding the flock of God, means that these believers are

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<sup>64</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>65</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>66</sup> BDB.

<sup>67</sup> Strong's Online.

carrying out the work of a *shepherd*, but we do not read of them being called *shepherds*. There is nothing in Paul's explanation of the gifting that would indicate that these gifts are exclusively given to elders; as a part of the Body of Christ, we have all received a spiritual gift from the Lord (1 Corinthians 12:18-19) and our responsibility is to exercise it within the context of the flock of God – we are sheep doing the bidding of the Shepherd. Since Jesus unequivocally stated that He is the ONE Shepherd, it would be a large presumption on our part to claim that we are also a shepherd. The Scriptures describe elders/bishops and deacons within an assembly, but the reality is that we all bear a responsibility to one another (1 Corinthians 12:25); however, through all of this, we all remain sheep within Christ's fold! We, who remain faithfully in Christ, will join Him in exercising His kingly rule and sovereignty over His millennial kingdom (Revelation 20:6) and will continue with Him throughout eternity (Revelation 22:5); nevertheless, He remains the Shepherd and we are to be His obedient sheep.

It is for these reasons that I do not appreciate the English word *pastor* when it is applied within the Body of Christ. The word comes from the Latin *pastorem*, meaning shepherd, and, as we have just seen, Jesus is the only Shepherd.<sup>68</sup> To bear the title *pastor* (or *shepherd*), when we are truly nothing more than the Shepherd's sheep doing His bidding, goes beyond what is Biblical. Peter very clearly exhorted the elders who were carrying out the work of a shepherd, to not lord it over the other sheep, but to work *among* them (1 Peter 5:2-3). Yes, we are to carry out the work of a shepherd because Jesus will *shepherd* His flock through the sheep whom He has equipped for that task. However, that does not, in any respect, permit us to bear the name *shepherd*, or, as we hear it in English, *pastor*. The gifting that we receive from the Lord will NEVER place us OVER the other sheep; we must simply exercise the gifting that He has given us within the context of the local assembly of called-out ones.



Bud Talbert

Moreover, there seems to be a tendency with some to gravitate toward strong rule within the local assembly, and to wield the title of *pastor* with great force. They are quick to quote Hebrews 13:7 – “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation,” and that is hastily followed by: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves ...” (Hebrews 13:17). The English translation of these passages would seem to indicate that there are, in fact, those within the Body of Christ who *rule* over others. Indeed, this is highly characteristic of independent Baptists; one such Baptist, concerning Hebrews 13:17, has stated: “... the congregation must *submit* (i.e. yield) to these leaders” (emphasis in the original).<sup>69</sup> He then went on to say, “Believers, then, must yield to their **pastors**, follow their admonition, obey their commands, and submit to their authority” (emphasis added).<sup>70</sup> Is this a correct understanding of these two passages? Emphatically NO; it is not! The word *rule* is translated from *hegeomai* (*hayg-eh'-om-*

<sup>68</sup> [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=p&p=11&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=p&p=11&allowed_in_frame=0)

<sup>69</sup> Bud Talbert, “The Pastor and His People,” *The Whetstone*, Volume 9 Number 3, May-June 2003.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.



ahēe), which means to lead.<sup>71</sup> A transliteration of the beginning of Hebrews 13:7 is: *keep in mind your leading ones*,<sup>72</sup> which is very different from *remember them that have the rule over you*. Bear in mind that the translators of the KJV were under royal restrictions, and one of them was that the “Bishop’s Bible, [was] to be followed, and as little altered as the original will permit.”<sup>73</sup> In this case, the Bishop’s Bible reads: “Remember them which haue the ouersyght of you”; it seems that the translators went beyond their guiding rule to actually enhance the ecclesial authority of the bishop (going from *oversight* to *rule*).<sup>74</sup> *Rule*, in the second reference (Hebrews 13:17), has the same Greek word, and *obey* (another significant word in this phrase) comes from the Greek word *peitho*, which means to be persuaded (the root of the word for *believe*).<sup>75</sup> This is not a command for blind obedience, but a call to test those who have the oversight or who lead spiritually so as to ensure that they are Biblically accurate – as we are admonished by John (1 John 4:1). If such testing against the Word of God produces positive results, then we are to submit to their leading (which will actually be obedience to the Lord, and is the real reason why we are then encouraged to submit); the submission must never come without a continual testing with positive results, and it must never be a blind compliance to someone in a perceived position of authority. Jesus very forthrightly condemned such: “... Ye know that they which are accounted to rule [literally, be first] over the Gentiles exercise lordship over [to hold in subjection] them; and their great ones exercise authority upon [domineer] them. But so shall it [absolutely] not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all” (Mark 10:42-44).<sup>76</sup> Our mandate is to know the Word of God so that we can effectively apply it on a continual basis to what comes our way; in this case, specifically to those who are our spiritual leaders; this is the essence of Biblical discernment! It is precisely this discernment that will prevent us from sitting under the teaching of anyone who is tainted by modern ecumenism; if we sit under their teaching, then we are NOT being Biblically discerning.

The words of the living creatures and elders are that we will *reign on the earth*. *Reign* comes from the Greek word *basileuo* (*bas-il-yoo’-o*), and speaks of the ultimate or sovereign authority of kings.<sup>77</sup> Elsewhere we are told that we will *reign with* (*sumbasileuo*) Him (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:4,6). Jesus will make those who are victorious in Him to be kings, and as kings we will exercise His authority (not our own); a king reigns over his kingdom because he is king, and it is understood that he holds that right because of the position that he fills. Inasmuch as we are *in Christ*, we will be granted the privilege of reigning with Him, but it is equally certain that we will neither rule nor reign without Him.

Those who are victorious in Christ will be made *kings*, and will *reign* with Him (we will exercise His authority in His millennial kingdom), and we will also be made *priests*. What is a priest? It is someone who has been set aside for the specific purpose of carrying out religious activities; more particularly, it is someone who carries out such activities as a mediator between the holy and the unholy. When the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, it was His desire that this

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<sup>71</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>72</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>73</sup> [http://www.kjvonly.org/other/kj\\_instructs.htm](http://www.kjvonly.org/other/kj_instructs.htm)

<sup>74</sup> [http://www.studylight.org/desk/?t1=en\\_bis&q1=heb%2013](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?t1=en_bis&q1=heb%2013)

<sup>75</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>76</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

<sup>77</sup> Strong’s Online.

people would fill such a role between Him and the world: “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice [words] indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure [valued property] unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests [bringing together the roles of king and priest], and an holy [set apart] nation. These *are* the words which thou [Moses] shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 19:5-6).<sup>78</sup> God’s desire for Israel was that they would, through their obedience to His commands, become a nation of intercessors between Him and the peoples of the earth. God’s desire for Israel never came to fruition, for it was shortly after this that Aaron cast them a calf of gold to worship because Moses was delayed in coming down from the mountain (Exodus 32:1-4).

Peter picks up a similar theme: “But ye [those who are believing in Christ] are a chosen generation [kindred – we have been chosen *in Christ*], a royal [kingly] priesthood, an holy [set apart] nation [race], a peculiar people [a people for a possession]; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light ...” (1 Peter 2:9).<sup>79</sup> Here we see the activities of a priest and king being rolled into one – *a royal priesthood*. John declared, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). Jesus was born of the royal (kingly) line of David (Romans 1:3) and He is our High Priest (Hebrews 8:1) – He is the Head over all as both King and High Priest, a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 6:20). Melchisedec is described as being “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually” (Hebrews 7:3). Melchisedec met Abram and blessed him in the name of God Most High (‘*El ‘Elyon*), for he was a priest unto ‘*El ‘Elyon* (Genesis 14:18-20).<sup>80</sup> However, despite being called a priest of God Most High, he is also called the king of Salem (king of Peace), and his name means king of Righteousness (Hebrews 7:2).<sup>81</sup> We see the roles of king and priest brought together in Melchisedec, in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in those who are faithful to Him.

However, it is equally evident that our role as priests of the Lord is not forever. Jesus, as our High Priest, is our intercessor with the Father right now (Romans 8:34), and we, as His priests during the millennial kingdom, will function as intercessors between the people of the realm and the Lord (Revelation 20:6). In the new heaven and earth, which will only be occupied by those whose names are in the Book of Life, we will “reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 22:5), and no mention is made of being priests. A moment’s consideration will reveal the logic of this: priests are intercessors between the holy and the profane; the new heaven and earth will only contain the holy – there will be no need for intercessors. We are not told much about the new heaven and earth, but the evidence is that all who are *in Christ* will have sovereignty (*reign*) over this new creation.

The song of the living creatures and the 24 elders includes the promise of being kings and priests; we will reign on the earth under the oversight of the Chief Shepherd, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and we will be priests under the guidance of our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>78</sup> BDB.

<sup>79</sup> Strong’s Online; Strong’s Dictionary.

<sup>80</sup> Strong’s Dictionary.

<sup>81</sup> Strong’s Online.



**11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;**

Here John provides a broader picture of the throne of God: it is surrounded by a large host of angels. The parallel to this is found in Daniel 7:10: “A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him [the Ancient of Days]: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” Daniel establishes that the number of angels is incalculable. Although John is not viewing God’s judgment of the unrighteous at this time, the presence of innumerable angels receives a supporting context from Daniel’s vision. There is a vast company of celestial beings all around the throne of God, the living creatures and the 24 elders, and they are not silent.

John then endeavors to give us some idea of the number of the angels; as noted, what we see in our English KJV is a very close similarity to what we read in Daniel 7. However, the phrase “ten thousand times ten thousand” does not appear in the Greek text,<sup>82</sup> neither is it found in the Bishop’s Bible or the Latin Vulgate.<sup>83</sup> Somewhat puzzling is the fact that it does show up in the corrupt text of Westcott and Hort; clearly the translators of the KJV found this in a Greek manuscript that was available to them and saw fit to include it in their English translation (perhaps to strengthen the parallel to Daniel). The literal Greek of this latter phrase is simply: *even thousands of thousands*.<sup>84</sup> To understand what took place here in the minds of the KJV translators is a subject for another study.



**12. 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.**

Here is the single proclamation made by the myriads of angels; they are speaking in unison – *voice* is singular! This innumerable host of heavenly angels is making known their praise of the Lamb of God, and they are together in their praise.

Like the living creatures and elders before them (v.9), they begin by declaring that the Lord Jesus Christ is *worthy*. They describe Him as the One Who *was slain*; what is most noteworthy about the Lord Jesus Christ is that He died to pay the penalty for sin – therefore, He is worthy; He is that long-promised sacrificial Lamb Who paid the price to purchase men out of sin, and to seal the devil’s doom (Genesis 3:15). *Slain* (*sphazo*) means to slaughter, but especially to kill as a

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<sup>82</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>83</sup> *ESword*, Bishop’s Bible 1568, Latin Vulgate.

<sup>84</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; this is where it becomes obvious as to why Stephanus is a superior Greek text to Scrivener’s. In 1894 Scrivener simply took the KJV text and worked backwards to create from it a Greek manuscript, which includes the errors made by the translators ([www.tbsbibles.org/pdf\\_information/202-1.pdf](http://www.tbsbibles.org/pdf_information/202-1.pdf)).

sacrifice.<sup>85</sup> The word bears the perfect tense, describing an action that has taken place in the past, once, never needing to be repeated. “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption [deliverance] *for us*” (Hebrews 9:12). Christ died only once to purchase freedom from sin, and His sacrifice was in place before the world was formed (1 Peter 1:19-20); it is because His death was already a certainty in the mind of God before Adam sinned that salvation was available to all men before Jesus came to earth. Therefore, since Jesus died only once, it follows that we can receive His marvelous gift of salvation ONLY once. “For *it is* impossible [cannot be done<sup>86</sup>] for those who were once enlightened [infused with saving knowledge by God], and have tasted of [experienced] the heavenly gift, and were made [became] partakers of the Holy Ghost [Romans 8:9], And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away [and having committed apostasy; no *if*], to renew [restore] them again unto repentance [it is through repentance that we come to faith in Christ; that is the place to which it is impossible to bring the apostate]; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh [*anastauroo* (*an-as-tow-ro’-o*), literally, again (*ana*) crucify (*stauroo*)], and put *him* to an open shame [hold up to contempt]” (Hebrews 6:4-6).<sup>87</sup> Clearly, it is a serious matter to fall away from the Lord (to apostatize). As Peter writes, “it had been better for them [those who are apostate] not to have known [to know thoroughly and accurately] the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn [away] from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Peter 2:21). Jesus made it very clear that if we desire to be His disciples, then we must be committed to following Him (Luke 14:26-27), which means obedience to His commands (1 John 2:3), and, if we are so committed, then we must remain faithful to the very end in order to find salvation (Mark 13:13).

The anthem of the angels is that the Lamb of God is worthy of *power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory* and *blessing*. Once again, *receive*, which is translated from the Greek *lambano*, means to take what is one’s own; Christ, Who is worthy because He is the eternal God and Savior of mankind, rightfully has all of these as His own. Just as He did not receive any of these (as we might think of it) from the elders (Revelation 4:11), so He does not receive any of these from the angelic hosts – they are simply acclaiming that He is worthy of all of these things, even as they are already His. We have looked at *glory, honor* and *power*, as acclaimed by the elders (Revelation 4:11), and the Greek words that are used here are exactly the same. *Riches* speaks of abundance. The Psalmist declared: “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1). However, spiritually we read that “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ ...” (Ephesians 1:3); if we are *in Christ*, then we have been blessed with every blessing that God has for us. *Wisdom* (*sophia*) speaks of intelligence and understanding, and, when it is applied to God, it is elevated to the highest level. Little wonder, then, that we read, “The fear [reverence] of the LORD is the beginning [first step or of primary importance] of wisdom ...” (Psalm 111:10).<sup>88</sup> True understanding begins with a proper attitude toward the Lord, our Creator and Savior. *Strength*

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<sup>85</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>86</sup> Some contend that the Greek word *adunatos* means that something is merely difficult; when it describes a person, it means that they are weak or powerless, but in all other cases (such as this) it means that it cannot be done, it is impossible (Gingrich Lexicon; Vine’s “impossible”).

<sup>87</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>88</sup> BDB.



is from the Greek word *ischus*, which means ability or might.<sup>89</sup> The meaning is very close to *dunamis* (power), except that this word indicates a more forceful ability; whereas *dunamis* might indicate a latent strength, *ischus* would be an expressed ability because of a supporting power (*dunamis*).<sup>90</sup> *Blessing* is from the Greek *eulogia*, which literally means good or fine speech (hence, praise), and from which we get our word *eulogy*; the Lamb is worthy of their praise!<sup>91</sup>

So the enumerable hosts of angels declare their praise for the Lord Jesus Christ, which is based upon the sacrifice that He made for mankind.



**13. 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.**

The hosts of celestial beings have no sooner ended their acclaim of the Savior than John hears an expression of the same praise coming from various other sources. *Creature* refers to that which has been created by God. Therefore, we have included in this proclamation of praise every physical thing; both words (*every* and *creature*) are in the singular, which indicates that this is inclusive of every individual created entity – there isn't one that is not participating. This is all of creation: in heaven (referring to the created heavens, not the dwelling place of God), on and under the earth, in the sea, and (just to ensure that nothing has been left out) all that are in them. John, who has been taken up into heaven, into the very presence of God upon His throne, hears the combined praise of all of creation: the starry hosts, the winged creatures flying above the earth, everything that is upon the earth (plants and animals), the burrowing creatures within the earth, and the creatures in the sea. The Psalmist wrote of the whole of creation proclaiming praise to the Lord, the Creator: "Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also stablished them for ever and ever [for continuous existence]: he hath made a decree which shall not pass. Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word: Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven" (Psalm 148:2-13).<sup>92</sup>

From the earth, John hears the echo of what the angelic hosts have proclaimed in heaven: *blessing*, *honor*, *glory* and *power* are ascribed to the Lord Who is sitting upon His throne, and to the Lamb, Who, at this time, is standing with the Father. *Blessing*, *honor*, and *glory* are exactly the

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<sup>89</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>90</sup> Vine's "ability."

<sup>91</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

same words that were used by the heavenly hosts (v. 12). However, the word *power* is not the same. The angelic hosts used the word *dunamis*, which speaks of an inherent ability; the earthly chorus uses *kratos*, which speaks of a strength that brings sovereignty;<sup>93</sup> the former could be latent, even though it is present, whereas the latter requires it to be evidenced in some way (their continuous existence being a demonstration of the sovereign power of God). The hosts of earth await the coming expression of the power of God to restore what once was: “For the earnest expectation of the creature [creation] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature [creation] was made subject to vanity [frailty], not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope, Because the creature [creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption [perishing] into the glorious liberty of the children of God [the new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1)]. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits [singular] of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption<sup>94</sup>, *to wit*, the redemption [deliverance] of our body” (Romans 8:19-23).<sup>95</sup> There will come a day when the expression of God’s sovereign power (*kratos*) will be a new heaven and earth; the present creation, which has been made subject to corruption through the sin of Adam, will depart and be replaced with new. Paul tells us that even we, who have the *firstfruit of the Spirit*, eagerly await the day of our final deliverance from the presence and power of sin. We, who have placed our faith in Christ for our deliverance, have received the Spirit of God, Who abides within us; “... ye were sealed [marked] with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest [Down Payment] of our inheritance until the redemption [deliverance, liberation] of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:13b-14).<sup>96</sup> We have received the Holy Spirit in anticipation of the day when we may abide with the Lord forever in glorified bodies (1 Corinthians 15:52-53) – if we remain faithful to Him (Mark 13:13). We all know that a deposit does not guarantee final possession; many people who have made a down payment on a house ultimately never take full ownership of that house. “Take heed [discern or understand], brethren, lest [literally, not at some time] there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [unfaithfulness – see Mark 13:13], in departing [fall away; apostatize] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).<sup>97</sup> Simply receiving the Spirit of God does not guarantee that we will be in the presence of God for all eternity; unless we remain faithful to the Lord, we will offend the Spirit and fall into apostasy from which there is no recovery (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29; 2 Peter 2:20-21; cf. Ezekiel 18:24). God is very consistent in this matter; it is man who struggles with such a teaching, for it contravenes the more comfortable once-saved-always-saved theology, which is openly held by most Evangelicals and all of those who hold to either a Reformed or a Catholic theology.

All of nature is proclaiming the worthiness of the Lord upon His throne and of the Lamb, through Whom will come the ultimate deliverance from sin, something that the hosts of angelic beings will never fully comprehend. To the Ephesians, Paul revealed that the heavenly hosts are learning about the many aspects to the wisdom of God through His *ekklesia* (Ephesians 3:10). All

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<sup>93</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>94</sup> *Adoption* is not complete until we are with the Lord in our glorified bodies, Galatians 4:5.

<sup>95</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

<sup>96</sup> Gingrich Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

<sup>97</sup> Gingrich Lexicon; Friberg Lexicon.

nature affirms that this praise of the Lord will continue unto the ages of the ages (*for ever and ever*) – it will be without end.<sup>98</sup>



**14. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.**

The four living creatures proclaim, “Amen” – coming, as this does, at the end of a doxology or praise to the Lord, it means *this is indeed true!*<sup>99</sup> These creatures wholeheartedly lend their voices of agreement to the praise of all of creation; the heavenly and the earthly are agreed in their praise of the eternal God.

The 24 elders say nothing; however, they prostrate themselves before God and the Lamb, and worship (an expression of reverence to) Him, Who is living unto the ages of the ages.

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<sup>98</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.