

The Guaranteed Harvest

2010 Missions Conference

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It is a great privilege for me to be here with you this evening. We are here to speak about missions, yet at the same time there are so many here this evening that your heart is dull because you have never known him. Maybe you are a young person and you were brought here this evening. Your parents. You look down. You move your feet. You write with a pencil. You distract yourself.

No matter how humble we are as preachers and how hard it is to hear us, know this, young person, that just the fact that you are in a church where the Bible is taught and a man is attempting to speak from the open Bible, you are greatly privileged, greatly privileged and you will be held accountable on that day.

I fear for some of the young people who are here tonight. Listen. There is absolutely nothing more important than Jesus Christ. If you sense boredom, fight against that boredom and pay attention because your life depends on everything you hear when a Bible is opened. Seek with all your heart to know him. Hate the fact that you don't care to know him. Do whatever is within your means to seek him and to hear his Word.

If you are a Christian here tonight we are talking about missions. We are not talking about something that can be added to our taken from the Christian life. We are talking about missions. If there are countless billions of people who have not heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and if we are in this generation we are responsible to make that gospel known.

I always say this. Missions... there is only two ministries in missions. You either go down in the well or you hold the rope for those who are going down. Either way there will be scars on your hands. Stand up. Show me your scars. What has it cost you to be a Christian? What has it cost you to follow him? What has it cost you to take the gospel to the nations? What have you given up?

You look for meaning here and there running to and fro. I will tell you what meaning is and where it is found. It is found in doing the will of God.

“I have food to eat that you know not of. My food is to do the will of him who sent me.”

The reason why Americans are so full and yet so empty, the reason why our Christian bookstores, 50 percent of the books in there are written to figure out why we have no purpose, why we feel so hollow. It is because we have left the first things.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself.”

And your neighbor is the one closest to you and the one most far away, the one who has the gospel and must be encouraged and the one who does not have the gospel and at this point stands very little chance of every hearing the gospel unless something changes.

Let's open up our Bibles to the book of Revelation chapter five. Revelation chapter five and verse one.

I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?"

And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

Let's pray.

Father, Father, we so much need the Holy Spirit. God, multiplying words upon words. Take, Lord, this Word, the Holy Spirit and make it alive, a living reality in the hearts of all of us, Lord, that we might see the victory and the glory that the Lamb has won, that we might see his absolute sovereignty and his power, how he has triumphed over all things

and purchased for himself a people that that would motivate us to worship him, to serve him and to go out, Father, to every tribe and every tongue and every people and every nation with the glorious gospel of our blessed God. Father, help me. Lord, who is worthy to even touch the dust of this book? And yet, Lord, to speak about this text at this time. Father, please help us in Jesus' name. Amen.

The general theme of this book is the victory of the Lamb and the victory of the Lamb's gospel. We live in a day where Christianity is considered a small thing. But it is not a small thing because of the one who has accomplished the greatest work in the name of God and that it is his Messiah, his Christ.

This chapter that is before us, it is about the victory of the Lamb and all that he has accomplished through the cross. And I want us to look at this verse by verse to see that the work of missions does not hang upon the power of a man, the intellect of the greatest mind or the eloquence of the greatest preacher. The gospel hangs upon the power of Christ, the Lamb of God, the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

Before I get started again I just look out here and I see so many lives and I want to tell you: Don't waste your life. I am 48 years old and I have regrets. The only regrets that I have is that I have not give more to the cause of Christ, that I have kept so much back for myself. And I look at you and you love your children and you love your wife and you want good things for them and you want your children to learn all sorts of things and to prosper and have good jobs and play basketball and football and have friends. But don't you see that that compared to Christ and the Great Commission is nothing?

Sir, are you leading your children to see that all the universe pales in comparison to the one we are going to see here tonight and every task, every work, every deed that is known to man is nothing compared to taking this gospel to the world. Don't waste your life. Look at this Christ tonight. Fall in love with him. Be absolutely amazed at his power. Follow him. Follow him.

Now we look at our text, verse one. He says, "I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals."

John says, first of all, "I saw." That is why John is called the seer. He saw the things that God revealed to him, that Jesus Christ himself revealed to him. And he wrote it down in this book.

Now the fact that John saw the future is a very important thing. It tells us something very important about God. Really, we can interpret this only one of two ways. If God saw the... if John saw the future, it is because God revealed the future to him. If God revealed the future to him, God knows the future, but here is the question. How does God know the future?

It is very popular in the evangelical world today to say that God knows the future because he looked down through the corridors of time and he saw what was going to happen or

that his wisdom is so great he is able to discern all the factors creating the future and then come to a logical and perfect conclusion about the future. He knows the future because he saw it.

But that is not what Scripture teaches.

John knew the future because God revealed the future to him. And God revealed the future to him because God knows the future and God knows the future because he is the author and the sovereign Lord of the future. He has determined, designated, predestined, designed, whatever you want to call it absolutely everything so that it will come to pass according to how he desires and yet without removing the responsibility of moral creatures.

Now, it says here he saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a book. Now this book consisted of papyrus or parchment glued together and rolled up on a spindle. Books as we know them today didn't come into play until about the second or third century.

Now we have to ask ourselves—and this is very important to understand our text—what does the book represent?

Well, I want to read to you from Ladd. He says this. “It is God’s redemptive plan for the final scene of human history, the overthrow of evil and the gathering of a redeemed people to enjoy the blessings of God’s rule.”

Beal writes, “The book is best understood as containing God’s plan of judgment and redemption which has been set in motion by Christ’s death and resurrection, but has yet to be completed.”

I believe this book deals in a general way with the revelation of the final consummation of God’s plan in human history, the gathering forth of a people, the judgment upon the wicked, the redemption of the Church and the restoration of all of creation.

Now, he says here, “I saw in the right hand of Him...”

So the right... the book was held in the right hand of God. Literally in the Greek it says that the book as on the right hand of God.

Now from our studies in biblical literature we understand that the right hand was a place of favor, attention and a place of power. Thus, the Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father, the seat of favor, the seat of power, the seat of authority.

Now what does that mean about this book? It means this, that God’s redemptive plan for the Church, his work of gathering a people for himself, it receives his full attention and is the center point or focus of all his power.

Have you seen what that is actually saying? Here you see a missionary beating on a drum, talking about a people that he loves. You don't see that because he is involved in the Great Commission that he receives the full attention of God, that he is the focal point of the power of God.

It is quite an amazing thing.

Let's go on.

Now, I want you to look. It says, "I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back."

The thoroughness of this book. I want you to understand something. With regard to the salvation of the Church, the gathering forth of the people of Christ, the Great Commission, not one detail is missing, not one thing is left to chance. He is sovereign over all things to the greatest events, to the most minute. He is Lord over it all.

I want to read something to you that I wrote to put in my notes. It is this.

Whether it is one family saved from a deluge in a makeshift boat, granting a baby to an old man and his barren wife, sending a favored son to prison in Egypt, placing a baby in a basket of reeds and setting him afloat on the Nile, dividing a sea, diverting the spear of a wicked king thrown at a young psalmist who would replace for serving the Messiah's line from an evil queen when only one male descendant remained on earth, watching over an exiled people and bringing them home again, moving an entire empire to hold a census in order to bring one unknown carpenter to his home town in Bethlehem, whether it involved sending his Son and having him offered up on the cross by the hands of the wicked men, whether it involves resurrecting him from the dead and gathering a people to be his bride, every detail is worked out. And not one thing is left to chance.

A missionary life is not one of great apparent success. True missionaries struggle a great deal. They can spend their entire life and not see many conversions in certain lands. This is the stuff of strength. Not what they necessarily see with their own eyes, not with the reports that they can send home about all that God is doing.

No, the strength comes from this, that the one who is Lord over history is Lord over the Great Commission and everything he has ordained will come to pass.

Psalms 33:11. "The counsel of the LORD stands forever. The plans of his heart from generation to generation."

Isaiah 46:9. Listen to this.

Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done,

Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'

Ephesians 1:11, "Who works all things after the counsel of his will."

Now if we look in verse one again at the book written inside and on the back, and it is sealed up with seven seals.

Now in ancient times in Roman times the seal was used to show three things or to do three things: to show ownership, to protect a document from being changed or altered in any way and to keep its contents secret.

Now how does this apply to our text before us tonight? Well, first of all, that seal implies God's ownership. Again, that God is the owner of human history. He is the sovereign Lord and author of human history.

You need to understand something. Everything that has ever been done has been done for him. Everything that he is doing is ultimately for his glory and the display thereof.

Now, because you are a from a humanistic culture you say, "How could God do all these things for himself?"

Because he happens to be God. By virtue of that title it is his right to do all for his own glory. Any rationale creature must have an end or a purpose for what they are doing. And if they are a rational creature they will have the highest end or highest purpose for what they are doing. So if God is going to do something, there must be a reason for it and the highest reason in the universe is God himself.

He does it for him.

You say, "What about me?"

Well, the kindest thing that God could ever do for you is to give you the greatest gift he could ever give you. And that is for him to make the world a stage and to walk out in the center of that stage and to reveal his glory so that you might see it.

Some of you who think Christianity is so dull, it is either you have been taught wrongly or you still remain unconverted because when you understand that it is about the glory of God and the manifestation of such beauty that you must be strengthened in your inner man on the day you stand before the Christ because if you are not strengthened in some supernatural fashion, his mere beauty will drive you mad.

Christianity is about that glory.

Now, also the decrees are fixed. That seal represents that what God has decreed to do, it cannot be changed by anything in heaven, earth or hell. The most well meaning angel

cannot bring a change to a jot or tittle. The greatest demon in hell cannot affect what is written on that scroll.

Listen to what he says in Ecclesiastes 7:13. "Consider the work of God, For who is able to straighten what He has bent?"

No one.

Oh, he is not this little god sitting there on some tin throne with a paper machete crown on his head wringing his hands wondering what is going to become of his plan. He knows what is going to become of his plan. There will be victory because it hangs upon one who is worthy and that is the Christ.

Now also God's decrees are hidden from men unless he chooses to reveal them.

It says in Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever."

Do you realize something? Listen to me. Those who don't think much of Scripture reading or preaching, do you realize that men and women far more noble than you would have given their lives to hear the things you are hearing and to see the things you are seeing?

Oh, if God would just take away our ignorance, if he would take away this dullness of mind that causes us to chase after things that do not matter, if we would only in our hearts return to those things that are truly precious in the sight of God.

Ramsey writes this. "In God's government nothing is left to chance. To him nothing is uncertain. No unforeseen contingency can arise and there is no crisis unprovided for."

It is amazing. It is amazing.

Now in verse two it says, "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice."

Now we all know that angels are quite strong. At least that is what it seems in the Scriptures. So if it was just an angel or maybe even a small angel we would be amazed. But it says clearly that here is an unusually strong angel proclaiming in an unusually loud voice.

Now what is he trying to show us? He is saying that the message, the declaration that this angel is about to make is not confined to a certain region in the world or a certain region in the cosmos, but his voice travels throughout the entirety of the universe.

And what does he ask? Read on. He says, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?"

The word “worthy” comes from the Greek word αξιος (ax'-ee-os). It is an adjective meaning literally “weighty, having weight or having worth.”

When you are in an argument with someone and you trump their contradiction they say, “Well, that is a weighty argument. That is a worthy argument. It has worth. It has value.”

And the question being asked here is: Who has the weight, the worth, the virtue, the merit, the strength corresponding to the greatness of the task?

Now, who is able to reveal, but not just reveal, also enact our bring to completion the decrees of God leading up to the final redemption of the Church and the final restoration of creation?

Verse three. “And no one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look into it.”

First of all we understand that a search has been made throughout the entirety of the universe. Secondly, we find out that not even the greatest of angels are able to answer the call.

We have no mention here of Gabriel coming forth or of Michael standing up and saying, “I am the one.”

When we look among the greatest of men, we could go to Noah, but he is absent; Abraham, Moses. He is silent. Surely Isaiah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets of old? No. They sit in their seat. They do not move. They know they are not able to answer the call.

As a matter of fact, if all the most precious creatures in heaven were to join forces of strength, of intellect, of purity, of spirituality, none of them as a collective unit would be able to rise up and say, “We shall do the task,” no one.

Ramsey writes, “In vain is this call made. The whole universe is silent. It seems to stand appalled at the very idea of such a work being committed to creature hands.”

Seiss writes, “Angels shrunk back from it as beyond their qualifications. Heavenly principalities and powers stood mute and downcast as they surveyed the requirements of the work.”

Do you know one of the great evidences of true conversion is that if someone comes to you and even hints that your virtue or merit had something to do with your right standing before God you become so nauseous as to vomit. You turn from them and say, “Away, away.”

Here this great call is made. And all of creation hangs its head, almost sick at even the possible suggestion that one of them or all of them together might be worthy.

Now we read in verse four, “Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it.”

Literally, John began a great weeping or a wailing. There is no one able, no one to open up the seals, reveal the plan of God. But most importantly, there is no one able to take that book out of his hands and enact the decrees and bring the work of God’s salvation to its final completion.

Seiss writes, “John knew,” this is so amazing. “John knew by that spirit in which he was what that sealed book meant. He knew that if no one was found worthy and able to take it from the hand of God and to break its seal, then all the promises of the prophets and all the hopes of the saint and all the things associated with a redeemed world must fail.

“He understood that if there was a failure at this point, the redemption of the purchased possession must fail. Could it be possible that this should be? Had he all this while been hoping and preaching and prophesying what should, after all, not be accomplished? Was the promised inheritance now at the ripened moment for its recovery to go by default into eternal alienation? How could he bear the thought? Yet such were some of the suggestions of this interval of blankness and awful pause in heaven.”

We are so dull about the things of God that someone would suggest that something might not happen that he decreed. And we are so dull in our understanding that we do not think it is a big deal.

John came undone. He knew if only one aspect of God’s plan fails or cannot be enacted, then the whole thing is gone. There is no hope at all.

You know, there is a saying out there that men are so spiritually minded they are no earthly good. I say men are so earthly minded they are no good in heaven or earth.

Do you see what is going on here? We care more about our balancing of our checkbooks, about whether or not we have the right home or the right car or the right clothing or this and that. We fret about so many things. But John was a seer. He could see that all the earthly things do not matter. The decrees of heaven being carried out on the earth is the only thing that matters.

Oh, give me 25 men who realize that the only thing that matters on this planet is the carrying out of the decrees of God and they will march like an army this world has never seen.

This silence in heaven was a dramatic interlude. It was a dramatic interlude calculated to impress upon John and to impress upon us the singular dignity of the one that is about to be presented.

I love that.

All hope is gone. There is nothing left, not even the greatest angels in heaven or the holiest of men. Their jaws drop. Their arms hang to their side. There is no force left in them. Even the seer wails and cannot be comforted. And then you hear the Lamb, that name.

I know a dear brother and if you walk up to him he is an old man. And you say, "Brother, tell me something about Jesus."

He will turn around with his face glowing and tears just flowing down his face. "Let me tell you about the Lamb."

I wish we would see him as that precious.

I don't need to psych you up for missions. I don't need to get you like some football player riled up to go do some good deed. What we need is a vision of Christ. And that will compel you.

Paul, yes, he was a prisoner for Christ Jesus because he wore chains, but it was much bigger than that. He was indicating something else. He was a prisoner of the love of Christ. He was a prisoner of the splendid beauty of Christ. He saw Christ in such a way that Christ became of infinite worth to him. And it drove him. Some would say it drove him almost mad, but drove him nonetheless.

That is what we need. That is what we need in evangelicalism. That is what we need in reformed movement and sovereign grace movements and every other kind of movement. We need an exalted vision of the beauty and power and the unique dignity of the person of Jesus Christ.

That will build a fire in a man that won't go out for a thousand lifetimes.

In verse five, "One of the elders said to me, 'Stop weeping.'"

Now this elder is possibly part of 20... of a group of 24 that are possibly the most splendid, the most exalted rank of angelic creatures. It could be possible, we don't know, that they are the greatest, the highest order of creature.

But notice, when he directs John, he does not direct John to himself. He points away from himself and he directs John to the person of Jesus Christ.

That is such a good word for those of us who are preachers. There are no great men of God, never have been, never will be. I have known some of them and they are not great at all. There are no great men of God, just tiny faithless, unbelieving sinful miniscule pathetic little men of a great and mighty God.

He says to John, "Stop weeping or stop wailing."

This is not merely a consolation. He is not merely telling John, "John, I am consoling you. I feel for you, John.

No, this is a command. "John, stop! Stop!"

What is the difference between John and this elder? How is it that the elder can stand there in silence and be so bold and yet John hears the silence, no one answers the call and he is broken into a million pieces? He is disintegrated. What is the difference?

I will tell you what the difference is. It is not the nature of that angelic creature as being superior over that of John's. But it is that that angelic creature possessed a greater sure knowledge and a deeper vision of the power of God. He knew God.

I am amazed today. I go up to students and I say, graduated from this and that seminary or Bible college and I say, "In your four years of training, how many of those years did you studying the attributes of God?"

"Well, we dealt with that half a semester."

There is your problem.

There are two things in which men must be trained. One is to know their God. And the other is to understand the gospel, how to spend four years on both.

We need a vision of Christ.

Now, I want to stop here for a moment. I could tell you that you need to love God more and you would say, "Of course I do."

The question is: How do you love God more? Do you pull yourself up by your proverbial bootstraps? What do you do to make yourself love God more?

Well, I love my wife now much more than I did when we were first married. She is an imperfect person, but over the 16 years that we have been married, I know more now of her virtue and her merit, her nature, the things and the ways in which God has changed her. And that virtue in her draws out my affections. So the more I see of her virtue, the more my affections are drawn out toward her, the more I love her. It is the same way. The more you know of God's virtue and merit and worth, if you are a true believer, the more your affections will be drawn out of you and control you.

But if you are an unconverted churchman, the more you know of God, the more you will hate him because your heart must be changed before such virtue could ever draw forth such affection.

Now, let's go on.

He said, “John, stop weeping. Behold the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David. Behold. ἰδοὺ (id-oo’). Look. Be careful. Pay attention to this.”

At this moment everything draws back and everything vanishes from John’s sight and there stands the Christ.

The angel says, “He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah.”

Now this is a messianic title taken from Genesis chapter 49. Just let me read it to you.

Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father’s sons shall bow down to you. Judah is a lion’s whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Now why is he called the Lion of the tribe of Judah? He is presented here, Jesus Christ is presented as the great, the magnificent, the fierce warrior king. He is. Now I want you to hold on to that. He is presented as God’s great champion and the champion of God’s people.

Now, he is also called the root of David. This also is a messianic title. Let me read it to you from Isaiah 11.

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist.

Now by calling him the root of David, the stem of Jesse, this is what is going on.

First of all the Messiah came forth from the line of David when David’s line was almost nothing more than a wilted root, a dried, parched branch in the desert. And what does that tell us? Even when the greatest promises of God seem to be coming as close as possible to their ultimate failure they blossom forth in fulfillment and prove the faithfulness of God.

That is God’s dealings with his people. That it seems like before every great victory we get closer and closer and closer and closer to failure so that every human strength is

exhausted. All endeavors of mankind are dried up. There is no hope. And then he comes bursting forth.

Is that not the way God moves in history?

Secondly, though he is the Son of God, he is Son of man. He is of David's line. I think this is so amazing folks. I could stop right here and for the next three hours we could just go on this and what is so important here?

Just listen to me. This one who is going to walk up to God and take the book out of his hands and is going to enact the decrees of God and direct all of human history to its final goal, making every, even the smallest detail obedient to him, he is a man who is not ashamed to call us brothers.

This is amazing. He is God. Yes. But so often in our defense of Christ's deity we forget his humanity. And that is a tragedy.

Now, number three. Though David was the anointed of God, this is God's anointed. And he is given the Spirit without measure.

Now, let's just go back for a moment. I want you to think about something. David, King David, there was so much about him that was admirable. There were so many great works that he accomplished. He fought the battles of the Lord and for the Lord's people. He did great things. He brought liberation. But he is a worm and less than a worm compared to the one who comes after him, the one who is greater than David.

Sometimes I hear pastors will compare themselves to Moses and they will say, you know, "As Moses needed a man to stand on this side and that side to hold up his arms so that the people of God would prevail, so the pastor needs someone on their left and their right holding up their arms so that the people will prevail."

No. You are missing the point. The point is we now have one who is greater than Moses. He doesn't need to sit on a rock and no one needs to hold up his hands. You are not the fulfillment of Moses. Jesus Christ is. You are not the fulfillment of Joshua. Jesus is.

Anything that has ever had to have a fulfillment, he is it. And I like it that way. I like it that way.

Also, having died in weakness, this one from David's loins, he was raised in power. We see this working constantly in this magnificent person of Christ. He came in weakness as a Lamb and was crucified. He was raised. He sits at the right hand of God.

There is a sense, my dear friend, and we are going to possibly get to this tomorrow, in which there no longer are any real governments or real kings. There is only one in God's economy and those who would pretend themselves to be in authority, they ought to kiss

the Son and make amends with him before he becomes angry and his anger can flare up in a moment. That is the Christ you never hear about. But it is the one of Scripture.

He goes on.

“He has overcome,” we read, “so as to open the book and its seven seals.”

Christ has overcome. But in what way has he overcome?

Well, there is a whole lot I have here, but I am going to have to jump through a lot of it. He has overcome all the obstacles that have stood in the way of God’s redemptive plan for his people in the restoration of creation. And, in actuality, my dear friend, that call all be boiled down to one thing, sin, sin. When God created man he gave him dominion over the earth. When man sinned against God he lost that dominion and it was usurped by the evil one and the world itself was thrown into chaos and placed under condemnation and bondage to sin and death.

But the Son of God became a man.

The world was given to men. The world was lost by a man. The world had to be regained by a man.

He overcame sin. Hebrews 9:26. “For now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

He overcame Satan. He defeated him. He plundered him. He made a public spectacle of him. He overcame death.

Hebrews 2:14 and 15.

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives

He has overcome.

And how did he overcome? He overcame through the cross.

Now let’s go into verse six.

He says, “And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb.”

Literally, “And I saw in the middle of the throne and of the four living creature and in the middle of the elders.”

The simple meaning is this, that Christ takes center stage in the universe, in heaven and on earth.

Does that make you afraid? It should.

Is he center in your life? Is he the priority? Does everything else pale in comparison to him? If you say no, then I can tell you, you are thinking like one who is insane. You are thinking like one who does not have this reason.

The greatest, most splendid creatures in all of heaven acknowledge him to be front and center in all things and yet you and I are so quick to forget him and to neglect him. What foolish creatures we are.

It is for this reason God has given us the Word of God to renew our mind. It is for this reason God has given us a Church, that we might sharpen each other constantly, constantly prod one another, constantly be moving, motivating, stimulating one another to forget these vain distractions, this Vanity Fair called our world and to focus on everything that is the focus of heaven and that is Jesus Christ.

He is not some little accessory to your already wonderful life. He is everything or he is nothing.

Christ takes center stage. I wrote here, “This is not a momentary phenomenon, but an infinitely extended and established state, the way things will always be.”

Christ will always be at the center of everything, of everything.

And we go on.

“I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb.” A Lamb.

John looks up and sees a Lamb. I can assure you that this was not what he was expecting. The fierce warrior king, the champion of God, the champion of God’s people is a Lamb?

Seiss writes, “He is here described not by the ordinary word used to signify Lamb, *αμνος* (am-nos’), but another *αρνιον* (ar-nee’-on), more intensely significant of gentleness and domesticity, a pet lamb, the gentlest and most inoffensive of beings.”

Morris writes, and this is so good, “Russia elevates the bear, Britain the lion, France the tiger, the United States the spread eagle, all of them ravenous. It is only the kingdom of heaven that would dare to use as its symbol of might not the lion for which John was looking, but a helpless lamb and at that, a slain one.”

Now, also I want you to realize this. For those of you who care not much for Christ, for the nations and for the great kings that lift up their noses at him and rule without his authority, I believe that this word is being used here to show not just the lamb, but the gentlest of creatures. He is doing it to give consolation to God's people, but he is doing it also to heap judgment upon his enemies. That this one who rules has never been... he has never been an unloving tyrant. He has never been a wicked beast. He has never gobbled up nations or trampled them down with iron shoes. No one on judgment day will ever be able to stand there and excuse themselves for not surrendering to him because they found something wrong with Christ.

He has been kind. He has been gentle. He has been loving. He has waited for you and waited for you and waited for you. He has called out to you. He has given you rain. He has given you sunshine. He has put the clothes on your back and the breath in your mouth and the beats of your heart all come from him. And on the day of judgment all of creation will stand against you and they will applaud when the verdict is read with regard to your condemnation because you rejected someone so good.

It goes on. It says, "A Lamb standing as if slain."

The word there is σφαζω (sfad'-zo) meaning to slay, slaughter, butcher. A lamb bearing the marks of slaughter.

Ladd writes, "The Lamb had the appearance of having been slain, that is, with its throat cut as though it had been slaughtered."

Now, we must always remember this and never forget it, that everything the Lion of the tribe of Judah has done and everything he will accomplish this great and mighty Lion has accomplished it by dying as a Lamb.

The Lamb that was slain, it says he is now standing. As the New Testament Church always cried out, "He has risen, indeed."

John is now just seeing with his own eyes what Christ himself declared to him at the beginning of this book when he said, "I am the first and the last, the living one and I was dead and behold I am alive, not periodically, not at just this moment, but I am alive for evermore and I have the keys of death and of hell."

The Lamb is risen. But I want you to realize something. Though he is risen. Though he is all powerful, the marks remain. The cross was not a necessary evil to be forgotten. It was the greatest revelation of God to be remembered forever. It was not a momentary evil to be forgotten.

He goes on and he says, "Having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent out into all the world."

The horn in ancient Jewish literature referred to power. We can see that in Deuteronomy 33:17 as the first born of his ox, majesty is his and his horns are the horns of the wild ox. With them he will push the peoples all at once to the ends of the earth.

Now the fact that the Christ not only has a horn, but has seven horns represent his absolute and perfect power.

Some scholars suggest, especially from this passage in Deuteronomy, that it refers to not only perfect power, but aggressive power.

I want to read something. Just listen for a moment, from Isaiah 59.

And He saw that there was no man, And was astonished that there was no one to intercede; Then His own arm brought salvation to Him; And His righteousness upheld Him. And He put on righteousness like a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing, And [listen] wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.

This Christ, my goodness, listen to me. Lift up your head. Get it out of a book. Think about this. Christ is doing mighty things in the land. I could right now just stop preaching. This brother could come forward. We could tell you report after report after report, some of them so magnificent you would not believe them about what this Christ is doing. He has wrapped himself in zeal and he is carrying out a great work. For the last 2000 years he has been doing it and he will continue it until the day he returns. And you need to understand something. Christianity is not some little thing, some sectarian thing done in south Mississippi. You take everything Christ has done and is doing and Christianity is, has been and always will be the biggest thing going in the universe. And you get to be a part of it.

And don't you realize we are living in the greatest time to be a Christian?

You know, these people moping about us living in a post Christian America. That gives us an opportunity to live it like first century Christians. We may even get to suffer for him before we get out of here.

What a privilege. What a privilege.

It goes on.

Christ is not nonchalant in his endeavors. And it says he has seven eyes. These represent his omniscience. Nothing is beyond his government and nothing is beyond his gaze. Nothing is going to appear suddenly over the hill and thwart his plans. He knows everything, absolutely everything. So he is all powerful. He is all knowing and he is worthy.

Seiss writes the following. “Three grand qualities of the Christ are thus brought to view. First, his sacrificial virtue to take away sin. Second, his aggressive strength to conquer and overcome all foes and, third, perfect and universal intelligence direct from the indwelling Spirit of God in all his fullness. Therefore this Lamb really is worthy.”

He really is.

Verse seven.

“And He came, and He took it out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.”

Do you know anything about God? Don't you realize you can't do this? You can't do this? This is amazing.

Seiss writes, “This is the sublimest individual act recorded in the apocalypse.”

Ramsey writes, “It is the investiture of the slain Lamb with universal dominion.”

Isaiah, you know:

In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts...

He goes on and goes on and then he says, “Woe is me, for I am undone.”

He caught a fraction of a glimpse of God and it disintegrated him. The Lamb, this Son of David, greater than David walks right up to God and don't forget this is our brother. This is the one who did not take upon himself the nature of an angel, the nature of a man.

Here we find a direct correlation, I believe, with the Son of man in Daniel.

It says in Daniel seven, “I kept looking in night visions and, behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of man was coming and he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him and to him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.”

This is what Jesus meant when he said, “All authority has been given unto me on heaven and on earth.

Think of it.

What did you think that meant? That simple statement, “All authority has been given unto me on heaven and on earth,” That could be, some theologians believe, the most radical statement Jesus Christ ever made.

All authority has been given unto him in heaven and on earth.

Ephesians 1:20 and 21. “He raised him from the dead and seated him at the right hand in heavenly places, at his right in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named not only in this age, but also in the one to come.”

Verse eight. “And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp.”

Here we see the most exalted creatures in the universe falling on their face before Christ. If this is not a proof of deity what could be? And know this. Learn from them. If you are going to take anything home to meditate on tonight, meditate on their action.

The most exalted creatures, I am sure if one of them came down to this planet the world could not contain them. Their beauty would devastate us. Our mind would not be able to comprehend a fraction of their glory. Such fear would set upon us that we would all die in an instant. And they throw themselves down before Jesus of Nazareth.

Will they not condemn us on the day of judgment for our lack of worship?

The Puritans were right when they called sin neglect of God, insanity, that the most reasonable creatures throw themselves and we have no time for such things.

Are you sure you know Christ? Are you sure?

It goes on.

Golden bowls. “And golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints.”

I simply want to say this, skimming over it. In ancient Jewish literature, again, angels were often appearing presenting the prayers of God’s people to God. But here is something that is quite amazing. They do this in the presence of the Lamb. He is our mediator. There is one God, only one and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

It goes on, verse nine. “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals’”

All of heaven now confesses with its mouth what it has been proclaiming with its posture. They have thrown themselves down before Christ and they are crying out, “You are worthy.” They sing a new song.

Now, in the Scriptures, a new song is usually coined after some new act of deliverance. This is the last new song to ever be sung. That Christ is worthy because he was slain is the great anthem of heaven.

I would pray that you would catch a glimpse of the cross, that it would become your anthem. My favorite preacher ever, no question about it, Charles Spurgeon, but to be honest with you—and I know he is going to get very angry with me when I talk to him one day—but the guy only preached one message. I have read so many of sermons... so many sermons from Charles Spurgeon and every one of them, it doesn't matter where you take him, what text, he is going to make a bee line for Jesus Christ and the cross. He will find a way.

I wonder why he was the most used and maybe the most powerful preacher that ever walked this planet apart from Christ and his apostles. Could it be because he was so enamored, that great mind of his and that great heart of his with one thing, the crucified Christ. Oh, that we would be that way.

It goes on and he says, “For you were slain.” It says, “Worthy are you to take the books, to break its seals. For you were slain.”

Now, finally, we are told with words, clearly, that we cannot misunderstand, he is worthy to be worshipped by all of creation, the greatest and the smallest and why is that? Because he was slain. He was a Lamb led to the slaughter. There is no Christianity without a Lamb and there is no Lamb in Christianity except the one that has been slaughtered. And if you are going to preach Christ you are going to preach Christ slaughtered, crucified for the sins of his people and raised again on the third day.

Let me read some things to you. Just this cross is the anthem of heaven and it should be the thing that draws you to loyalty, but for the world, they hate it.

My dear friend, sometimes I will come home from preaching and I will tell my wife, “These men got very, very angry at me. These men threatened me or these men wrote this on the internet.” And my wife will always say, “What do you... that is what they are supposed to do because men hate the cross. They are supposed to do it. Now get back out there again and preach.”

Men hate the cross and if they don't hate you, you are not preaching the cross. Now, sometimes I have preached the cross of Jesus Christ and I have done it with a wrong spirit. I have failed in so many ways.

A man asked me recently in a radio interview. He says, “A lot of people say a lot of bad things about you.”

And I said, "Yes."

He goes, "What do you feel about that?"

And I said, "Well, when people said horrible things about Christ they were always wrong. But when people say things about me they are not always wrong. And we need to learn from them."

But know this. Men hate the cross.

Listen to this. This is in a dialogue from Octavius. In this Felix derides the Christians saying their ceremonies center on a man put to death for his crime and on the fatal wood of the cross. He goes on to say that Christians put forth sick delusions, a senseless and crazy superstition which leads to the destruction of all true religion.

That is true.

Lucian, the Voltaire of antiquity mocks Christians in his [?] as poor devils who deny Greek gods and instead honor that crucified sophist and live according to his laws.

Origen's works Contra Celsus, in it Celsus declares the following, "What drunken old woman telling stories to lull a small child to sleep would not be ashamed of muttering such preposterous things?"

And Pliny the younger writes after examining two Christian slave girls under torture, "I discovered nothing but a perverse and extravagant superstition."

But I will tell you this. To honor his Son, if you go out into that world that hates your gospel and you preach it long enough and faithfully enough, God will call forth people. Why?

I finish up here. He says, "Because the Son of God purchased them for God with his blood."

Now, it says he purchased them, men, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. I do not believe that we ought to sit down and just try to figure out exact and perfect definitions as though some code is found within these words. I think what he is telling John is that he is going to gather a people for himself, not from just one singular ethnic group or even a few, but from every ethnic group.

I will tell you this. The extravagant theologies that come out of America with regard to eschatology have done more damage to winning Muslims to Christ than anything I could possibly ever think of. I honestly think that if they were to be nuked tomorrow a lot of Christians would rejoice saying it is the will of God rather than souls have perished. Christ died for people from all peoples.

And we carry the gospel to all peoples. And we love all peoples. And we die for all peoples.

The gospel might be preached to ever creature.

Now, here is where we are going to end and this is where the sovereignty comes in. Listen very carefully because really this is important. I am going to read some things to you.

God reveals to John that he is going to call forth a people that has been purchased, have been purchased. He is going to call forth a people from every tribe, every tongue, every people and every nation.

Now when we hear that, we have only got a few options theologically and I am going to give them to you.

One, here is the question. Is this prophecy based on God's foreknowledge of how people would respond to the gospel? Or is it based on his sovereign decree?

Two, did Christ pay a price only and hope that he might gain an uncertain number of people who might choose him? Or did he pay a price for a certain number of people that God had chosen before the foundation of the world?

Three, and this is the kicker. Now listen. I want you to think about this. Was Jesus able to reveal to John that men from every tribe, tongue, people and nation would be redeemed simply because he was able to look forward in time and see that fortunately that is the way things turned out? Or was it because God had ordained it from before the foundation of the world?

I will give you the answer. Psalms two, six and eight, chapter two verse six and eight:

But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain. I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee. 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Thy possession.

"I will give them to you, Son."

And then in John 6:37, "All that the Father gives me will come to me and the one who comes to me I most certainly will not cast out."

Now I want to conclude with just saying this. The infinite value of the death of Christ secures for us the right to offer the gospel to every creature on this planet and to do so passionately. That is why one of the first administrative acts of Christ when he had all

authority and all power, was to send forth his men to preach to every creature on the face of the earth.

But at the same time the death of Christ not only made possible a universal offer of the gospel, but it actually secured a specific people.

I am going to read from Ramsey, from the Geneva commentary and this... we will just conclude with his words.

“The price has been paid. The prisoners, therefore, must be released and given over to him. The curse cannot hold them for he has already borne it. The law cannot hold him for he has already satisfied it. Death and hell cannot hold them for these derive their claim from the violated law and that claim is forever cancelled. Having paid the price of their redemption in his own life’s blood they are his property and since he cannot be deprived of his blood bought right, sin that by nature reigns in them must be dethroned and destroyed and the world that holds them captive conquered. Thus,” oh, I love this part, “Thus, he sends forth the Holy Spirit to subdue their hearts to himself. He regenerates their hearts and makes them able to respond to the gospel of their salvation. Thus, by repentance and faith they take actual and complete possession of that spiritual and eternal life purchased for them. That same death secured the right of Christ.”

Now listen to this. Oh, I love this. “That same death secured for Christ the right to direct all acts of providence of every kind and decree and degree from the fall of a sparrow to that of an empire so that they work together, all of them for the good or salvation of his people. Nothing in earth or hell can deprive him, the Christ, in the minutest degree of what he has bought with his blood, the complete salvation of every one of his people whom the Father has given him. All things, therefore, are committed to his hand and to be used by him for his great end.”

Do you see the power? We can go anywhere. Any one tries to stop us we... the daughter of Zion wags their head at them. And we can go knowing that if we stay, if we preach, if we are faithful to the gospel, if we cut ourselves off from all of these church growth helps in these supports of the flesh, if we go out there with nothing more than the gospel of Christ sacrificial love, intercessory prayer, we will bring in the sheaves with joy because he has ordained it.

Thank you.

Change of Voice:

Thank you, Paul. [?] and be dismissed. We have a full day tomorrow. It has been a great evening to kick off this conference. Let’s now ask God to be with us now.

Lord, we thank you for this powerful reminder tonight that the harvest is guaranteed. You have purchased, past tense, your people out of every kindred, tribe, people and nation. Now they await to hear the gospel. Help us, Lord, to go forth in every aspect of our lives,

neighborhoods, family, even to the uttermost parts of the earth. Help us to open our mouths and speak about Jesus Christ, the good news that sinners can be saved. Receive your righteousness, oh Lord, and then await the glory of heaven while we serve you faithfully. And, Lord, just continue to meet us this weekend. Bless us with a full day tomorrow. Fill our cups to overflowing. Thank you for giving us this powerful thought tonight from your Word from both Ken and Paul. Help us to go away now meditating and thinking and discussing and then closing our eyes with these great thoughts for your glory alone in your name we pray. Amen.