

Revelation
He Is Worthy! (Part 3)
Revelation 4-5
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Well, I encourage you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Revelation 5, Revelation 5, as we continue to work our way through this amazing book that comes at the end of God's revelation to us.

You know, we live in a world that is filled with competing ownership rights. It happens in small individual levels. It happens in cities. It happens between individuals who are trying to draw the boundaries in different places. It also happens at a national level. We've all read in the news about what Russia is attempting to do in asserting itself and saying that many of those lands that were lost in the breakup of the Soviet Union actually belonged to them, and they want to begin to flex their muscles and assert their rights to regain them. China is claiming there are islands there that are theirs and even islands that they've created in the middle **of the** ocean. Those are theirs as well. We see it, of course, in the Middle East as there is constant battling in war over the right to own the land.

Well, tonight, we raise our eyes to a much bigger struggle - not a struggle over the property lines between individuals, not a struggle over the competition between nations but rather, tonight, we look at the proper and rightful owner of the universe. And there is, in fact, dispute about that - no rightful dispute, but there's dispute and we're going to see that as we begin to work our way through this passage tonight.

Now, just to remind you of where we are, chapters 4 and 5 of the Book of Revelation really began the heart of this book. The great lesson of these two chapters is that God is infinitely worthy to sit on the universe's throne and to judge its treasonous rebellion against Him. And He will delegate that right to the only one who is worthy - His only Son. These two chapters are a prelude. They're a prelude to the judgments that God will begin to unleash on the earth, beginning in chapter 6 and throughout that period we call the Tribulation. These heavenly events in chapters 4 and 5, to some extent, describe the circumstances that are ongoing in heaven. But

these chapters specifically occur just before the seven-year Tribulation occurs on the earth, because there is a circumstance, we come to tonight in chapter 5, that is unique to the end of the age.

Now, the last two weeks we've examined chapter 4 and I entitled it "The Scene in Heaven: The Father and the Throne". And there we saw Christ's invitation to John to come up and to see God's throne and he saw. He saw the throne of God. He saw the person of God. And then we, last time, looked at all of **the magnificent** setting around God's throne and then the worship that was a part of that as well.

Tonight, we come to the central event in this vision, and I want us to read it together. Revelation 5, and I'll begin reading in verse 1. Let's read the whole chapter although, I just warn you, there's no way we're getting through all this tonight. But let's begin.

"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.' Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of

thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.’ And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, ‘To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.’ And the four living creatures kept saying, ‘Amen.’ And the elders fell down and worshiped.”

It’s impossible for us to fully capture the majesty of this scene. John has done his best, under inspiration, to describe it to us and I want us to begin to work our way through it. In this chapter, John’s attention turns from the scene in heaven to the search in heaven - the Lamb and the Book. We’re still in the throne room described in chapter 4, that we looked at in detail, **but** the focus of chapter 5 turns away from all of those things to a remarkable book and an amazing person. Several times in this chapter we read “I saw” (verse 1, verse 2, verse six, verse 11) as John reminds us that he is an eyewitness of these things. But also with that expression, he turns our attention to focus on something else that he’s seeing. In this great drama, as it unfolds, John’s gaze and ours is really captured by three great sights and I want us to look at them together.

The first sight, that his attention is captured by, is the book with seven seals. The book with seven seals. John ended chapter 4 by directing our attention to the worship that surrounds the throne of God. And that worship focused on God as creator. As chapter 5 begins, John looks again at the one sitting on the throne, and as he looks at God, his eyes land on the Father’s mysterious book in verse 1. Let’s look at this book. This book becomes the centerpiece of the rest of the Book of Revelation.

Now, he begins with its description: “I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book...” Now, remember, God is spirit and doesn’t have a body like ours. So, when He’s described here as having a right hand, as sitting on a throne, it’s an anthropomorphism, that is, Scripture is describing God in human terms in order to help us understand something that’s true about Him. So, when this book is pictured as being in God’s right hand, the point is this: whatever this book is, it’s His. It’s His possession. It’s His by right. Literally, **the** Greek text

says, “I saw *on* the right hand of Him who sat on the throne”. God is pictured sitting on His throne with an open palm, and something is lying on that open right hand, and verse 1 says it’s a book. It’s as if He’s waiting for the right person to come and take it from Him.

Now, immediately, let me just mention that the word book is a bit deceiving. When we hear that word, what comes to our minds are the books **that** are on the shelves in our homes. That book didn’t really come into popularity until the second century AD. In fact, you may not know this, but do you know where the books that you have in your library, where books like that came from? Christians invented them. Christians invented them at the end of the first century AD and they became very popular in the second century. And the reason for that was because before that there had only been scrolls. But in the early church as the people of God gathered, as we gather here today, and as pastors sought to teach them the Scripture and as members like you sought to understand the Scriptures, they became frustrated with scrolls. Can you imagine? **You** come tonight and **you** bring your scroll of Revelation. And I say, “**Turn to** the account (not chapter 5 - there were no chapters) ...” I say, “Turn to the account of **the** scene in heaven.” And you’re sitting there, scrolling your scroll, trying to catch up. And then I say, “Okay, now open your scroll of Isaiah and let me show you...” And you’re bringing out Isaiah and you’re... You can understand why this was not tenable. And so, out of a desire to find their place more quickly and to seriously study the Scripture, Christians invented books. And here’s how it went. They simply took a scroll and they cut it into sections, equal sections, and then they glued it back-to-back. And then they stitched the edges. That’s how books began. That’s why you have books in your house because Christians, like us, wanted to study God’s Word.

Now, when John wrote at the end of the first century, especially since he was writing, remember, from Patmos where he’s been exiled, it’s likely that he did not write on the new technology but rather on a scroll. And what he saw in the hand of God here is almost certainly a scroll. Now, in the ancient world, scrolls were made in one of two ways. First of all, there were parchment scrolls - sections of animal skins that were cut into equal parts, sheep or goat usually, and then those skins that have been prepared were sewn together. These were more expensive. They were often reserved for official documents, for wealthy people. But in the first century, by far, the most common writing material (and it had been for 3000 years **out of** Egypt) was made of

papyrus. The papyrus reed grew, in those days, by the banks of the Nile in Egypt. Not so much anymore. It was harvested and you can see, on the slide, this all pictured. It was harvested, cut into long thin strips. And then two sets of strips were soaked with water, glued to each other at 90-degree angles, pressed together, and then allowed to dry. And then often they would be smoothed with a pumice stone or something like that. And **the** result, frankly, was something not unlike the paper you and I write on. Scrolls were made by joining dried sections together.

Now, this was likely a scroll because, as I said, codexes like we know weren't invented until the end of the first century and the beginning of the second century. And this scroll is described as having writing inside and on the back. And inside best describes the inside of a scroll before it's unrolled. That's how that word is most often used. So, here sitting on the right hand, the open right hand of God, was a scroll and it's a scroll of unparalleled importance.

Verse 1 goes on to say it was "...a book written inside and on the back..." (Literally, that had been written). That expression was often used in Greek to stress that the document's authority was still in force. Usually, only one side of a papyrus scroll was written on and that was the inside. That was the side where the reeds ran horizontally because you can imagine writing across vertical reeds, **you** know, it's a little hard. You get to every crack and every crevice, **and** your letters are messed up. But if you wrote **in** line, the long line, with the flow of the reed, then that work went a lot better. So, most scrolls were only written on one side. But this scroll was not only written on the inside, but also had writing on the outside and we'll talk about why that was true in just a moment.

Notice verse 1 goes on to say "...it was sealed up with seven seals." A seal was just a unique impression made on either clay or wax. You would take **a** ball of clay or wax, put it at the edge of the document, and then you would make a unique impression on that. That impression was usually made by a ring or, in many cases, a role that you carried with you. It contained a distinctive mark, your mark, that was tied solely to you.

Now, a scroll was sealed for two reasons - to keep its contents private... **I** think of Isaiah 29:11-12: "The entire vision will be to you like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to

the one who is literate, saying, 'Please read this,' he will say, 'I cannot, for it is sealed.' Then the book will be given to the one who is illiterate, saying, 'Please read this.' And he will say, 'I cannot read.'" So, it's something sealed up so that its contents are private. But you also sealed the document like this so that only the right person, the authorized person, opened it and this scroll, as we'll learn, was sealed for both of those reasons. Until John was allowed to see this unfold in his vision, the things that we discover were hidden in the secret counsels of God.

Now, this scroll is sealed with seven seals. That's not too uncommon in the ancient world. To be considered genuine, for example, a Roman will had to be sealed with seven seals indicating that it had been attested to by seven witnesses. That was what was required for a will. By the way, that was true of the wills of the Roman emperors Augustus, Vespasian, and their successors. All of their wills were sealed with seven seals.

Now, these seven seals would have been attached either on the edge of the scroll - so picture **the** elongated scroll, on the edge of the scroll, at intervals, so that when you broke each seal, you could read a little more of the document. That's one possibility. **I** think, in light of what we read here more likely, the entire scroll was rolled up and the seven seals were all placed along the final straight edge of the scroll. The fact that this document has seven seals (**we've** already talked about the number seven in Revelation) underscores not only its importance (you only put seven seals if this was *really* an important document and that it's perfectly sealed) and that is there is nobody but one who has the right to open it - only the person qualified. So, that's the description of this scroll.

But that raises the really important question and, that is, its meaning: what is this scroll? Now, there's been a lot of debate about its contents. It's interesting, as the Book of Revelation unfolds, we're told what happens when each of the seals are broken, but we're never told what's written inside this scroll. And that has, as you might imagine, elicited a great deal of debate about the meaning of this book. Here are some common explanations of the scroll in Revelation 5. Some say it's the new covenant. Some say, no, **it's** the Old Testament, especially the Torah. Others say, no, it's the Lamb's Book of Life. Others say, no, **it's** just like the Roman wills we talked about. It's a will or testament that contains the inheritance God intends to give Christ and His

people. Others say, no, it's really a scroll that contains God's entire redemptive plan. And if you open commentaries, you'll find all of those.

Now, it seems to me there's a problem with all five of those views - two problems, in fact. One is, all five of those perspectives look to the past, for the most part, when clearly the scroll and its seals point to the future. The other problem is that, and this is a problem with all of them, they focus primarily on the positive when what unfolds in the rest of this book is primarily judgment.

I think there are two other views that are more likely. The sixth view is that it's a description of the judgments God intends to unleash on the world during the tribulation. The seven seals are a series of seven horrific judgments that God will pour out on this planet. And the seventh seal contains seven trumpet judgments. And the seventh trumpet contains seven bowls of wrath. So, kind of wrapped up in these seven seals, are all of the judgments that unfold throughout this book. So, clearly, the seven seals are connected to the unleashing of God's judgment. So, I think this (number 6 here - the description of the judgments God intends to unleash on the world during the tribulation) is part of the answer, but it isn't the complete story, because the judgments are specifically tied to the breaking of the seals not the contents of the scroll. After considering all the options, the evidence has led me **and** others before me, that the content of this scroll is the title deed to the earth. The title deed to the earth.

Here's Dr. Thomas. He says, "This kind of contract was known all over the Middle East in ancient times and was used by the Romans from the time of Nero on. The full contract would be written on the inner pages and sealed with seven seals. Then the content of the contract would be described briefly on the outside." Now, think about what he just said. You have a scroll and inside of that scroll is the contract, the deed. You roll it up, and on the outer edge of it, written on the outside, is a description in brief of the contents of the document so that you know what that document is when you look at it. And, again, in the ancient world if you have this sealed document, how do you know what's inside? Well, on the outside, there is a brief description of its contents. He goes on - "All kinds of transactions were consummated this way including marriage contracts, rental and lease agreements, release of slaves, contract bills, and bonds."

Support also comes from Hebrew practices. The Hebrew document most closely resembling this scroll (listen to this) - the Hebrew document most closely resembling this scroll was a title deed. In fact, the clear biblical example of this kind of scroll being a title deed, is found in Jeremiah 32. Turn back there with me. Jeremiah 32. Let me set the context for you. It's the last days of the southern kingdom (Judah). It's not too long before Jerusalem fell, and Jeremiah is there. His cousin, a man named Hanamel, approached Jeremiah and asked Jeremiah to buy his field, a field located in Jeremiah's hometown near Jerusalem. Now, both Jeremiah and his cousin knew that once the Babylonians took over the land of Israel, this field would become worthless. And so, you know, if Jeremiah at this point is just using his business acumen, he says, "*No way! I'm not buying that field. It's going to be worthless in **just** a few short years.*" But God commanded Jeremiah to purchase it as a sign, as a sign that the Babylonian captivity would not be permanent, and that the land would be worth something again. And as the story unfolds, we encounter an ancient document that is clearly a title deed.

Look at verse 9, Jeremiah 32:9: "I bought the field which was at Anathoth from Hanamel my uncle's son, and I weighed out the silver for him, seventeen shekels of silver. I signed and sealed the deed, and called in witnesses, and weighed out the silver on the scales. Then I took the deeds of purchase, both the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions and the open copy; and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the sight of Hanamel my uncle's son and in the sight of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, before all the Jews who were sitting in the court of the guard. And I commanded Baruch in their presence, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Take these deeds, this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, that they may last a long time.' For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Houses and fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.'"

This is the closest description in Scripture to what we are encountering in Revelation 5. And so, there is, I believe, very strong reason **to** believe that what we're encountering in Revelation 5 is in fact a title deed, and it's the title deed to the earth. It's likely the very same scroll that's alluded to in Ezekiel 2:9-10 where Ezekiel writes: "Then I looked, and behold, a hand was

extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it. When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back, and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.”

The earth was leased out to man in Genesis 1 when he was assigned responsibility for its care. But man has forfeited the title deed and he has actually illegally transferred it to a usurper, through the entrance of sin in Genesis 3. Since that time, Satan has wrongly claimed what’s not his and he has misused it contrary to God’s purposes. But all creation will be finally and legally reclaimed by Christ. It was initiated by His atoning death and, one day, Christ will take it back entirely from Satan, the usurper, through a series of divine judgments.

That’s what we’re encountering in Revelation 5. Christ takes the title deed to the earth from the hand of the Father. And the rest of this book, as He breaks each seal and the corresponding judgments are unleashed, our Lord is gradually taking back completely and forever what is rightfully His. That’s the meaning of this mysterious book in God’s right hand. It’s the title deed to the earth and its seals are the judgments our Lord will unleash on it and the universe to redeem it from its curse, and to restore it to its rightful owner.

Let’s go back now to our text - Revelation 5. That’s the mysterious book. In verses 2 and 3 we witness the angel’s fruitless search. Verse 2 says, “And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice...” This same strong angel appears again in chapter 10:1, in chapter 18:21. We don’t know who this is. Some have identified him as Gabriel or Michael, the only two holy angels named in Scripture. But, if it were one of them, I think it’s likely his name would be given. So, this is an anonymous angel, very possibly another archangel who’s described as strong or powerful.

And notice he proclaimed. **The** word is the same word that’s used for “preach” in the New Testament. It’s to proclaim as a herald of a king **with a** loud voice. Literally, the Greek text says, “with a mega voice” or, literally, “with a megaphone”. Mega is the Greek word for great. Phone or “fo-nay”, as it would be pronounced in Greek, is the word voice. Now, you know where we got the expression “megaphone”. It comes directly from Greek, and it means with a great voice. It makes sense, doesn’t it?

Now, why was such a loud voice necessary? Because the searching question that this angel proclaims is intended to reach the farthest, remotest boundaries of the universe. Notice the question in verse 2: “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?” Who is worthy? The Greek word translated “worthy” originally meant to have a proper weight. Here it means, “Whose character has the proper weight?” Whose right to rule is sufficiently weighty to warrant taking the title deed to the earth? Who has the character and who has the authority to qualify to open this title deed and to take possession of the universe?

Verse 3: “And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it.” This threefold division reflects an Old Testament pattern. “In heaven” - probably it does refer to where God dwells, so the angel searches through the angels and all the spirits of the redeemed in heaven. “On the earth”, of course, refers to all the men and angels and demons who were on the earth at that moment. And “under the earth” is the place of departed spirits, especially the unregenerate and some of the demons. In other words, this search for the worthy one, reached every intelligent being in the universe. The Greek expression in verse 3 “not even one” is the idea - not even one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it.

Think about that. I mean, really think about that for a minute. Let your sanctified imagination put this together. The angel’s question echoes through the entire universe so that every intelligent being, whoever was or ever will be, hears it. And in response to this question, “Who is worthy”, let him step forward. There is nothing but universal silence. None of the holy angels - not Michael, not Gabriel. None of the heroes of the Old Testament. None of the kings or the prophets - not Moses, not David, not Elijah, not Elisha, not Daniel. None of the apostles - not Peter, not Paul. No one steps forward to say, “*I am worthy. I can take the title deed to the earth.*” Absolutely no one!

And as a result of that, in verse 4, we see the apostle’s inconsolable grief. Verse 4 says, “Then I began to weep greatly...” John was profoundly grieved by the fact that no one could open this scroll. I say profoundly grieved because the word for weep here describes, for example, our

Lord's weeping over Jerusalem in Luke 19:41. It describes Peter's weeping after betraying our Lord in Luke 22:62. It occurs several times in the New Testament of the wailing of professional mourners. Here, it's not that. It's entirely heartfelt sobbing and wailing. "Greatly" is vehemently. John suddenly erupted in bitter, unrestrained weeping. Why? Verse 4: "because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it [its contents] ..."

Now, don't do John an injustice here. This is not about his curiosity not being met. John is profoundly moved. Why? What is it **that** moves him so much about this. It's because it seems to him, at this point... Remember he's been called into heaven to see the things which are going to take place and he understands that that's somehow related to this book. And so, when no one steps forward to open the book, **it** seems to him that God's redemptive plans have been paused, that God's redemptive plans have been postponed. There's no one. Things cannot be brought to a proper conclusion, and so he weeps. There's a sense in which all the tears of every believer, since the beginning of time, are contained in the apostle John's tears, because what he was really crying about is, "*Lord, how long? When? When are You going to act? Really? We have to wait?*"

I don't think it **can** be put better or more eloquently than by W.A. Criswell in his commentary and his exposition of the Book of Revelation. He says this. I want to read it to you. **It's** a longer quote but **I want you to** stay with me because I think you capture what's going on in the heart of John here: "John's tears represent the tears of all God's people through all the centuries. Those tears of the apostle John are the tears of Adam and Eve driven out of the Garden of Eden, as they bowed over the first grave, as they watered the dust of the ground with their tears, over the silent still form of their son, Able. Those are the tears of the children of Israel in bondage as they cried unto God in their affliction and slavery. They are the tears of God's elect through the centuries as they cried to heaven. They are the sobs and tears that have been wrung from the heart and soul of God's people as they looked on their silent dead, as they stand beside their open graves, as they experience in the trials and sufferings of life, heartaches and disappointments indescribable. Such is the curse that sin had laid upon God's beautiful creation. And this is the damnation of the hand of him who holds it - **that** usurper, that interloper, that intruder, that alien, that stranger, that dragon, that serpent, that Satan devil! John wept, for the failure to find a

Redeemer meant that this earth and its curse is consigned forever to death. It meant that death, sin, and damnation in hell should reign forever and ever, and the sovereignty of God's earth should remain forever in the hands of Satan." And I wept greatly.

That brings us to verse 5 and the elders' triumphant announcement. Verse 5 says, "and one of the elders [one of the 24 elders, one of the leaders either of the twelve tribes of Israel or one of the twelve apostles] said to me [verse 5], 'Stop weeping...'" Our Lord gave exactly the same command twice during His ministry - when He intended to raise the widow son at Nain in Luke 7 and when He intended to raise Jairus' daughter in Luke 8. On both occasions, Jesus was saying, "*Stop weeping because weeping is no longer appropriate based on what I am about to do.*" That's exactly what John is saying - what one of the elders is saying to John - "*Stop weeping! It's not appropriate because of what Jesus is about to do.*"

Verse 5 goes on: "behold..." As we've seen in Revelation, this often comes before an important announcement - "Behold". And in the Greek text, the very next word is the word translated "has overcome". It's placed first for emphasis. The Greek word is *nikao* which means to conquer, to be victorious. The English word "Nike" comes from this Greek word.

Then the elder describes the one who is overcome with two titles. Notice them: "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah" and "the Root of David". Now, both of those are Old Testament titles. Jewish writings in the first century BC (so, before our Lord's birth), Jewish writings taught that both of these passages, quoted here, referred to the coming Messiah. Let's consider these two titles.

First of all, the elder says, "Stop weeping" because "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah ... has overcome". The Lion that is from the tribe of Judah - this first title comes from Genesis 49 where Jacob blesses his sons and, specifically, his son Judah. Turn back there with me. Genesis 49. When it comes to his son, Judah, verse 8, he says, "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." In other words, you're going to be **the** one from whom the line of Israel's kings comes. And that's exactly what we see in the Old Testament. "Judah is a lion's whelp [there it is]; [Judah is a lion]

from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies 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 [in other words, it's from Judah and his descendants that the kings of Israel are to come. And then he says this], until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."

Now, if you have a version of the NAS that has a marginal note in it, you'll see that the marginal note says that "until Shiloh comes" really means "until he comes to whom it belongs". In other words, the kings of Israel will come from Judah but there is coming the King, the One to whom the right to rule truly belongs and to Him will be the obedience, not merely of Israel, but of the peoples. So, that last expression is about the Messiah. It's about our Lord and He's described here as a lion. The lion pictures the Messiah as powerful, as noble, as courageous, and as fierce. This ruler would rule His people and He would be a serious threat to His enemies. He's a lion.

By the way, this image of Messiah as a lion, is why many of Jesus' contemporaries rejected His claims. They wanted a lion and what they got was a lamb. Sadly, they just misunderstood the Old Testament because His first coming was a lamb. But one day, He's coming again, and He will come as a lion, destroying His enemies and taking back what belongs to Him, establishing His reign. He will be the ruler who is the lion to whom belongs the obedience of the people and He is the one to whom the right to rule belongs inherently.

Now, go back to Revelation 5. The second title that the elder uses is He is the "Root of David". Now, this Greek word translated "root" here, can mean one of two things. It can mean a root in the traditional sense like the root that grows under the ground that supplies nourishment for the tree. It can also refer to a shoot which comes up from the root. I have an oak - I have several oak trees in my backyard. **And** one of those oak trees produces thousands of shoots up from its roots. So, you have the roots under the ground or just above the surface of the ground, and then you have all these shoots. That's what this word can - it can mean either.

In the case here, it's clearly not a root but a shoot. Why do I say that? Because this comes from Isaiah 11. Isaiah 11:1 says this: "Then a shoot [and in Hebrew it's very clear] will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit." Verse 10 says, "Then in that day

the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious.”

Now, this image of a shoot coming up like this, is very familiar to us. We’ve all seen an old, huge, rotten tree that’s been cut down and there’s nothing left but a stump. The tree rotted out. It became worthless; became a hazard. And so, they came in and cut it off as a stump. It looks desolate. It looks hopeless. There’s no life. All life is gone. But then a few months later, you walk by where that tree once stood proud and grand and great, and coming up from the stump of that old dead tree, is a little shoot, just a little stem. Isaiah is saying that Israel was like that rotten tree - no sign of life whatsoever. So, God was going to judge them. He was going to cut them off at the stump. And for a long time, it would look like there was no hope - just a dead rotten tree and its stump.

The dead stump was Israel, but the tiny shoot is Messiah. He’s Messiah and He would bring hope and life again. So, both of these titles then are messianic and they both, in context - if you look at both of these passages in context, they both describe the Messiah as a warrior, as a warrior king. Messiah had to be from the tribe of Judah. He had to be from the line of David. Oh and, by the way, Jesus of Nazareth was. In Matthew 1 we learned that Jesus was a legal descendant of David through his adoptive father, Joseph. And in Luke 3, we learned that Jesus was a physical descendant of David through his mother, Mary. That’s why Paul in Romans 1:3 writes, “... [Jesus] His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh...” Had to be. The point is, Jesus is qualified. He is qualified to rule because of His credentials as the shoot coming up from David, and as Shiloh the one who’s right it is from the tribe of Judah, the tribe of kings. Jesus is also qualified to rule because He is the fierce lion warrior who cannot and will not ever be defeated. The elder tells John, “*Stop crying. There is someone worthy to take the book and to open its seals. And it’s the Messiah.*”

Verse 5: “[He] has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.” Notice the word “so as”. Jesus overcame and one of the great purposes behind His victory was this. One of the great reasons Jesus persevered throughout His suffering and overcame it, was so that He could open the scroll and break its seals. He wanted to accomplish the great plan of the ages. He wanted to

bring human history to its conclusion by reclaiming and restoring a fallen broken universe to its original state. He has overcome.

Now, that leaves us with a really important question and that is, why? Why does Jesus need to take back the world once He receives the title deed of the earth from the Father. Isn't the world already under His control? The answer is: Yes, it is. So, how are we to understand this? Well, what I'm about to explain to you is really key to understanding the rest of the Book of Revelation. To fully understand what is about to transpire, you need to grasp five **theological** truths, five theological truths. Let me give them to you briefly.

Number one: God is and always remains sovereign over all things. God is and always remains sovereign over all things. Psalm 103:19: "The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all." Psalms 115:3: "But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases." Daniel 4:35: "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; [in other words, whether you're talking angels or demons or whether you're talking people] and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'" So, He is sovereign over the holy angels. He is sovereign over Satan and his demons. He is sovereign over the created universe. He is sovereign over mankind, its nations, and all of human history. That's the first thing you have to understand.

Secondly, under His sovereign control, God has issued these great decrees. First of all, God made the decision to curse the entire universe. In response to man's sin, to Satan's sin as well, the universe is now filled with decay and death. He cursed it in Genesis 3:17 and Romans 8 talks about He subjected the entire creation to futility. He permitted Satan's rebellion, Satan's temptation of man, and the creation of Satan's evil world system that stands opposed to God. In fact, in Revelation 12 (we'll get there) verse 4, we learned **that** He permitted a rebellion in heaven in which Satan led a great rebellion against God and God threw him out of heaven. This was all in the plan of God. Remember, God could have decided not to create Satan. God could have decided to crush his rebellion at that moment. But God determined to allow it for His own purposes.

A third decree of God was He permitted the nations and their leaders to rage against Him and His Anointed. Psalms 2: “Why are the nations in an uproar [rage] and the peoples devising [conspire] ... against the LORD and against His Anointed?” And, again, He permits it because, in the end, what does He say in Psalm 2? “*I will establish My king and He will rule with a rod of iron.*” He hasn’t yet. So, that means He’s permitted this for His time and His purposes.

A fourth decree of God is He permitted individuals to manifest their fallenness in active rebellion against Him and His law. You see it in Genesis 9 where, having destroyed the world once for its evil, He says even though evil permeates the planet again, just as it did before, **I will not again** destroy it. I’m going to allow it to continue, again, for My own purposes. In Romans 5:12 says that through Adam’s sin came sin and death to all and God permitted it to happen.

A third theological truth that you have to understand is someday, because of His faithful obedience and redemptive work, the Son of God, the God-man, will rightly inherit all things. In Psalms 2:7-8 the Father says to the Son, “I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance...” And I love the way the writer of Hebrews puts it in Hebrews 1:2. He describes Jesus Christ as the “heir of all things”. He is the heir of all things. By His sacrifice, the Lamb has purchased His people and He has purchased the right, by His obedience, to inherit all things. And that authorizes Him as the owner of all things to judge this planet and its rebellious people. Chapter 5 is really, as we’ll see, it’s about the transfer of authority from the Father to the Lamb, the transfer of **the** responsibility for this planet and the universe. The scroll is the official document confirming the Lamb’s right to rule.

And that brings us to number 4: the title deed in Revelation 5 symbolizes the rightful inheritance that belongs to Jesus Christ. It’s all His.

And number 5: with the breaking of the seven seals, Christ begins to judge the universe, a role that was delegated, remember, to Him by the Father? He says the Father has given all judgment to the Son, in John’s gospel, to take from the usurper what is rightfully His, to destroy all rebellion against Him and His Father, and to restore this universe from the curse of decay and

death into the glory that it was once made to show. When the seventh trumpet sounds, the angel is going to declare that the wrath of the One on the throne and of the Lamb is coming to its climax and that the Lord God is taking full possession of all that is rightfully His.

Turn over to chapter 11, chapter 11:15. **Here's** where it leads. As the scrolls are broken as the trumpet sounds... I'm sorry, as the seals are broken, as the trumpets sound. Verse 15: "Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.' And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, 'We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.'"

You see where it's all leading? It starts with that title deed sitting in the hand of the Father. Who is worthy? Who is worthy to take the ownership of the universe? Who is worthy to shake out of this universe all who have wrongly rebelled against its rightful owner? Who is worthy? The Lion of the tribe of Judah, a shoot that came up from David. He is worthy.

Can I just encourage you, Christian? This is the Lord you serve. And this is where human history is moving. It is written. So, let it be written. So, let it be done.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for this magnificent passage that reminds us, in the end, that the universe is not about us. It's about the glory of Your name. It's about the glory of Your Son. It's about Your right and His right as Creator and as Redeemer. Father, our hearts cry out for the day when our Lord will return and take back His world and end its night. Lord, help us to live in **an** eager anticipation of that. Help us to warn others that this is coming. Help us to share the good news of Christ, as we'll see the next time we study this passage together - the Lamb slain for His

people, to redeem them from every tribe and tongue and people. And help us to live looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. And Lord I pray for those here tonight who don't know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Father, I pray that You would help him to see that if they refuse to know Him as Savior and Lord, they will know Him as Judge. May they turn before this life ends, before Christ returns, and it's too late. May they repent and believe in the Lamb slain rather than have to face the ferociousness of the Lion of Judah. And it's in His name we pray, Amen!