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A0530 - July 24, 2005 - Revelation 5 - The Seven Sealed Scroll-Part 2

Revelation 4-5 are the key to Revelation 6-19. Without them we would be at a loss of explaining why God's Tribulation judgments are so severe. Last week I gave you seven purposes of the Tribulation that are drawn from chapters 4-5. These are not all of the purposes but they are important.

1. to establish God's holiness on the earth
2. to set up an eternal theocratic kingdom on earth
3. to demonstrate that as Creator He has the right to do as He pleases with His creation
4. to demonstrate that He has the power to re-take what is rightfully His, crushing whoever stands in His way
5. to display His justice and mercy
6. to show that the legal basis of God re-taking His fallen creation is the redeeming work of Jesus Christ on the cross
7. to show that the Lamb is worthy to exercise God's ruling power on earth because of His work of redemption on the cross

The second thing we did last week was look at God's program of land redemption in the OT for Israel. We did this to help enhance the significance of the seven sealed scroll and the purpose of the future events of Rev 6-22. Therefore, let's review...

GOD'S PROGRAM OF LAND REDEMPTION FOR ISRAEL

Under the Abrahamic Covenant God had promised Israel a piece of Real Estate, the boundaries of which are outlined in Gen 15:18 and more particularly in Ezek 47-48. Under the Mosaic Covenant God outlined five important principles for land redemption within each of the 12 tribes.

The Principle that the Land of Israel Belonged to God

Who owns the Promised Land? Importantly, Israel does not own the Land, for in Leviticus 25:32 God declares, “The land is Mine”. God is the ultimate owner of the land promise to Israel. He is therefore Israel’s King. He alone has the right to rule the land and He has the right to dispense of it for His own benefit and in accordance with His own sovereign purpose.

The Principle of Tenant Possession

God gave the land to His people Israel to possess as an everlasting inheritance (Gen 13:15; 15:7; Dt 19:14; Josh 1:2). The Israelites were therefore His tenants. They were to manage God’s land according to God’s sovereign purposes.

The Principle of Not Losing Tenant Possession Forever

Since God was the ultimate owner of the land of Israel and since He had given tenant possession to Israel forever then Israel did not have the right to sell the land. In Lev 25:23 God declared, “The land shall not be sold forever: for the land is Mine;” In summary, one cannot sell what is not his. The only way one could come into permanent possession of property was by inheritance. The only way to dispose of land was to give it to legal heirs.

However, if an Israelite mismanaged his property and he was forced into poverty he could sell his tenant possession of the land. Once his tenant possession was sold he would no longer enjoy administering the land for a temporary period of time (Lev 25:15-16, 25-27).

To make sure the sale of the tenant possession was not permanent God established the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:28). Every 50th year on Israel’s God-ordained calendar system (Lev 25:8-10) the land would be returned to the original tenant or his heir (Lev 25:10, 13, 28; 27:24).

The Principle of Not Losing Tenant Possession to a Person Outside the Original Tenant’s Tribe

In Numbers 36:9 God expressly forbade transferring one’s inheritance from one tribe to another tribe. Each tribe of the children of Israel was to keep his own inheritance. God commanded that if a man died his tenant possession could only be given to a family member (Num 27:8-11).

What about fathers who had no sons but only daughters? God established the provision that “the daughters...” could “marry whom they wish; only they must marry within the family of the tribe of their father.’ ⁷” Thus no inheritance of the sons of Israel shall be transferred from tribe to tribe,” This marriage restriction kept land within the same tribe and even within the same family if possible.

The Principle of Redemption

The Right of Redemption

If an Israelite had to sell his tenant possession because of poverty he could redeem the land at any time before the year of Jubilee if he had the money. In the meantime, his nearest kinsman also had the right and duty to redeem the land for him before the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:25-26).

The Redemption Price

To redeem the land the original tenant or his nearest kinsman was required to pay a redemption price consisting of “the sum of money equivalent to the rent for the years the lease was yet supposed to run, namely, until the jubilee” (Lev 25:27).

The Kinsman-Redeemer’s Keeping of the Land

If the land was redeemed by the nearest kinsman he had the right to administer the land for his purposes. The purpose of kinsman-redemption was to keep the land in the family and tribe. When the year of Jubilee came the land was then returned to the original tenant or his heir.

The Deeds of Purchase

In conjunction with the redemption price two copies of the deeds of purchase were made to show who had the right of tenant possession of that piece of land. These two identical deeds of purchase were legal documents, typically scrolls that had the terms of the contract written on both sides (as in Rev 5:1). Both copies would be signed by the buyer and a witness and one copy would be sealed. The other remained unsealed so people could find out who had the right of tenant possession of a piece of land.

The Need for the Sealed Scroll Deed

The sealed scroll was necessary if a dispute arose concerning who had the right of tenant possession. The unsealed copy could be tampered with by someone wishing to steal tenant possession. Thus, the sealed scroll became the final court of appeal. The seal guaranteed that the contract terms would not be changed and it would be opened in a court of witnesses to see if the terms on both copies agreed.

The possibility of this happening was particularly high if the kinsman-redeemer did not immediately take possession of the land because his circumstances removed him for many years to another location far from the land. During this time, usurpers would often come in and use the land for their own benefit. When the kinsman-redeemer returned he would have to prove that the land was his and not theirs so the sealed scroll deed would have to be opened before he could take possession.

The Two Responsibilities of the Kinsman-Redeemer

The key to understanding this system is to understand the two responsibilities of the kinsman-redeemer. First, he had to pay the redemption price. Second, he had to actually take possession of the land and administer its affairs. If he did not take possession of the land immediately then he may have to evict usurpers from the land before he could take actual possession of it. Sometimes the eviction required force by the kinsman-redeemer when the usurpers refused to leave the land.

Now, there are five parallels between God's program of land redemption, which I've just outlined for you, and God's program of world redemption. I've not been wasting my time talking about some myopic OT title system. I've been setting you up to understand what the seven sealed scroll is.

THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE SEVEN SEALED SCROLL OF REV 5

The First Parallel

Just as the land of Israel belonged to God so the whole earth and everything in it is His. Because God created it He is its owner and sovereign King. Henry Morris wrote, "The earth is permanently God's possession by right of creation."

The Second Parallel

Just as God gave His land to Israel as an inheritance forever and set them as tenants over it so He gave His earth to mankind to possess as an everlasting inheritance (Gen 1:26-28). The earth was originally declared “good” and given to Adam as his inheritance. In other words, originally, God gave a man the “title-deed” to the earth. Thus man was to be His tenant on earth. Thus, man was not free to regard himself as the sole owner and authority. Man was not free to do whatever he wished with this inheritance because God was the ultimate owner and mankind was responsible to serve as His representative, administering God’s rule over the earth for God’s benefit and in accordance with God’s sovereign purpose and in obedience to His commands (Gen 2:15-17). Originally, God was the landlord; mankind was the tenant possessor. This was the formal establishment of a theocratic kingdom on earth.

The Third Parallel

The Restriction

Just as the Israelites were forbidden to lose their tenant possession inheritance forever to foreigners, so mankind was forbidden to forfeit forever his tenant possession of the earth that was his inheritance. It would be wrong for mankind to forfeit the earth to anyone because God was the ultimate owner of the earth. Mankind had no right to forfeit what was not his to forfeit. Only God had that right because only God is the ultimate owner of the earth.

The Loss of Tenant Possession

In the same way that an individual Israelite might mismanage his property and have to sell the tenant possession because of poverty, giving up the enjoyment of his inheritance, so in a very real way mankind forfeited his tenant possession of the earth when he followed Satan’s lead and rebelled against God (Gen 3:1-7).

What took place at this darkest moment of human history was man joined Satan against God, and Satan usurped tenant possession of the earth away from its original tenant. Ever since that day Satan has been administering control over the world system which is anti-God (1 John 2:15-17). In other words, the theocracy was replaced by a satanocracy. That Satan has usurped tenant possession of the earth is clear from Scripture. When Satan was tempting Christ in Matt 4 what was the third temptation?

Luke 4:5-7 And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ "Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours."

Jesus did not respond by saying, "you don't have the right to give me all the kingdoms of the world because they're not yours" did He? Satan very much had the right to give him all the kingdoms of the world because, as Satan said, this entire domain had been handed over to him from someone else. That someone else was Adam. Elsewhere, Satan is called "the god of this age" (2 Cor 4:4), the "prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and it also says that "the whole world lies under the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19).

Because man forfeited his God-given tenant possession of the earth God cursed nature (Gen 3:17-19).

Isaiah 24:5-6 ⁵ The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. ⁶ Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.

Because of this the whole earth groans awaiting the day of redemption when it will be released from this curse and all the defilement in it (Rom 8:19-23). Satan therefore usurped tenant possession of the earth when Adam handed it over to him at the Fall of mankind. Now, he is the god of this world system.

The Temporary Nature of the Loss

Just as the Israelite's loss of tenant possession of their land was temporary (i.e. until the year of Jubilee) so mankind's loss of tenant possession of the earth to Satan is temporary as I'll show in a moment.

The Fourth Parallel

Just as an Israelite was not to forfeit his inheritance to anyone outside of his tribe so God intended that the earth was to remain man's inheritance forever and mankind was never to forfeit it to anyone outside of humanity. But mankind did forfeit tenant possession to a being outside of humanity, he forfeited it to Satan, an angelic being (2 Cor 11:4).

The Fifth Parallel

Just as God established a land redemption program for Israelites so they would not lose permanent possession of their inheritance, God also established a world redemption program for mankind so that man's forfeiture of the earth to Satan would not be permanent.

The Provision of the Kinsman-Redeemer

Parallel to the fact that God provided a way for an Israelites nearest kinsman to redeem his tenant possession for him, is the fact that God established a program through which a kinsman of mankind redeems both mankind and the tenant possession of the earth, which mankind lost to Satan.

Just as the Israelites kinsman had to be a relative from the same tribe so the Redeemer of mankind had to be a kinsman from mankind. Whoever, our Kinsman-Redeemer is He must be a man. He cannot be an angel or any other being.

Scripture gives several hints that God has provided a Kinsman-Redeemer. First, just after tenant possession was forfeited in the garden of Eden God made a promise that a "seed" of the woman would crush Satan, the usurper. Second, Paul said in Gal 4:4 that this Redeemer was born of a woman and his mission was to provide redemption (v 5). Third, the Book of Hebrews teaches that this Redeemer was Jesus Christ and that He became flesh and blood so that He might destroy Satan (Heb 2:14-16). Fourth, John said that Jesus Christ came into the world and took to himself human flesh with the purpose of destroying the works of the devil (1 John 3:18). Fifth, in Matt 19:28 Jesus talks about regeneration of the whole earth as taking place when the Son of man sits on the throne of His glory. The word "regeneration" (*paligennesia*) could be translated "back to Genesis". In other words, back to the original tenant possession before the Fall at which time, of course, the curse on nature will also be lifted. Sixth, the first Adam lost this inheritance but the second Adam, Jesus Christ will restore it when He returns immediately after the 2nd Coming to earth. These will be the "times of refreshing" which our Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ will usher in during the Messianic Kingdom and which Peter longed to see, but had not in Acts 3:19-21.

The Redemption Price

Just as the Israelite's kinsman-redeemer was required to pay a redemption price to redeem the lost inheritance of his relative, so Christ, the Kinsman-Redeemer of mankind and their tenant possession of the earth, was required to pay a redemption price to redeem mankind and his forfeited inheritance. The redemption price he paid in full was the shedding of His precious blood (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 1 Pt 1:18-19; Rev 5:9).

The Kinsman Redeemers Keeping of the Land

Just as an Israelites kinsman redeemer would keep possession of the land and administer its affairs after redeeming it and claiming it, so Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer will not return the earth to its original tenant possessor, Adam, but will keep and administer its affairs for Himself carrying out God's purposes on earth as was originally intended.

The Deed of Purchase

In light of the many parallels between these two programs (land redemption and world redemption) it seems obvious that the sealed scroll is a deed of purchase for mankind's tenant possession of the earth. Just as scroll deeds were made in the OT when a piece of land was redeemed so a scroll deed was made when Christ paid the redemption price with His blood. Jenour stated,

We regard it as a COVENANT DEED, the book in which were registered the terms of man's redemption, and his restoration to the dominion of the earth and all those privileges which he had forfeited by transgression." Therefore, we have in Rev 5 a picture of the throne room of God, a Lamb standing as slain, "Provision has...been made, not merely for the salvation of man, bur for the recovery of his lost inheritance. The redemption price has been...paid; and "the evidence of the purchase," represented by the...sealed book, is exhibited in this vision as in the Divine possession; its formal production at length taking place, because *now*, "He whose right it is," is coming forth to assert it."

As with all title deeds, there were two copies made and one was sealed. This scroll is sealed with seven seals ensuring its integrity. It therefore contains irrefutable evidence that Jesus Christ is the Kinsman-Redeemer and He alone has the right to take tenant possession of the earth.

In the same way that a kinsman-redeemer in OT Israel would not always take immediate possession of the land because his circumstances removed him from doing so, so Christ

has been absent since the day of the Ascension, seated at the right hand of the Father. During this time a foreign usurper has had control of the world system. His name is Satan and he is a wicked cosmic power. Christ has fulfilled the first responsibility but not the second.

The Two Responsibilities of the Kinsman-Redeemer

Remember, the key to understanding this system is that the kinsman always had two responsibilities. First, paying the redemption price and second, actually taking possession of the purchased possession. Christ has paid the redemption price with His blood but He must also take actual possession of the earth and exercise control over it as the last Adam, God's representative on earth. He is returning to take what is rightfully His due to His purchasing it with His own blood. And there are usurpers squatting on His territory and trying to take what is rightfully His and use it for their own benefit. These usurpers are known as Satan and all under his dominion. Because they refuse to leave Christ will exercise His power to crush Satan and his forces, and take possession of the earth. That is the extent of our Kinsman-Redeemers death on the cross. Salvation of men is not all that has been purchased, but mankind's tenant possession of the earth as well. Who can limit the blood of Christ? Christ does not and God does not. Will you?

Therefore, we can conclude by saying that when Christ died on the cross He purchased mankind and man's tenant possession of the earth. At this time a deed was made, sealed with seven seals to protect the irrefutable evidence. Christ ascended and during that time Satan and his forces reign on the earth. This seven sealed scroll is about to be taken and opened by the worthy one as He returns to take what is rightfully His and set up His theocratic kingdom on earth forever. To God be the glory.

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