

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834    jthomas@fbgbible.org*

**A0529 – July 17, 2005 - Revelation 5 - The Seven Sealed Scroll-Part 1**

There are two things I want to teach you today.

1. God's 7 Purposes of the Tribulation in Rev 4-5
2. God's Program of Land Redemption in the Old Testament
3. Next week we will look at God's Program of World Redemption in Revelation which parallels #2 above.

I want to take our time working through Rev 4-5 because everything here is the key for understanding Rev 6-22. Dr. Showers said,

“Chapters 4 and 5 serve as the introduction of the third major division of Revelation. They portray the divine throne room of the universe and set the stage for what is foretold in chapters 6 through 22. They are the key to the purpose of the future events of those chapters.”<sup>i</sup>

What was the theme of Rev 4? What was the most common word used throughout Rev 4? The theme was the “throne” and the One who sat on the throne; namely, the Father. In chapter 5 this theme continues and a new theme is added. Let's read Rev 5 and see if you can discover what that theme is.

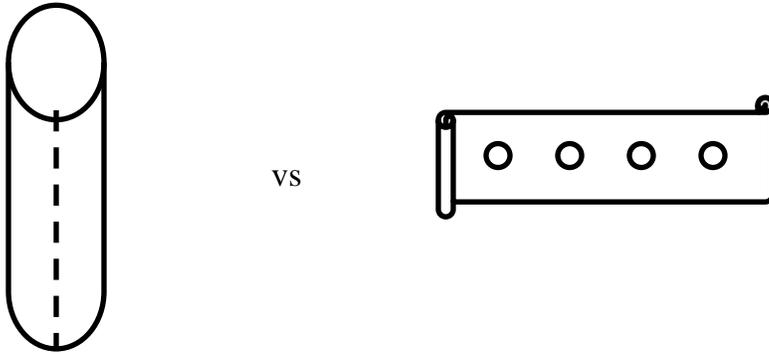
**Revelation 5:1** I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. <sup>2</sup> And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?" <sup>3</sup> And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>4</sup> Then I *began* to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it; <sup>5</sup> 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 scroll and its seven seals." <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> And He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. <sup>8</sup> When He had taken the scroll, 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. <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the scroll 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. <sup>10</sup> "You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." <sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> 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." <sup>13</sup> 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." <sup>14</sup> And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.

What is the new theme in Rev 5? That's right, "the seven sealed scroll" and the Lamb. If we are going to understand the severity of the Tribulation judgments that are unleashed upon the whole world in chapters 6-19 then we have to understand the background of this document. This background is located in your Old Testament, but first, let's look at the scroll itself.

## THE SCROLL

This seven sealed scroll is not a book in the modern sense but a rolled up scroll that contains vitally important information. When no one is found able to open the scroll or to look into it John begins to weep greatly. But then the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David is found worthy for He "has overcome so as to open the scroll and its seven seals." This information is protected by seven seals which assure the authenticity of its contents. The seven seals are not all on the outside of the document so that it would require the breaking of all seven to break into the scroll. But the seals begin on the outer edge and the others are contained within the document. These documents would have several sections. A section would be written and then that section would be sealed. Then another section would be written and then sealed.



Rev 5:1 says that the scroll is written on both the inside and the outside of the scroll. This was the common practice in the ancient world because of the expense of paper.

The first seven seals contain the first seven seal judgments. The seventh seal is unique in that it contains within it the seven trumpet judgments. The seventh trumpet is unique in that it contains the seven bowl judgments. Therefore, the seven sealed scroll contains vital information regarding all the judgments of the tribulation.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SCROLL

As Dr. Showers stated, “Chapters 4 and 5 serve as the introduction of the third major division of Revelation. They portray the divine throne room of the universe and set the stage for what is foretold in chapters 6 through 22. They are the key to the purpose of the future events of those chapters.”<sup>ii</sup> These two chapters provide seven purposes of the Tribulation. *First*, Revelation 4:8 emphasizes the holiness of God. Day and night the four living creatures say “holy, holy, holy”. God’s holiness is what makes Him distinct, unique, and separate from His creation. God’s holiness keeps the Creator-creature distinction forever in place. Lucifer challenged God’s holiness when he said “I will be like the Most High”. That was Lucifer’s way of saying, “the Creator is not distinct from His creation. As one of your creatures I can become just like you.” In contrast to this Satan learned that no one can transgress the Creator-creature distinction and become as God. God is holy, holy, holy. Nevertheless, Satan brought this same lie before Eve and said she would become as God, knowing good and evil if she would only eat of the fruit. Charles Darwin was not the first to propagate the idea of upward development over time from one species into another. Darwin got it from Plato, Plato got it from Eve and Eve got it from the devil. This lie is so pervasive in dominant modern evolutionary thinking and is an absolute denial of God’s

holiness. The world will be saturated with the claim that God is not holy and we are gods and goddesses by the time of the Tribulation. The first purpose then of the Tribulation is to establish God's holiness on the earth.

*Second*, Rev 4:8-10 and 5:14 emphasize God's eternity. God is the one "who was, and is, and is to come". That God is eternal means that He does not have a beginning or an ending. The creation, however, does have a beginning. Thus, His enemies are only temporal creations in contrast to the everlasting God. Thus, His eternity makes Him holy (different or unique) in contrast with creation. Thus, the second purpose of God is "to set up an eternal kingdom on earth".

*Third*, Rev 4:11 emphasizes that God created "all things". Since God created all things by His sovereign power then He is the absolute owner of all creation. Everything that exists is His and He has the right to do with it whatever He purposes. Thus, the third purpose of God is to "demonstrate that as Creator He has the right to do as He pleases with His creation."

*Fourth*, both chapters 4 & 5 demonstrate God's power and authority to rule all of creation. God's throne sits in the heavenlies and is mentioned 17 times in these two chapters. The word "throne" means "rule or dominion or sovereignty". In 4:11 and 5:13 two words are used of God's "power". The first *dunamis* refers to potential power. If God created all things by His wisdom and power then He certainly has the potential to re-claim the creation which is rightfully His. The second word *kratos* refers to "might or strength" directed toward a goal. The goal here is the reclamation of the earth and the setting up of a theocracy. In fact, the *-cracy* of *theocracy* comes from the word *kratos*. It is a word describing absolute sovereignty over all creation. So, this word has more to do with the visible re-taking of the earth by God through the Tribulation judgments and His establishment of a theocracy. Grundmann says, "These doxologies in Rev. imply acknowledgement and acceptance of the power of God which has an eschatological character, which destroys hostile powers and which brings the world to perfection." As Creator He alone is the legitimate owner of all things. Therefore, the right to rule the entire universe is reserved exclusively for Him, including the right to use His power to crush any enemy who challenges His rule. The fourth purpose of God is "to demonstrate that He has the power to re-take what is rightfully His, crushing whoever stands in His way & establishing a theocracy on earth."

*Fifth*, Rev 4:3 signifies God's holiness, justice and mercy. The heavens and earth are full of His outright enemies who are wicked in contrary to His holiness. Therefore, His justice

must judge. Even so He ever remembers the Noahic promise to never again destroy all flesh. He is preparing to send forth His Spirit to consume wickedness from the earth but His mercy withholds total annihilation. The fifth purpose of God is “to display His justice and mercy.

*Sixth*, the perfect work of redemption provided by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David makes Him alone worthy to break the seven seals and reveal the contents of the scroll. For His redemption work He is worshipped and declared as the one who has redeemed us by His blood (5:9). He has taken us out of the evil system which has usurped His universe. The blood of Christ becomes the legal basis for re-claiming and cleansing creation from wicked cosmic powers and men under their dominion (Eph 2:2). So, the sixth purpose is “to show that the legal basis of God re-taking His fallen creation is the redeeming work of Jesus Christ on the cross.”

*Seventh*, Rev 5:12-13 signifies that the Lamb is worth to exercise God’s ruling power. The basis for His worthiness lies in His redemptive work on the cross. The last purpose is “to show that the Lamb is worthy to exercise God’s ruling power on earth because of His work of redemption on the cross.”

As you can clearly see, the underlying relationship between all these Tribulation purposes in Rev 4 & 5 is God’s right as sovereign creator and owner of the universe to re-claim, with force if necessary, what is rightfully His due to the Lamb’s work of blood redemption and His right to establish His righteous and just rule upon the earth.

It seems apparent that the scroll is tied significantly to God’s program for redeeming, not just the elect, but the whole world.

Whatever the sealed scroll is, its identification must relate to the facts that the unique, eternal God created the universe for His own benefit and sovereign purpose; that therefore He alone has the right to rule the entire universe; and that His right to rule includes the right to use His power to crush any enemy who challenges His rule. In addition, its identification must relate to the importance of the Redeemer and His redemptive work and the fact that the Redeemer is worthy to take the scroll from God’s hand, break its seals, open and read it, and exercise God’s ruling power because of His work of redemption.<sup>iii</sup>

To understand the further significance of the seven sealed scroll we have to understand the background which involves God’s program for Israel’s land redemption. Remember, God’s program for Israel was outlined in the Abrahamic Covenant. This covenant is unilateral

(one way...God→Abram) and unconditional (fulfillment not dependent on Abram meeting any requirements). Unilateral and unconditional covenants are noted by their use of “I will...” whereas bilateral and conditional covenants are marked by their use of “if you...then I” terminology. The Abrahamic Covenant made three groups are made promises: individual, national, and universal. The individual promises were made to Abram. The national promises were made to Israel. The universal promises were made to all who blessed or cursed Israel. The Abrahamic Covenant contains many promises which you can list by a very careful study of the texts outlining the provisions (cf Gen 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, and 22). However, these many promises can be reduced to three basic promises: 1) Land, 2) Seed, and 3) Worldwide Blessing. The Seed promise guaranteed that the Redeemer would come from the line of Abraham and is amplified in the Davidic Covenant of 2 Sam 7:12-16 and 1 Chron 17:10b-14. The promise of a Worldwide Blessing guaranteed that salvation would come from the Jews (John 4:22). Those who bless Israel are blessed and those who curse Israel are cursed because Israel is forever the apple of God’s eye. You cannot understand world politics until you understand God’s covenantal program with Israel. To understand world politics you must look through the lens of God’s covenantal program with Israel. Lastly, the Land promise guaranteed Israel the occupancy of a piece of Real Estate in the Middle East demarcated by the boundaries laid out in Gen 15:18 and more specifically in Ezek 47-48. By divine right they hold the title to that piece of Real Estate. It is God’s program of land redemption that I want to hone in on this morning in order to give us the background for understanding the seven-sealed scroll.

## **GOD’S PROGRAM OF LAND REDEMPTION FOR ISRAEL**

Five important principles were involved in God’s land redemption program for Israel under the Mosaic Law.

### **The Principle that the Land of Israel Belonged to God**

This is the most important principle. In Leviticus 25:32 God declared, “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). Therefore, God was the ultimate owner but Israel was given the

responsibility of serving as His representatives, administering His righteous rule over the land for His benefit, in accordance with His sovereign purpose and through obedience to His commands. The Mosaic Law spelled this out in detail. Thus,

“The land, the law declares, properly belongs to YHWH, who is sole landlord, while all the Israelites are but his tenants.”<sup>iv</sup>

### **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. They were explicitly forbidden to sell the land because they did not own 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 apportioned property and circumstances forced him into poverty he could sell the portion of land that was his tenant possession. But he did not sell ownership of the land. What he sold was his tenant possession or administration of the land. Once sold he would no longer administer or determine the use of the land for a temporary period of time (Lev 25:15-16, 25-27). “In actuality, the land was sold only in the sense that the use of the land for a number of years was surrendered so that it might be regarded as a kind of lease.”<sup>v</sup>

To make sure the sale of the tenant possession was not permanent God established the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:28). Every 50<sup>th</sup> 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? The daughters would, of course, receive their father's inheritance, but if she married a man from another tribe and they had children then the children would be of the tribe of their father, not their mother. To deal with the possibility of this real problem God established another regulation through Moses.

**Numbers 36:5-9** Then Moses commanded the sons of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying, "The tribe of the sons of Joseph are right in *their* statements. <sup>6</sup>"This is what the LORD has commanded concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, 'Let them marry whom they wish; only they must marry within the family of the tribe of their father.' <sup>7</sup>"Thus no inheritance of the sons of Israel shall be transferred from tribe to tribe, for the sons of Israel shall each hold to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. <sup>8</sup>"Every daughter who comes into possession of an inheritance of any tribe of the sons of Israel shall be wife to one of the family of the tribe of her father, so that the sons of Israel each may possess the inheritance of his fathers. <sup>9</sup>"Thus no inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another tribe, for the tribes of the sons of Israel shall each hold to his own inheritance."

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 due to mismanagement of the land God built in the right to redeem the land at any time before the year of Jubilee if the original tenants circumstances enabled him to do so. 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 the land was not immediately returned to the original tenant but was kept and administered by the kinsman. Since he had paid the redemption price 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.

An example of this is found in Jer 32:6-9 where Jeremiah exercised the right of redeeming his cousin's land. Once Jeremiah paid the redemption price the land came under his administration and he was free to administer it as he wanted until the year of Jubilee.

### The Deeds of Purchase

In conjunction with this redemption by Jeremiah, two copies of the deed of purchase were made as legal evidence of Jeremiah's right of tenant possession of the land (Jer 32:10-16). These two identical deeds of purchase were legal documents, typically scrolls that had the terms of the contract written on both sides. Jeremiah took the first copy, signed it himself, had a witness sign it, and then it was sealed. The second copy was signed but not sealed (Jer 32:11, 13-14) so anyone could read the document and find out who had the right of tenant possession of the land under dispute.

### 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. 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.

This is exactly what happened with Jeremiah. Jeremiah was in Babylon in prison when he paid the redemption price. It would be many years before he could return and take possession of the land so he had the two scrolls put in a safe place (Jer 32:13-15).

## 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 outlined under the Mosaic Law and God's program of redemption of the world in the seven sealed scroll of Rev 5. That is why I have given you the background for understanding this OT system. Next week I will have the time to review these principles and to illustrate five parallels between them and God's program for redeeming the whole world. Prayerfully you will then begin to understand the necessity of the terrible Tribulation judgments.

Let's conclude with a review of what we've covered today.

1. God's 7 Purposes of the Tribulation in Rev 4-5
2. God's Program of Land Redemption in the Old Testament
3. Next week we will look at God's Program of World Redemption in Revelation which parallels #2 above.
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<sup>i</sup> Renald Showers, *Maranatha, Our Lord, Come!* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 2001), 74.

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>v</sup> *Ibid.*, 78-79.

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