

THE SCROLL

Revelation 5:1-5

In Revelation chapter 4 we were brought into John's vision of the heavenly courtroom convened for the Tribulation judgments. John was privileged to see the throne, God the Father seated upon it, the Holy Spirit before the throne, the four living creatures and the twenty four elders.

Chapter 5 continues John's vision of the heavenly courtroom.

The Scroll (5:1-5)

Revelation 5:1-5 (ESV)

¹ Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" ³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴ and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵ And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

What is this scroll and its significance such that John weeps when, initially, it appears no one is worthy to open it?

And what is required in order to be *worthy*?

Let's observe carefully what John saw. According to verse one, where was the scroll? It was in the right hand of the One seated on the throne; in other words it was in the right hand of God the Father. God the Father is the author, the source of the scroll and its contents, therefore, whatever it contains is true and whatever plans it holds will be carried out.

John saw that the scroll was written *within and on the back* indicating that it was full and comprehensive, nothing more could be added because it is complete.

Finally, John saw that the scroll was sealed with seven seals. Seven is the number of perfection or completeness, again indicating that the contents of the scroll are complete.

The scroll may have looked something like this with the wax seals all along the exposed edge of the scroll.

In the first century A.D. a scroll sealed with seven seals would have been recognized as a legal document; specifically, a will. The Romans had an interesting way of transacting wills. The Roman custom of making a will included a ceremony involving a testator (the owner of the estate) and seven witnesses. For each of the seven witnesses there was a seal. In addition, a very reliable friend was selected who would, for a coin, purchase the property for the family. In this way the property would become the property of the reliable friend, however, upon the death of the testator, the very reliable friend would return the property to the rightful heirs.

There was a Jewish custom, stipulated under the Law of Moses, which also gives us insight to the scroll. If a Jewish family were to lose its property or possessions by some kind of misfortune or distress, their property could not be permanently taken from them. The Old Testament law of jubilee and the kinsman redeemer protected them against this (Leviticus 25:8-46).

Leviticus 25:25 (ESV)

²⁵ "If your brother becomes poor and sells part of his property, then his nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what his brother has sold."

The family's losses were listed in a scroll and sealed seven times. Then the conditions necessary to purchase back the land and their possessions were written on the outside of the scroll. When a qualified kinsman redeemer could be found who was willing to perform the duties of a kinsman redeemer, then the one who had taken the property was required to return it to the original owner. The kinsman-redeemer

had to be a blood relative, had to have the resources to purchase the forfeited inheritance and had to have the desire, or the resolve to redeem the lost inheritance of his kinsman.

The Old Testament book of Ruth is the story of Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer of the widow Naomi. In fulfilling the duties of the kinsman-redeemer Boaz married Ruth and fathered Obed, the grandfather of King David and became an important link in the lineage of the Messiah (Matthew 1:5-6).

Now, to fully understand the meaning and importance of the scroll I need to bring in another thread.

Who was given the earth as their possession with the authority and power to rule over it?

God the Father gave the earth to Adam and Eve as their possession to reign and rule over it as His representatives (Genesis 1:26-30; Psalm 8; Hebrews 2:6-8).

Genesis 1:26–30 (ESV)

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” ²⁹ And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.” ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

In successfully deceiving and leading Adam and Eve to disbelieve and disobey God, Satan usurped Adam’s authority over creation and became *the ruler of this world* and the *prince of the power of the air* (John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2). In listening to the voice of the serpent, Adam lost the inheritance given him and his descendants by God.

Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden. Sin and death entered the world. Adam and Eve’s bodies began to age and decay. They began to have arguments and difficulties in their marriage (Genesis 3:16). Eaking out a living was hard and frustrating for Adam (Genesis 3:17-18). They had problems with their sons; one murdered the other (Genesis 4:8). Satan now had access to the world. And life on this planet has continued on this trajectory ever since.

All of this because Adam, as the representative head of mankind, lost our possession, our inheritance, in the Fall.

The scroll in the Father’s hand is *the title-deed of our inheritance!*

Our inheritance can be restored... if a kinsman-redeemer can be found.

No one in all the universe could be found worthy enough to break the seals. No wonder John wept, for he realized that God’s gracious plan to restore mankind’s inheritance could never be completed until the scroll was opened. But no one in all the universe was found worthy; no one met the requirements of a kinsman-redeemer for mankind.

But then, John saw the Lamb...