***The Seven-Sealed Scroll

RV94-01***

Please open your Bibles to Revelation 5:1-5. We begin this new chapter on the Seven-Sealed Scroll, segment number one. The Bible tells us that, at some point in human history, all those who are part of the body of Christ, both living and dead (members of the church), will be caught up to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air, and He will take them back to heaven. With the departure of that group of believers, which includes those of you who are here today who are born again, a period of human history will begin which is known as the tribulation. It is a period of great, enormous human suffering. It is the final outpouring of the wrath of God. It is a period that the Bible clearly describes, and in some detail.

The apostle John, who wrote the book of the Revelation, was privileged to have a preview of that tribulation era. As we begin Revelation 5, we have a continuation of John's situation in God's heavenly throne room. Revelation chapters 4 and 5 are a continuation of the same scene. John is in the position of saints through the rapture, after having been taken to heaven, after being removed from this earth, and the earth is now ready for the era of the tribulation.

**The Throne Room of God**

So, we've been looking at this scene in the divine throne room. It is a scene which we have found is filled with symbols – symbols which we can only interpret by looking elsewhere in the Bible. You cannot interpret these symbols by making guesses and assumptions on your own. Otherwise, everybody comes out with some other idea. You take these symbols one-at-a-time, and then you go back and you research through the Bible and say, "Where was this symbol used?" That gives you a frame of reference for significance. Then, it is amazing how the book of the Revelation gradually unveils itself in considerable clarity.

**God's Throne**

Well, this scene is indeed filled with symbols. John sees God the Father seated on a throne in the heavenly throne room. The Father's glory is visually displayed in dazzling jasper stone, symbolizing the holiness of God, and in the ruby red sardius stone, symbolizing the blood of Jesus Christ, satisfying God's justice against sinners. These two gems were in the Old Testament high priest's breastplate, and they symbolize God in Christ as the Alpha and the Omega. They were the first and the last gems of the series, indicating that God is the beginning and the end of everything.

**A Rainbow**

The Father's throne, John observed, was encircled by a rainbow, a complete halo, symbolizing God's faithfulness to His Word, as the rainbow is in nature – that symbol that God will never again flood the world completely with water. The Father's throne, furthermore, is surrounded by this halo rainbow, which is light green in color (an emerald color) signifying eternal life, and praise for God's grace and salvation.

**The 24 Elders**

The throne was surrounded by 24 other thrones which are occupied by elders, symbolizing the church in heaven after the rapture. On earth, every local church is led by one pastor-teacher elder – a single elder per local church is the order of Scripture. Now in heaven, these who have been the leaders are congregated together as symbolizing the total body of Christ, which has been removed from the earth and is now in heaven, even as the 24 orders of the Old Testament priesthood symbolized the total priesthood when it was gathered together. When those 24 representatives gathered, they represented the whole Aaronic priesthood and all of its ministry. So, here these 24 thrones with these elders representing the church are seen by John in heaven because, of course, the rapture has taken place. The white robes on these elders symbolize their ultimate sanctification, and the golden crowns on their heads symbolize the rewards for their victories in God's service while on earth. So, we have the church here with complete sanctification now possessed, and rewards given for service.

**Seven Flaming Torches**

From the Father's throne, John also observes flashes of lightning and sounds of thunder, which symbolize the approach of divine judgment upon the tribulation earth, which are imminently to be poured forth. In front of the Father's throne are seven flaming torches, which are described as the torches of God the Holy Spirit, representing His ministry upon the humanity of Jesus Christ. These are very exciting because, as they were resources for the humanity of Christ, they're also resources for you and me within our humanity. So, these seven flaming torches we observe represent the Holy Spirit as "YHWH;" that is, as God is assisting us as the indwelling deity. Then the Holy Spirit is seen as wisdom, the spirit of wisdom, which are divine viewpoint values as the frame of reference in our mind. Then the Holy Spirit is understanding, which is the mental capacity of the discernment of truth in the matter. Then the Holy Spirit is the spirit of counsel, guiding the believer in making divine viewpoint decisions. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of might – the power to execute God's will in our lives. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of knowledge, teaching the believer Bible doctrine information. And the Holy Spirit is the spirit of the fear of the Lord – reverential awe of God's Holiness and His power.

**A Sea of Glass**

In front of God's throne, John then observes a sea that looks like glass, symbolizing again and connecting it back to the Old Testament sea of brass before the laver that stood in front of the tabernacle for the washing of the hands and feet of the priests before they entered to minister. This sea of glass represents the ground of temporal fellowship for the believer today in confession of sins to the Father as the basis of experiential sanctification. The way we are set apart to God's service, use, and blessing is by keeping known sins confessed, as per the principle of 1 John 1:9. This is an enormously important practice in the Christian life. It is rarely done. It is widely neglected. It is almost unanimously ignored among church people. It's one of the greatest deceptions of Satan. That's going to be one of the greatest tragedies in heaven, when Christians get up there and realize how much of their life and their effort was wasted because it was done while out of temporal fellowship, and it didn't mean a hill of beans.

So, we see these flaming torches; this sea of glass; and, the power of the Spirit of God functioning in our lives when we are in temporal fellowship.

**The Four Living Creatures**

The throne of God is also surrounded by an honor guard of four cherub class angels, symbolizing God's government over His creation, through Jesus Christ as the royal lawgiver; as the servant of mankind; as the last Adam; and, as the living God. These same qualities are represented by the four gospels. These four living angelic beings, with their perfect discernment, proclaim the holiness of the Father to establish the separate reality of evil. God is holy. Therefore, there are some things that are unholy. These four beings are also to establish the personhood of the Father; that He is a living being; and, to establish His eternal being (his eternity) – that He is God.

The 24 elders, symbolizing the raptured church, fall down on their faces before their thrones in worship of God the Father as they listen to the proclamation of praise of the four living cherub angels. And the 24 elders then praise the Father as the Creator of the universe, thus declaring him to be the personal and omnipotent God, in contrast to Satan's deceptive concept of deity under the guise of pantheism.

**Revelation 5**

John's gaze is now drawn back, at this point, to God the Father who is seated on His throne. We pick up the story in Revelation 5:1. John says, "And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a scroll, written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals." The first thing that John's eyes now catch is what we may call the doomsday book. It's a scroll sealed seven times. The verse begins with the word "and," which is this Greek word "kai." It is a conjunction indicating that Revelation 5 is a continuation of the scene we have been describing in Revelation 4.

John says that he saw something. The word "saw" is this particular Greek word: "horao." The word "horao" is the word for the physical act of seeing in a panoramic overview, rather than when we talk about seeing as one would look through a microscope and focus down to a small view. This is an overall panoramic view. John is just taking in the big picture. And he is observing the totality of the Father on the throne, sitting now with something in his hand. This is John (active voice) who is doing this. It's the aorist tense, which means that the scene is taken in as a whole. And he says that he sees "*in* the right hand," but that is not a good translation. The word is "epi," which means *upon*. He sees something "*upon* the right hand." That's the Greek word, "dexios," which simply is referring to the right hand of God.

**Anthropomorphic Language**

What John is saying is that he sees the right hand of God held in the palm-up position. This, of course, is what we call anthropomorphic language; that is, human-like language (in human terminology). We are speaking of God who is Spirit – not physical limbs. We speak of Him in terms of physical structures so that we can convey ideas. We call that anthropomorphic terminology. We're talking about God who is Spirit, as if He looked like us, and as if He had parts the way we do.

The Mormons, of course, have pressed this to an enormous false doctrine which has concluded (under their theology) that God is actually a human being – that He is actually flesh and blood; that He does actually have these physical parts of the body; and, He is actually someone who has developed far enough along the line to become God, even as all Mormons, in time, expect that they will develop and be human being gods. But this is simply biblical language in order to convey spiritual truths.

**A Scroll**

The right hand in the Bible, of course, is the symbol of power and authority. Here, it represents that it is the official source, so that the information here is going to be reliable. He sees something in the right man of Him who sits upon the throne. Again, we have the word we've had so many times: "thronos," which is the word for the place of imperial authority. God the Father is sitting upon the throne, and He holds a "biblion." This is not a book, but a scroll, because in John's time, they did not have books in the codex form that we have today. They had books which were a long sheet of paper (parchment or papyrus) on which they wrote, and then they rolled the thing up. Then you unrolled it at both ends and read. They kept rolling it out from both ends, as you would read, and then rolled it back up. They were on scrolls.

This word "biblion" is actually what we call a diminutive. It is from the word "book," which is "biblos," from which we get our English word "Bible." "Biblos" is the basic word for book, but this is "biblion," meaning a "small book." It's a little book. It's a small scroll, and it's rolled up as a parchment. John's attention is drawn, and he suddenly sees this scroll just sitting there on the right hand of God the Father. It is a legal document of some kind which is to be executed by someone.

**Writing**

John, as he looks more closely, notices something else about this scroll. He says that it has been written upon. That's the Greek word "grapho". This is simply the word for writing on some material. This is a perfect tense which shows that it was done in the past. Sometime in the past, this document was put into written form. Undoubtedly, this scroll was written in the past, when the counsel of the Godhead gathered together to make its decree (its overall plan for creation). It is passive to the document itself. God wrote the thing. And it's in the participle mood – a spiritual principle such that God has a record.

**Detailed and Complete**

What John notices, furthermore, that's of interest to him, is that this thing is written on both sides. He says it's written within, which is this Greek word "esothon." It means "on the inside." And then it's written on the "opisthen." The "opisthen" is on the back – on the other side. So, the scroll, which is sitting in the Father's right hand, has been written on both sides of the parchment, which is a symbolic indication that the record here is detailed, and it is complete. It is all that we need to know, and God has given us a full revelation.

**God's Promises**

The chapters which follow are going to show us that the writing which is recorded on this scroll has to do with the future and final plans that God has for the world and for humanity. It is a record of human history during the tribulation, following the rapture of the church. It is a record that leads to the fulfillment of the covenants which God made with the nation Israel. That's very important for you to remember – that the God who never lies has made promises to the people of Israel which He has never kept to this day. You must never forget that. The God who never lies has made promises to the nation of Israel which He has never kept to this day.

These include such simple little promises as the fact that the Jewish people would possess (under their authority, and under their personal occupation) an extent of land that went from the Euphrates River on the north to the Nile River on the south, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Arabian Desert. Never, in human history have the Jewish people possessed that territory of land. They came the closest to it under Solomon, when Solomon was strong enough militarily that he conquered the people who occupied that territory, and brought them under his control so that they paid tribute to him. But the people of Israel themselves never possessed the land.

The Jews are sensitive to this. They're aware of this. This is clear to them. This is why you are seeing today the fact that the Jews realize that you don't possess the land if you don't physically occupy it. That's why they are in such determination today, relative to the West Bank, to get in there and put up settlements, and to be in there. That's when they can claim it as their land, and not before.

So, God has made a promise, which He has never kept, and therefore we must expect that the future is going to bring this promise to fruition. He has made promises such as the fact that the people of Israel would always have a throne, and would always have a king descended from David's line ruling upon it. He hasn't kept that promise. The people of Israel do not have a throne. They do not rule with someone through the line of David.

Furthermore, God has said that the people of Israel would one day be the leading nation of the world. They would be the people who rule the world. God has never kept that promise.

So, you have two alternatives. You may say, "Well, God was talking in symbolic language. He didn't actually really mean that. He didn't actually really mean that there was going to be a throne, and that someone from David's line would be the ruling king. He didn't really mean that the Jews are going to have this land, and that they're going to possess it, and certainly He didn't mean that they're going to possess it forever. He didn't really mean that they are going to be in charge of leading the whole world – that they are going to be the spiritual teachers of the world. He didn't really mean that. What he meant was all symbolic, spiritual language. The church today fulfills all those promises."

I once had a Bible teacher who was an amillennialist. I asked him, "How would you deal with the fact that God has never given Israel this land, and how we could be called Israel? What land has God given us?" He said, "Well, don't you believe that God gave us the United States as our country." That's what's called symbolizing language. So, suddenly, the United States has become the land of Israel. The Mormons think that way. They call this the New Zion. And there's that sloppy use of the language of the Word of God. It's a satanic device, because if language doesn't mean what it says, then Satan can outmaneuver us in our thinking.

So, we've got to start with the admission that God has made promises to the people of Israel that He has never kept. He has made covenants with them that didn't even depend on anything they did. There's only one covenant that God ever made that says, "My execution of this depends on what you do," and that was the Mosaic covenant. God said, "If you behave yourself, I'll do what I promise here. If you don't, I won't." But the other covenants: the Abraham; the Palestinian; the Davidic; and, the New Covenant – none of those are structured upon anything that the people of Israel do. Whether they behave themselves or not, God says, "I'm going to do it, and you can do it with Me; you can do it graciously; you can do it happily; and, you can do it without suffering, or I'll turn the screws on you until you're ready to go along with Me. In one way or another, I'm going to execute." And that is what God intends to do.

So, suddenly we have a suspicion here that this scroll is enormously important, because it's going to tell us something, on the inside thinking of God, that's going to explain a lot of unanswered questions. Is it any wonder that Satan wants people to be ignorant of this book, and why this is such a neglected book? If you tell the average preacher, "I'm preaching on the book of the Revelation," he will roll his eyes heavenward and say, "Oh, boy. Lots of luck. I hope you make it."

So, these seals are sealing up a record here that is leading to the fulfillment of God's covenants with the nation Israel. It records the successive steps which are actually going to be taken now to establish Jesus Christ as the ruler of the whole earth during the 1,000-year millennial period, and then on into the eternal state. This scroll is some kind of a legal document pertaining to the eviction of Satan from his usurpation of planet earth.

Of course, God has, as you know, different scrolls in which He keeps records. We've already studied the book of life, which Revelation 3:5 speaks of. The book of life records the name of everybody born into the human race. If they die without having accepted Christ as Savior, their name is erased from the book of life. Then we have the Lamb's book of life, which is recorded in Revelation 13:8. The Lamb's book of life is the record of those who do die in the state of grace (in the state of having received Christ as Savior). The Lamb's book of life is only believers. Then we have also seen, in Revelation 20:12, the book of works, which probably is a book that records only good works. It is the record on which people are going to stand before the Great White Throne, and try to prove that they deserve heaven.

So, it is not unusual for God to be recording things in books and keeping records. But this particular record is not one which has been open to public view. As a matter of fact, in the book of Daniel, Daniel was given information about future events that caused him to shake his head and say, "God, I don't even understand what in the world you're talking about." God said to him, "Daniel, this information is for you to be recorded, and I want you to seal it up. This is information which you are not to divulge. Put a seal on it. Keep it under cover. When I'm ready, the seals will be broken, and the information will be made known." We come to the Revelation, and John sees a scroll in the Father's hand which Daniel had to seal up, which now God says, "I'm ready to make it known, and I'm ready to break the seals and show you what's in this book."

**Seven Seals**

So, John noticed that this book was sealed. The word "sealed" is the Greek word katasphragizo." "Katasphragizo." This word comes from the word "sphragizo," which means "to seal." That's the last part of the word. In the Greek language, when you add the word "kata" before it, it intensifies the word, which means it has been sealed up securely; sealed tight; or, sealed down. It has been sealed with seven ("hepta") seals. These seals refer to impressions in wax which indicate ownership, and also for security of contents of the document. These seven seals were apparently along the edge of the scroll, so that a seal was broken, and then it could be unrolled until it got to the next seal. That information could be read. Then the next seal had to be broken in order to read the next information. Seven specific areas of information are recorded on this scroll, with each seal securely removed from human site.

So, we've got a scroll. What in the world does that mean? Again, if we're going to find out what it means, we have to go back to the Bible itself. In Ezekiel 2, we have a reference to a scroll which gives us some enlightenment about this symbol being used in the Bible. In Ezekiel 2:9-10, Ezekiel says, "When I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto to me, and lo, a scroll was on it, and he spread it before me, and it was written within and without, and there was written in it lamentations and mourning and woe."

Here is one very enlightening illustration of the use of scrolls in Scripture. The prophet Ezekiel is handed the scroll. He observes that this scroll is written on both sides of the parchment. He also recognizes that this scroll is an official record of God's judgment upon the Jewish people. Thus we have our first clue that the seven-sealed scroll in heaven is God's official record of divine judgment. And as we shall see, specifically, these are divine judgments upon tribulation humanity.

Isaiah 29:11 also gives us an insight on the use of this symbol in the Bible. Isaiah 29:11: "And the vision of all has become unto you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men delivered to one who is learned saying, 'Read this.' And he said, 'I cannot, for it is sealed.'" The context of this verse declares God's warnings of impending divine discipline upon the Jews. He says that in spite of all these warnings, they have had no more effect upon the Jews than if these warnings had been written in the book that was sealed that they couldn't read. Vital information is of no value if you can't read it (if it is sealed). Until someone qualified to break the seal reads the contents, it's of no value. And God says that's how the Jews have been treating the information I have been giving them. They've been treating it as if they didn't know what in the world I was talking about, as if it were in a book that was sealed, and therefore unreadable.

The seals on the document that John sees in the Father's hand ensure the secrecy of God's plan for the earth until the seals are broken. God the Father knows the contents, of course, because it is His plan, and He holds it in reserve until He is ready to reveal it. But He himself knows what's in it. Acts 15:18 makes this point in saying, "Known unto God are all His words from the beginning of the age." So, the Father knows what's in the scroll, but the seals are keeping it from the knowledge of anyone else.

Then we have another indication about the use of scrolls as a symbol in Zechariah 5:1-4: "Then I turned and lifted up my eyes and looked, and, behold, a flying scroll. He said to me, 'What do you see?' And I answered, 'I see a flying scroll. Its length is 20 cubits, and its breadth is 10 cubits.'" This was a scroll that was 30 feet long and 15 feet wide: "Then He said unto me, 'This is the curse that goes forth over the face of the whole earth. For everyone that steals shall be cut off as on this side according to it, and everyone that swears shall be cut off as on that side, according to it.'"

What Zechariah sees is this large scroll, written on both sides of the parchment. And on one side, he sees God's judgment announced upon thieves. On the other side, he sees judgment announced against those who commit perjury. These were two favorite practices of the Jews: stealing; and, telling lies on the basis of God's name – perjuring themselves. So Zachariah says, "Here, read the judgments that I'm going to bring upon the thieves among you, and upon the perjurers. The scroll will, in effect, be the instrument to execute God's judgments upon the guilty.

The scroll in the Father's hands that John sees in heaven is an announcement of divine judgments upon the tribulation mankind, and upon Satan's earth as the just deserts for what they have done.

Then, Jeremiah 32 is a very significant passage that is extremely illuminating on the use of scrolls in the Old Testament, and thus in the Bible. Before we get to this, I have to touch on another Old Testament principle: the principle of the kinsman redeemer. God has promised to cleanse the earth, and to restore it to its condition before Adam's sin fouled it all up. That is what God has promised to do. He's going to clean up the earth to its pre-Adamic condition. The Bible makes it very clear to us that the earth is God's rightful possession by His rights of creation. Psalm 24:1-2 puts it this way: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof: the world and they who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." The earth belongs to God. He is the rightful owner by virtue of creation.

We also find that, at the very beginning of that work of creation, God very graciously gave the title deed authority of this earth to Adam. Genesis 1:26 said, "And the Lord 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 fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping things that creeps upon the earth.'" Then verse 28 says, "And God blessed them. And God said unto them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'" Man was in charge as God's agent to possess God's creation.

This is furthermore illustrated in Psalm 115:16, which says, "The Heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's. But the earth He has given to the children of men." So, when God finished creation, he said, "Adam, this is yours. You're in charge. You exercise dominion over it. You enjoy it. It's yours – nobody else's." However, we find that after the fall of Adam, something changed. Adam lost control of the earth. He lost his authority over the earth, and instead, Satan took over the authority over the earth. There are many passages in Scripture which describe Satan as the ruler of this world, and as the power who runs things. 2 Corinthians 4:4, John 14:30, Ephesians 2:2, and Hebrews 2:14 all convey the clear declaration that the earth is now under satanic authority.

For this reason, when Satan offered Jesus Christ the title deed to the earth in the wilderness temptation, the Lord Jesus did not challenge his claim. He just rejected it on the basis of Scripture. In Matthew 4:8-9, Satan could have given Him title deed to the earth. He could have given Him the crown without the cross. That's what he was offering. The Lord Jesus rejected that.

**The Kinsman Redeemer**

However, someone qualified, now has to redeem the earth to remove it from Satan's authority, and to restore it to man. The redemption of the earth is based upon this principle of the kinsman redeemer. Not just everyone can redeem it. There is just a certain type of person who can. This is recorded for us in Leviticus 25:49. This is the kinsman redeemer principle. The redemption of the earth is based upon this: "Either his uncle or his uncle's son may redeem him, or any that is near of kin to him of his family may redeem him, or if he be able, he may redeem himself." This is describing, in the context of someone who has been sold into slavery or sold himself into slavery, how he may be redeemed out of that slave condition. The redemption was either a person or of inheritance.

Leviticus 25:47-48: "If a sojourner or a stranger becomes rich by you, and your brother, who dwells by him, becomes poor, and sells himself unto the stranger or sojourner by you, or to the stock of the foreigner's family, after he is sold, he may be redeemed again, One of his brethren must redeem him;" or, in terms of his property (that too), by the same token, could be redeemed.

Leviticus 25:25: "If your brother has become poor, and has sold away some of his possession, and if any of this can come to redeem it, then he shall redeem that which his brother sold." It could be redeemed, but it required someone who was a near kinsman to do the redeeming: of persons and inheritance. You may compare this to Galatians 4:4-5 and Ephesians 1:7, which describe Jesus Christ as our kinsman redeemer of people, and Ephesians 1:11 and Ephesians 1:14, of Jesus Christ redeeming our inheritance. So, the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled this same picture of kinsman redeemer. The redemption is of a person or his inheritance.

Secondly, the redeemer must be a relative. That's what we've read here in Leviticus 25:48-49. If you compare that to Galatians 4:4 and Hebrews 2:14-15, you have Jesus Christ described as one who was a relative because He was humanity, and therefore was qualified to redeem.

Furthermore, the redeemer has to be able to pay the price of redemption. In Ruth 4:4-6, this principle is laid out: "But I thought to tell you, saying, 'Buy it before the inhabitants and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know that there is none to redeem it beside you. And I am after you.' And he said, I will redeem it. Then, Boaz said, 'On the day that you buy it from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.' And the kinsman said, 'I cannot redeem it for myself lest I mock my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right for thyself, for I cannot redeem it.'"

The person who's going to redeem has to be able to beat that price. In the New Testament, you may compare John 10:11-18 and Romans 3:24, which declare how Jesus Christ has paid the price of redemption. He had it to pay. He was spiritually alive. He could pay the price of spiritual death.

Then finally, the redemption is secured by paying the just price in full. Leviticus 25:27 says, "Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overpayment unto the man to whom he sold it, that he may return unto his possession." What he got in payment for his land, the kinsman redeemer is to make full restitution. The fair price has to be paid. You compare this to the work of the Lord in Galatians 3:13 and 1 Peter 1:18-19: "That we were purchased not with silver and gold, but with the blood of Christ." He had the price to pay.

So, this principle of the kinsman redeemer comes into play when we have the question of: how is man to be restored to control of the earth? Somebody has to redeem the earth that Satan now has in his control. How is it going to be wrested from Satan's authority? It has to be done on the basis of the kinsman redeemer – one who can redeem the earth; who is qualified; and, who can do it. Jesus Christ came as humanity, and as deity, qualified, therefore, on both accounts to be able to pay the price of redemption. The scroll in the Father's hand is thus the title deed to the earth which the Son has redeemed. The time has come now for this title deed to be executed, and the usurper Satan evicted. The scroll records the specifics of transferring the possession to Jesus Christ.

**Five Stages of Discipline**

Furthermore, there was another factor that we should observe, and that is the cycle of discipline principle. This is in Leviticus 26. This cycle of discipline was specifically placed upon the Jewish people. God said, "When you as a nation refuse to obey My word, there will be five stages of a cycle of discipline that I will take you through. And if you are smart, you will know when you are at a certain stage, and you'll back off. If you will not, I'll take you to the next stage. This is a fascinating area, but we don't want to get tied down too much in it. But it is background for us to understand what is taking place here.

The Jewish nation had been warned that national apostasy would result in a cycle of discipline in five distinct stages. This is recorded in Leviticus 26. While this is specifically for Israel, one must wonder whether God, who has certain ways of working, does not work upon other nations in the same way, because we have some very uncomfortable analogies – very uncomfortable similarities with what is happening in our country today.

**Stage 1**

God says, "When you get away from My Word, and become rebels against the Word of God, the first stage of this discipline will result in a spirit of fear; loss of health; theft of wealth; defeat by your enemies; and, domination by those who hate you." Leviticus 26:16-17: "You'll be in a spirit of fear. Your health will break down. People will steal what you have. You'll be defeated by your enemies. You'll be dominated by people who hate you."

**Stage 2**

"If you won't listen to Me, we'll go to stage 2." Leviticus 26:18-20: "Now I will bring upon you mental oppression. I'll bring you a condition of drought, so that your labors come to naught. Every effort you make to prosper, I'll shoot it down."

**Stage 3**

"If you won't listen to Me, I'll go to the third stage of the cycle." Leviticus 26:20-22: "I'll bring upon you violence in your society: social violence; and furthermore, death. We'll begin to thin out your population."

**Stage 4**

"If then you will not listen to Me, I'll bring on you the fourth stage of the cycle of discipline." Leviticus 26:23-26: "At this stage, you will come under military attack, and you will be conquered by a foreign nation, and you will suffer epidemic diseases (as often happens in war conditions). There will be rationing of food, and there will be hunger. You'll still be in your land, but now you'll be under foreign authority."

**Stage 5**

"If you still won't listen to Me, then I'll bring down the fifth and final stage of the cycle of discipline." Leviticus 26:27-39: "At this stage, you'll be in such desperate hunger that you'll resort to eating human beings. You'll become cannibals; there will be widespread death; your cities will be destroyed; your people will be removed from your country, and taken as slaves to be slaves in other countries; and, you will live in mortal danger." That was the stage which existed when Jeremiah came on the scene. They were at the fourth stage of the cycle of discipline. The fifth stage was imminent, and Jeremiah was saying, "Here it comes."

**Jeremiah**

With these two principles of the kinsman redeemer and the cycles of discipline, let's go back to the story in Jeremiah 32. Jeremiah had been telling the Jews that they had reached the fifth stage of the cycle of divine discipline – that they were facing dispersion by military force. He told them that Nebuchadnezzar was going to come from Babylon, and they would be taken as slaves to Babylon. Jeremiah 29:8-14 describe this message to them.

Furthermore, Jeremiah also foretold them that after 70 years in Babylon, the Jews would return to their land. Jeremiah 30:3 stresses that fact: "For 70 years you'll be there, and then you'll be permitted to come back."

What did they do to Jeremiah? Because he said this, the authorities became so enraged (they considered it such a traitorous act for him to be talking about their country like that), that they threw him into prison. They said, "If you're going to talk like that, we don't want you around." They ridiculed him; they made sport of him; and, they threw him in prison.

Jeremiah had a cousin name Hanameel. Hanameel thought this thing over, and he wasn't ready to dismiss Jeremiah as some crazy preacher who didn't know what he was talking about. So, Hanameel thinks to himself, "If Nebuchadnezzar is going to come in here, and he's going to take our land, and he's going to ship us out, I might as well make the most of what I've got now, and get rid of my land. I should sell it now, ... enjoy myself while I've got the thing. Spend the money." So, he hits up his cousin Jeremiah. He says, "Jeremiah have I got a deal for you? I have this beautiful piece of land. I hate to part with it, but I've got to move on in life, and there's nobody I'd rather have this land go to than you. So, I want to sell it to you."

Hanameel didn't have to sell too hard because God had already spoken to Jeremiah, and said, "Jeremiah, that dude (your cousin) is going to come and try to sell you his property, and I want you to buy it." So, Jeremiah says, "OK, I'll buy it." You have Hanameel's proposition in Jeremiah 32:6-15. And Jeremiah proceeds to buy the land. A title deed is executed, and then it is sealed, and then it is stored in a jar to preserve it until Jeremiah or his heirs return from Babylon. The seal could only be broken, after the captivity, by those who were authorized to break it: those who were the owners; those who had the right to execute the contents; or, the executors of this title deed. That would be (and was) Jeremiah's heirs after the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity. The heirs of Jeremiah were qualified to break the seal and to claim their inheritance.

The reason God did this was to make it clear that Jeremiah knew what he was talking about: "If you want to question that you are ever going to come back (which is what Hanameel was doing), then you go ahead and take advantage of him. If he's dumb enough not to believe me, Jeremiah, you buy it. You get an official title deed. You have it officially sealed." And he went through all of this with the legal authorities: "And then have it recorded and stored. And when your descendants come back, they will inherit this land, and they'll be that much the better off to start off again after these years of captivity." This is exactly what happened.

With all these illustrations of the use of scrolls in Scripture, this is what comes out. This particular incident of Jeremiah indicates that the seven-sealed scroll, which John sees in the Father's hand, represents the title deed to the earth, which originally was given to Adam, and which Adam lost in a winner-take-all gamble with Satan. Jesus Christ has paid, as the kinsman redeemer, the price of redemption to secure the title deed for the earth once more for man. That, incidentally, includes you. That's why you can breathe a sigh of relief. The kinsman redeemer has paid the full price. He was qualified to pay it, and therefore, nothing more can be charged to your account. Satan now continues, and has continued since the cross, to control the earth. He will continue to control it until the seven-sealed title deed is opened, and the new owner is established.

That's what John is aware is happening. Because he knows Scripture, the moment he sees that scroll lying in the Father's up-turned right palm, and he sees those seven seals, all of these points in Scripture that deal with scrolls come flying to his mind, and he says, "I know what that is. That's an official legal document that is going to execute God's plan. Remember that he was told, "Now, I want you to come up here to heaven to show you the things that must be hereafter." John is standing there rubbing his hands and says, "Hot dog! Here comes the full picture. Here is the great dramatic revelation of what God is going to do to finally restore this earth and humanity back to the place of blessing like it was before Adam fouled it all up. The kinsman redeemer has done his job. The scroll is there. The official plan has been laid out. It's all in there. All that has to be done now is for the thing to be opened."

Then John stands and waits, because he knows what's coming. The next thing is the opening of the scroll. Now he can find out what Daniel was told, "Don't tell them. Seal it up." Finally, it's going to be revealed. He stands there holding his breath when an angel asks a dramatic question. The answer to that question causes the prophet to break down in tears. I mean that he is shaking and sobbing all over. Why in the world would he do that at this dramatic, wonderful moment of human history that he's experiencing? I'm glad you asked that. If you'll come back next time, we'll tell you why.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1982

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