

The Significance of the Scroll



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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. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"

Revelation 5:1-2 ESV [English Standard Version]*

In the right hand of the One who sat on the throne was a sealed scroll. This scroll was a legal document, as is made clear by the seven seals. The seven seals are from the seven witnesses as to the document.

"Bonorum Possessio" is the term used in ancient Roman law (in force at the time of Christ and the writing of Revelation) for the legal right of inheritance. It required seven witnesses to seal the inheritance document to make it legally binding for the beneficiary. Plainly stated, taking possession of the inheritance designated in the legal will required it be sealed by seven witnesses.

If the will was not witnessed and sealed by seven seals, the document was invalidated. It was a legal matter to ensure the contents had not been unscrupulously



altered.

The throne room scene in Revelation 5 opens with this backdrop. A legal document was held in the possession of the One on the throne, and it required lawful procedure to proceed.

Enter Hebrew law... the Kinsman Redeemer.

Deuteronomy 25:5-6 explains the process of a kinsman redeemer redeeming the bloodline of the firstborn, and an excellent example of that would be Ruth, the Moabite who married Boaz. Boaz was the kinsman redeemer for the line of Elimelech. (see Ruth 4:7-12)

Leviticus 25:49 explains the kinsman redeemer for land that has fallen out of the family line because of poverty or poor stewardship. Jeremiah practiced this in chapter 32 when his cousin, Hanameel, approached him about redeeming the land for their family by buying it from him, which Jeremiah did.

Now look at the instruction of the Lord in Jeremiah 32:44 [ESV]. I've placed emphasis on the process of legalizing the land deeds:

*"...Fields shall be bought for money, and **deeds shall be signed and sealed and witnessed**, in the land of Benjamin, in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the Shephelah, and in the cities of the Negeb; for I will restore their fortunes", declares the Lord.*

Recall that in the first part of chapter 32 we read that Jeremiah did redeem his family's land in order to have a legal right to possess it at their return after the 70 years of captivity to Babylon.

YHWH is the Supreme Judge

What we have in the throne room of Revelation 5, is a legal

procedure. A land deed of inheritance has been witnessed and sealed, and a kinsman redeemer is being sought to buy back the land. What land? The earth, which was deeded to humanity (Adam and Eve represent the line of humanity on the earth) but was then forfeited at man's fall and fell by default to the usurper, the adversary of God.

Deuteronomy 32:8-9 [ESV] in the original language** tells us after the Tower of Babel, the boundaries of land were put under the order of the "sons of God".

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.

But the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.

Without getting too detailed, if Dr. Heiser's exegesis after two decades of research is accurate, this means the nations of the earth were assigned to the "sons of God", or the lesser gods of the Divine Council (see Psalm 82). Many of these gods rebelled against the Supreme God, the Most High and led the nations into rebellion. So God founded a nation for himself and Israel was hereafter considered God's "portion" or his "heritage".

The popular and common church teaching is that the dominion of the earth was forfeited and given over to satan, the primary adversary of God.

The end result is the same, although the details differ. The earth's land deed is in need of redemption from its bondage to those in rebellion to God the Most High. If it cannot be redeemed by a kinsman redeemer, it remains in the possession of the leasee who is granted legal temporary possession because of a breach in the original contract. In this case, that would be satan, or the fallen gods of the Divine Council who have led the world into rebellion against God. This is

why John wept. Revelation 5:3-4 ESV:

And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

Three locations of inhabitants (heaven, earth and under the earth) came up empty-handed. And I think this pause in heaven was intentional. I think it was so the weight of our need for a redeemer could be felt. Sometimes we schmooze over details because we want to get to the punch line, not realizing the reason it's a punch line is because of the details.

Look at how Paul puts it in Romans 8:19-22 (ESV):

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

Bondage. Futility. These are the descriptors for the state of the earth after the fall.

Being a perfect Judge and Law-giver, Yahweh, (God in the common vernacular), will not bend rules or cut corners. He will judge righteously so that nothing evil can be truthfully spoken about Him. And by His own rules, dominion was traded in the original garden and the earth was subjected to evil rule and futility.

The earth and its inhabitants need a redeemer. The covenant was transgressed by the inhabitants of the earth, and a will can only be redeemed when the testator is dead. Look at Hebrews 9:15-17 (ESV):

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

Sometimes man's laws mirror God's and sometimes they don't. In this instance, it was Christ's death that redeems the people from their death sentence under the first covenant. He was the Passover Lamb that absolves us of the penalty of our sins.

Christ made a new covenant (see Luke 22:20) prior to His death, which is why we celebrate communion. But it can only be redeemed after His death because the testator must die for the inheritance to be received for the recipient(s) of the inheritance.

Remember, God is a perfect judge. Which is why the elder consoled John, because the requirements for redemption had been met:

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." (Rev. 5:5, ESV)

Christ receives the title deed of the earth

I think the seven witnesses to the scroll of the inheritance of the earth are the seven spirits of God from Revelation 1:4 and 5:6. These spirits give witness to the events of the earth, and their witness is unchallenged in the courts of Heaven. Cross reference this with Zechariah 4:10.

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain,

with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. (Rev. 5:6-7, ESV)

Christ is found the lawful beneficiary of the inheritance of the earth. He proceeds to open the scroll by breaking the seven seals, one by one, so that by the time He breaks the seventh seal (see Revelation 8), the legal authority of the earth is placed in Christ's dominion. All legal qualifications have been met and He has become the rightful heir of the earth. He then proceeds to wage a legal war on the rebellious of the earth who have rejected the rule of God and have rejected His atonement for reconciliation with God.

Timing seems to always be the culprit of conflict

I happen to be in the school of thought that the seals have been broken and the scroll has been opened. I think the deed to the earth was given to the rightful heir in a court proceeding that John was able to witness. The Revelation of Jesus Christ given to John was of things that are and things that were to come [Rev. 1:19]. I think this falls in the category of things that "are," specifically at the time of John's vision.

What are the requirements for receiving an inheritance? The death of the testator and the qualifications of the inheritor. The death of the testator was met at the Cross which redeemed us from the penalty of the first testament (the Mosaic Law) and enacted (put in motion) the New Testament (covenant). The qualifications of the inheritor of the land deed of earth were met at the Resurrection, when the terms for inheritance were fulfilled, which was Christ's perfect obedience to the Father.

We know that Christ defeated death and the grave and made an open show of the powers of darkness in the first century.

Paul is specific about this in Colossians 2 and 1 Corinthians 15. In both John 12:31 and 16:11, Christ tells us the ruler of this world (who had dominion because Adam and Eve forfeited it in the Garden) will be cast out and has been judged. Who cast him out? Who judged him?

We know from Revelation 12 that the dragon was expelled from Heaven, lost his place there, and came down to earth to wage war against the offspring of the woman, Israel. But when the woman was protected and hidden, the dragon waged war against the offspring who are defined as Christians (those keeping the commands of God and the testimony of Christ).

Revelation 12 is a vision of a multi-generational picture.

We have a past picture of a woman clothed with the sun, moon and twelve stars almost conclusively recognized as Israel (vs. 1), giving birth to the male child conclusively recognized as Christ (vs.2). The dragon was originally where? In Heaven (vs. 3). He dwelled IN HEAVEN. The dragon is plainly identified as "the old serpent, who is called 'Devil,' and 'the Adversary,' who is leading astray the whole world". So make no mistake, the Dragon lived in Heaven at the time of Christ's birth and that dragon is the devil. The dragon failed in his attempt to devour the Christ (vs. 4) and Christ was returned to the Throne of Heaven.

The timing is plain that the Dragon was expelled from Heaven AFTER the resurrection of Christ. When the Dragon/Devil was cast out of Heaven and to the earth, he pursued Israel to destroy Israel. It's important we recognize Israel was not a nation at this time (first century), so Israel is the people of the TWELVE tribes. The Devil wanted to destroy the twelve tribes of Israel, NOT just the Jews of Judah. [This matters, but I don't have time to get into it here.] Israel was given the ability to hide 1260 years (vs. 6). So the Dragon waged war against the rest of her offspring, which is by literal definition: the Jews and the Christians (vs. 17).

Without going into all the details, the point I want to underscore is WHEN did the great voice in Heaven declare this (from vs. 10, emphasis mine)? “**Now** the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come...”

When the dragon was cast to earth! The salvation, the power, the kingdom of God and the authority of Christ HAVE COME now. And in context the “now” is when Christ was resurrected, not some future event.

Now the dragon has come to earth not as the ruler of the earth, but as a challenger. The rulership was given to Christ as explained above.

But this opens another chapter of the beautiful story, which will have to be covered another time. This chapter was about the scroll that only the slain Lamb was found worthy to open, the title deed to the earth.

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Footnotes:

*This paper will use the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted. I will reference later why this is the version for this article. In the meantime, kindly do not write me to chastise me for not using the KJV. I have explained my stance on that [here](#).

**I understand most translations have translated Deut. 32:8 as “sons of Israel” instead of “sons of God”. To understand why this is a mistranslation, see the work of Bible and Hebrew scholar Michael Heiser as he methodically breaks the origins down [here](#). A simpler breakdown in layman’s terms can be found [here](#). The English Standard Version is the closest translation to the original which is why I’ve chosen it for the purposes

of this paper.