

# Recordkeeping in Heaven

## Those Record Books – Overview

### **The Book of Life:**

This is where God retains the names of each person who will be in His kingdom. John writes about this: *“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the **Book of Life**; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels”* (Revelation 3:5).

He adds: *“But there shall by no means enter it [New Jerusalem] anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the **Lamb’s book of life**”* (Revelation 21:27).

### **The Book of Remembrance:**

This book is a record of the good deeds of those who fear the Lord – those who obey Him. It is mentioned specifically in Malachi:

*“Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a **book of remembrance** was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. ‘They will be Mine,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. So, you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him”* (Malachi 3:16–18).

The judicial separation of the sheep (righteous) and the goats (cursed) when Christ returns appears to be partially based upon this record.

No good deed goes unnoticed by God (Matthew 10:42; Mark 9:41; Luke 6:23; Revelation 22:12). For this reason, Jesus urges us to store up treasures of good works in heaven (Matthew 6:20).

### **The Book where Sins are Recorded (perhaps what some refer to as the “Book of Death):**

The Psalmist says that God marks our iniquities in His book (Psalm 130:3). Paul teaches that everyone will appear before Christ at the judgement and receive a sentence according to their deeds, whether it be good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). John the Revelator confirms that the dead will be judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the heavenly books (plural) (Revelation 20:12).

### **The Unsealed “Little Book” in Christ’s Hand:**

This is noted in Revelation 10:1 as a unique document. Christ symbolically *“came down”* to present it to John to understand – before the last 1260 days of earth’s history (Revelation 10:1-2, 9-10; 11:3). It is a fascinating and provocative study. This is the unsealed portion of Daniel that he was advised centuries before to seal until the *“time of the end”* (Daniel 12:4, 9).

## The Seven Sealed Scroll:

This is one of the most riveting parts of Revelation (chapters 5, 6 and 8:1). God the Father compiled it. Christ the Lamb took it from Him (5:7). He then sequentially breaks each seal (chapter 6), initiating a unique series of end-time sagas. Christ comes during the events of the sixth seal. The “seventh” brings “*silence!*”

## A Deeper Study of Three of these Books

### Daniel’s Sealed Vision Scroll:

The seer wrote Daniel 8 through 12 in Hebrew (chapters 2 to 7 were mainly in Aramaic). That Hebrew part is especially important to God’s people today. Within its narrative are two labeled visions: (1) the *hazon* and (2) the *mareh*. The latter is identified as distinct from the *hazon* by some scholars and as within the *hazon* by others.

- The *mareh* addresses the **restoration of God’s people spiritually**. It includes Daniel 8:14-26a and chapters 9 through 10:13.
- The *hazon* introduces prophecies that mainly reveal what will occur in the **conflict between good and evil** at the time of the end. These are presented in Daniel 8, and 10:14 through 11:45.

Gabriel told Daniel that the *hazon* visions of the ram, he-goat, and little horn (Daniel 8:1-12) were for the “*time of the end*” (8:17). Then, detailing it further, he says that they were distinctly for an “appointed time,” which God set aside (8:19).

- Amazing – because of Daniel’s inability to grasp the implications of what he saw and heard, he fainted (8:27a).
- He had just been told that the *mareh* was true and correctly stated. However, the *hazon* part was to be sealed until the distant future (8:27b – NIV, NET). That suggests those issues will become more clearly understood during earth’s last conflict.

In 10:1 Daniel said that he finally understood the *mareh*, which had not been sealed.

Angel Gabriel has been the key messenger in this Hebrew segment. In 12:4 he finally advised Daniel: “*But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end*” (Daniel 12:4).

- Both parts of the *hazon* messages were to be closed from understanding until later. Why?
- “The book that was sealed ... [was] that portion of the prophecy of Daniel relating to the last days.”<sup>1</sup> It was specifically for God’s people who would understand it at the **end of time**.

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<sup>1</sup> *Acts of the Apostles* (Pacific Press Publishing Association; Mountain View, CA, 1911), p. 585.

When is that time? This has been “identified” by many expositors from 1798, 1844, 1870, 1929 to 1978, etc. Contextually, it is at God’s *“appointed time,”* which will then prophetically cover earth’s last three and a half years (another study). It begins with the enforcement of a religious mandate that Jesus called an *“abomination”* (Matthew 24:15).

In Revelation 10, Christ, in pre-advent imagery, came down to help prepare His witnesses to finish the work (Revelation 11:3, 5-7a). Fascinating – in His hand was an open little scroll.

- While holding it, Christ makes an oath to God the Father regarding its application, stating its prophetic fulfilment could no longer be delayed (10:6 – NIV). It was now to be understood and applied.
- He had taken a similar oath **at its sealing** in Daniel 12:7, saying that its end-time meaning would include that three-and-a-half-year period. Daniel 11:30-35 suggests that that is the *“appointed time.”*

“It was the Lion of the tribe of Judah [Rev. 10:3 – Christ] who unsealed the book and gave to John the revelation of what should be in these last days.

“Daniel [then] stood in his lot to bear his testimony which was sealed until the time of the end.... The book of Daniel is unsealed in the revelation to John, and carries us forward to the **last scenes of this earth’s history.**”<sup>2</sup>

That three and a half years is noted in Revelation 11 as 42 months (11:2) and 1260 days (11:3). It is critical to note that Christ symbolically *came down* with this unsealed book for John to eat (10:1-11). It became a preparatory document before earth’s final witnessing (11:3-7a). John became/becomes symbolic of that distinct group that will evangelize the world just before the eschaton (10:11).



The *hazon* vision, portraying vital prophetic information of trials for God’s people, was only to be grasped at the time of the end – during that preparation period. There appeared in the 1978+ window a growing number of individuals discussing and publishing with growing clarity the meaning of that segment of Daniel 8 through 12.

- Today, most of Daniel 8–12 is understood. A few verses in chapter 11 still remain under discussion.
- This *“unsealed”* book has to be *“eaten”* by all those who are part of earth’s final witnesses.

<sup>2</sup> *Testimony to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, (Pacific Press Publishing Assoc.; Mt. View, CA; 1923), p. 115.

## **Book of Life:**

“The Bible refers quite often to the existence of a heavenly register in which the names of those who belong to the Lord are recorded. This book is located in heaven (Luke 10:20) and is called ‘Your [God’s] book, which you have written’ (Exod 32:32), the ‘book of life’ (Ps 69:28; Phil 4:3), and the ‘book of the Lamb’ (Rev 17:8). It is also referred to as ‘the book’ (Dan 12:1).”<sup>3</sup>

Within John’s apocalyptic narrative, relative to the antichrist, the prophet notes: *“All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world”* (Revelation 13:8 – NIV).

- Only the NIV appears to word the intent of this book commensurate with other references.
- It is the Lamb’s final register of those who are citizens of His eternal kingdom.

Those that follow the antichrist beast are not found in that book. Either they were removed or never recorded.

- Beale concludes that they were never recorded as this book was developed.<sup>4</sup> That would reference God’s foreknowledge, serving to emphasize the assurance of salvation for a select group, which would be predestination.<sup>5</sup> **However, names can be removed.** That intimates that everyone was originally there, starting out as potential kingdom subjects! Christ did make it clear that He died for everyone! Revelation 17:8 implies that this book had been compiled before the creation of this world.<sup>6</sup> Paul said, *“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Timothy 2:4 – KJV). *“But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for **everyone**”* (Hebrews 2:9 – NIV).
- Names can be deleted from that record. *“Let them [enemies] be **blotted out** of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous”* (Psalm 69:28).
- Moses grasped that truth in a substitutionary defense for the Israelites. He asked God to exclude him from *“Your book which you have written”* and keep those God wanted to destroy (Exodus 32:32).

The **ultimate** purpose of the Lamb’s Book of Life is to have a **final citizenry list** for heaven and the New Jerusalem. *“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither [whatsoever] worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they **which are written in the Lamb’s book of life**”* (Revelation 21:27). Jesus even said, *“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven”* (Luke 10:20).

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<sup>3</sup> Rodriguez, Angel M.; *The Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*; Spring 2002, pp. 10-26.

<sup>4</sup> Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1999), p.

<sup>5</sup> Rodriguez, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 616.

- Paul additionally notes regarding his coworkers: *“And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life”* (Philippians 4:3).

Removal of names from a “pre-determined” list calls into question God’s foreknowledge in many expositors’ thinking. “Why would He place them there in the first place?” Yet, God answered Moses:

*“And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, **him will I blot out of my book**”* (Exodus 32:33). Everyone has the opportunity of being saved! Christ died for the whole world. Personal choices influence God’s recordkeeping decisions.

- *“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the **whole world**”* (1 John 2:2 – NIV).
- Christ’s redemptive measures must be individually accepted.

Christ reaffirmed to John the judicial merits of an individual’s choice of accepting the provisions of His grace.

- *“**He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels**”* (Revelation 3:5).
- This suggests a “conditional predetermination” of salvation, which is pleasing the Savior.<sup>7</sup> That directly relates to being an overcomer – man’s choice – not God’s.

Having one’s name removed from the Book of Life is a metaphor for judgment.<sup>8</sup> This appears to be exemplified in Daniel 7:9-10:

- Books are opened. The outcome: death to the little horn antichrist and his followers (Daniel 7:11).
- God’s people will be delivered – *“everyone that shall be found written in the book”* (Daniel 12:1; cf. 7:13-14, 27).

Retaining names in the Book of Life directly relates to those accepting the atoning death of the Lamb of God: *“All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world”* (Revelation 13:8 – NIV) – heaven’s final determination.

The blotting out of a name is a divine act that forever alienates a sinner from God. It is a permanent gesture that will lead to destruction (Deuteronomy 9:14). Therefore, a name in the Book of Life expresses one’s eschatological hope.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1977), p. 97 (quoting Caird).

<sup>8</sup> Aune, David E.; *52A World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 1-5* (World Books; Dallas, Texas – 1997), p. 224.

<sup>9</sup> Rodriguez, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

The horror of this blotting out is dreadful. It is divinely irrevocable. To be identified as one who is a friend of Christ, an overcomer, is wonderful because that name became embedded in that eternal record (Luke 10:20).

“As the books of record are opened in the Judgment, the lives of all ... come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living. Every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated. Names are accepted, names rejected. When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God's remembrance. The Lord declared to Moses, ‘Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.’ [Exodus 32:33.] And says the prophet Ezekiel, ‘When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, . . . all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned.’ [Ezekiel 18:24.]”<sup>10</sup>

- This solemn issue was pondered by widowed poet Mary Ann Kidder in the 1800's:

#### Is My Name Written There?

Lord, I care not for riches, neither silver nor gold;  
I would make sure of Heaven, I would enter the fold.  
In the book of Thy kingdom, with its pages so fair,  
Tell me, Jesus, my Savior, is my name written there?

Is my name written there,  
On the page white and fair?  
In the book of Thy kingdom,  
Is my name written there?

Lord, my sins they are many, like the sands of the sea,  
But Thy blood, O my Savior, is sufficient for me;  
For Thy promise is written, in bright letters that glow,  
“Though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them like snow.”

Oh! that beautiful city, with its mansions of light,  
With its glorified beings, in pure garments of white;  
Where no evil thing cometh to despoil what is fair;  
Where the angels are watching, yes, my name's written there.<sup>11</sup>

#### **The Seven-Sealed Scroll:**

*“And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne”* (Revelation 4:2).

The *“throne was set”* (past tense) suggests that the throne was previously positioned and traceable to Daniel 7:9a.

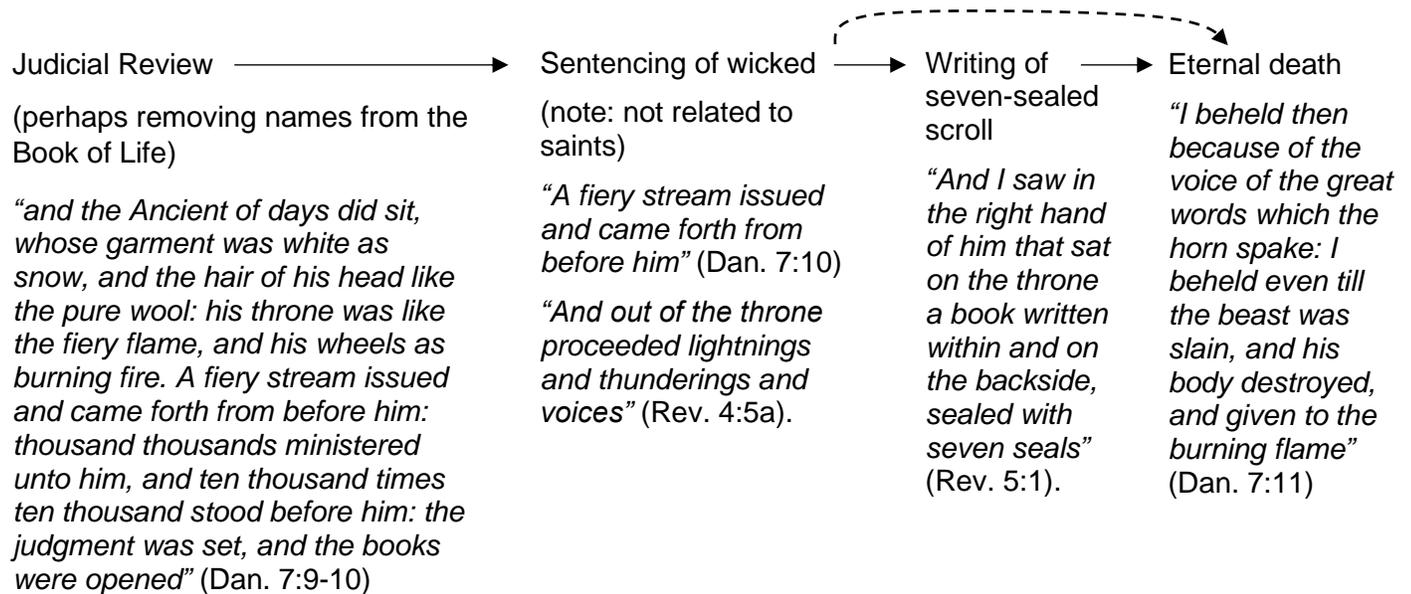
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<sup>10</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 483, 1888.

<sup>11</sup> <https://prayer-warriors.com/is-my-name-written-there-hymn-lyrics/#:~:text=%E2%80%93%20Hymn%20Lyrics%20Is%20My%20Name%20Written%20There%3F,angels%20are%20watching%2C%20yes%2C%20my%20name%20is%20written%20there.>

- The imagery with 24 heavenly attendants (Revelation 4:4) portrays a continuation of a divine courtroom scene from Daniel.
- Evidence is strong that Daniel 7 describes its onset and its sentencing. Here, it intimates that God is consummating that courtroom process by creating a document that is later needed for judicial review (Revelation 5:1)!

What divine matter remains to be reviewed and, even more puzzling, sealed?



Then the throne room scene of Revelation 4 continues uninterrupted into chapter 5, and, again, is written in past tense.<sup>12</sup> This contextually implies a continuation from the previous chapter. The “one sitting on the throne” now is shown having a book in His hand.

- It is written on the front and back – meaning that it is complete – there is no more room to write on it.
- The seals suggest that it is a judicial document; some judgment has been finished.<sup>13</sup>
- The “seven” represents completeness. Some work of God the Father has been finalized.<sup>14</sup>

Since it was sealed, its contents must wait to be read later – after all those seals are broken. Since the link to Daniel 7 is strong, it must relate to God’s reasons why the destruction of the wicked will occur (Revelation 7:11)!

The next two verses aid in our understanding: “And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon” (Revelation 5:2-3).

<sup>12</sup> Fee, Gordon D.; *Revelation – A New Covenant Commentary* (Cascade Books; Eugene, Oregon; 2011), p. 76.

<sup>13</sup> Beale, *op. cit.*, pp. 337-338.

<sup>14</sup> Kistemaker, Simon J.; *Revelation* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), p.

Worthiness relates to qualifications. Some unique purpose lies behind the breaking of those seals and opening the scroll. The word “*worthy*” in this apocalypse is used exclusively for God and Jesus (4:11; 5:9, 12).

- In all creation, such an individual could not be found.
- In this context, “*worthy*” (*laxios* – G) additionally means someone who has legal merit to do justice with the consequences of opening the seals and scroll!

A rolled-up scroll was handed to Ezekiel by God (Ezekiel 2:9); it was written on the front and back. God unrolled that scroll before the seer received it. Its disturbing text:

- Spelled disaster – and
  - Was full of laments, meanings and wailings.
- } The scroll contents, prophetically, set forth what would befall the wicked (cf. Ezekiel 2:9-10).<sup>15</sup>

Those were/are judgments He will pronounce on apostate people. Such divine punishment, called “*wrath*,” will come to the rebellious world, as noted in the third angel’s message of Revelation 14.<sup>16</sup> The purpose of those seven seals is to keep the contents hidden until its information would fulfil God’s last redemptive steps – and be understood.<sup>17</sup>

- Their sequential breaking brings events that lead up to and through the eschaton.
- The last seal is broken after Christ comes, within the sixth seal.

That means that the scroll’s contents are important and apply to the millennial reign of God’s people with Christ. What might, therefore, that scroll contain?

- “*Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth*” (Revelation 11:18).
- “*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years*” (Revelation 20:4).

Christ has come. The saints have been in heaven for that wonderful marriage supper of the Lamb. What still remains in the plan of redemption? Though a myriad of assumptions has been proposed by scholars, perhaps the most plausible:

“During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place. The apostle Paul points to this judgment as an event that follows the

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<sup>15</sup> Smith, James; *An Exegetical Commentary on Ezekiel*. Originally published as part of the Bible Study Textbook Series by College Press, 1979. Revised Edition 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Block, Daniel I.; *The Book of Ezekiel*, vol. 1, Chapters 1–24 (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1997), p. 125.

<sup>17</sup> Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

second advent. 'Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels the hearts.' 1 Corinthians 4:5.... At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God. John in the Revelation says: 'I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.' 'They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.' Revelation 20:4, 6. It is at this time that, as foretold by Paul, 'the saints shall judge the world.' 1 Corinthians 6:2. In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death."<sup>18</sup>

As in Daniel 7, the imagery in Revelation 4 and 5 portrays a courtroom. As an Old Testament reference, Ezekiel's scroll appears to contain the record of failures, rebellion and, finally, God's wrath. What questions might remain in what has already seemed a thorough picture of God's redemptive work?

### **The Greater Purpose of the Seven-sealed Scroll:**

Collectively, all these end-time scenes that John was permitted to observe when each seal was broken suggest:

1. A final storyline in the conflict between good and evil.
2. This document, tied to **voices** (decrees) coming from the throne (4:5), means that eternal decisions have been concluded – contextually, against the wicked.
3. Since it cannot be opened until after the Second Coming (chapters 6 and 8:1), it must, again, relate to the wicked.
4. Whatever the scroll contains causes the deepest reverence and acknowledgement from heaven's beings (Christ's worthiness) of God's right and purpose to bring it to a close.

Unique insight is elucidated by Robert V. Fullerton. The scroll, he concluded, is a "judgment lien." This is issued by a court where a debtor is unable to satisfy a debt (caused by sin).

- This document authorizes the debtors' assets (his souls) to be forfeited.
- In reality, the debtors could seek protection of the court. But here, the Lamb of God, the Redeemer, the One opening each seal, the only one worthy to open each seal, and the one who could provide legal protection, the one who actually "**paid the debt,**" **provides no relief.**<sup>19</sup>

Why? The provisions of His grace were rejected. Looking at heaven's reactions to this disdain of Christ's love brings divine justice! This is noted:

1. "**For the great day of his wrath is come**" (Revelation 6:17a).

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<sup>18</sup> *The Great Controversy* (Pacific Press Publishing Association; Mountain View, CA, 1888), pp. 660-331.

<sup>19</sup> <https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/6129/what-is-on-the-sealed-scroll-in-revelation-5-8>

2. Again, “And the nations were angry, and thy **wrath is come**, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:18).
3. “These shall make war with the Lamb, and **the Lamb shall overcome them**: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings” (Revelation 17:14).

The silence in heaven in breaking the seventh seal is likely a response to many issues. Paramount, in context, would be the heavenly host’s bated breath, wondering, “What will that scroll now reveal?” It can only be one thing: **Why the wicked couldn’t be saved.**

This seven-sealed scroll is not the Book of Life (which was never sealed) nor the unsealed (*hazon*) vision of Daniel 10. It stands alone as a final judicial declaration of why the wicked failed to appropriate the redemption mission of Christ’s grace and must be eternally lost.

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Prophecy Research Initiative – non-profit 501(c)3 © 2021  
*EndTime Issues...*, Number 254, November 4, 2021