

# THE SCROLL OF REVELATION FIVE

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John went through an emotional experience as he observed Gabriel – heaven’s highest created being – calling out for someone *worthy* to open a sealed scroll. This call came when the document was still in the right hand of God the Father who was seated on the throne. The scroll was written on both sides and sealed with seven seals. Revelation 5:1-3. There could not have been such a question posed, “Who is Worthy,” unless the general meaning of the scroll was known to be of stupendous value *and* the resulting events of seal breaking were envisioned. Something in past revelations must have made these issues clear to this heavenly being. Anticipatory interest existed in the dramatic events which would occur in the opening of each seal and finally the scroll.

In exploring what this scroll contains and the meaning of the seven seals, one discovers a great deal about God’s character. Since Jesus, not God the Father, was found worthy, it had to relate to Jesus’ victory over sin and death – the *functional* difference between the two. This, in turn, would open the door for the final vindication of God’s character. This victory, gave Jesus the authority to judge.

Is Jesus worthy because He now heads the Kingdom of Grace with His work as High Priest? If so, what would being a priest mediator have to do with a secret scroll that even angels can’t touch? Is Jesus worthy because His death permitted Him to unroll and reveal who will be saved? Then why is it secured with such portentous seals? What could be in that document that could only be revealed after calamitous events? Does the dramatic appearance of the bleeding Lamb with seven eyes and seven horns suggest that a new roll for Jesus has begun, giving Him special authority or worthiness?

Jesus’ authority *has* changed. The seven eyes portray His omniscience. He is now ready to vindicate God’s judgment, embarking on a dramatic mission of discernment. His horns reveal He is about to exercise His power. Because He was the Lamb, He can now be the Lion of the tribe of Judah. This imagery of authority opens the door for three things: One, to take the document; two, to break its seals; and three, to open the scroll, implementing the events bound in each.

What could God have put on that scroll that was so important it had to be sealed, writing on all sides and then holding it in His right hand waiting for the worthy Being to take it?

“Before analyzing the amazing figures revealed, we should recognize that a ‘seal’ (from the Greek word ‘sphragis’) implies that the bound document, has not only been kept secret, but the ‘seals’ also suggest that God had already certified the contents as authentic and genuine.

“Therefore, its prewritten contents are of enormous significance, not only for the human race, or even the celestial onlookers who ‘were filled with awe’ as it was unrolled (see 12MR 297), but for God Himself whose character must be vindicated before His creatures in order to preserve the freedom and harmony of the universe throughout eternity.”<sup>[1]</sup>

The book contains something God put there which is so important that only a Redeemer God can now open it. It must have something to do with God the Father's judgments, decisions, actions or even His character.

Because Jesus has horns, we are dealing with far more than His mediatorial work. The next phase of His work is investigative judgment, then, execution of that judgment. The imagery strongly suggests He is about to execute some action. There must be something *to be judged* or *related to* the execution of judgment in those seals and scroll.

A very solemn thought is presented when the scroll is opened.

"John continues: [Revelation 6:6, 7, quoted]. As the book was unrolled, all who looked upon it were filled with awe. There were no blanks in the book. There was space for no more writing. [Rev. 5:8-14; 6:8-11; 8:1-4, quoted.]"[2] If the record is full, it is complete. If it is complete, it must be related to the end of time. *There is nothing more to add.*

What fills the angelic hosts with awe? What is now revealed that was never fully known before?

Let's look at some Old Testament background passages for this scene. The first passage we will consider comes from Ezekiel Chapter 2. Ezekiel saw a vision of the Lord on His throne and of the four living beings or cherubim. Immediately after Ezekiel saw that vision, the Lord spoke to him and gave him the following commission.

**Ezekiel 2:1–3:11:** Then He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!" And as He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard Him speaking to me. Then He said to me, "Son of man, **I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me**; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. And I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children; and **you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.'**" As for them, whether they listen or not—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you, son of man, neither fear them nor fear their words, though thistles and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions; neither fear their words nor be dismayed at their presence, for they are a rebellious house. But you shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious. Now you, son of man, listen to what I am speaking to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house. **Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you. Then I looked, behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it.** When He spread it out before me, **it was written on the front and back; and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.** Then He said to me, "**Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel .**" **So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll.** And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your stomach, and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you." **Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth.** Then He said to me, "**Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.** For you are not being sent to a people of unintelligible speech or difficult language, but to the house of Israel , nor to many peoples of unintelligible speech or difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. But I have sent you to them who should listen to you; **yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not**

**willing to listen to Me.** Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate. Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. Like emery harder than flint I have made your forehead. Do not be afraid of them or be dismayed before them, though they are a rebellious house. Moreover, He said to me, “Son of man, take into your heart all My words which I shall speak to you, and listen closely. “And go to the exiles, to the sons of your people, and speak to them and tell them, whether they listen or not, “Thus says the Lord GOD.”

We have to consider this passage because of the very strong literary ties to the first part of the introductory sanctuary scene. Ezekiel sees a vision of the Lord that is very similar to what John sees. We note that Ezekiel and John did not see the exact same scene. They merely saw the same elements of vision but in different settings. After Ezekiel’s vision of God, He commissions him to take a special message to His people. The message is contained on a scroll, which is written on both sides. Ezekiel is to eat the scroll, i.e. to read and internalize the message, and then go proclaim the message to the Jewish exiles in Babylon . The message is specifically directed to God’s rebellious people. It contains warnings of “lamentations, mourning, and woe” that would befall both the exiles in Babylon and the remnant in Jerusalem.

Is this the same scroll, or the same kind of scroll, that John sees in Revelation? Certainly, the vision of Revelation contains a commission for a certain group of people to go out and proclaim a message of repentance and warning to both God’s rebellious people and to the world. However, that commission is not really made clear until later in Revelation. We also see that as the seals of the scroll are broken, indeed “lamentations, mourning, and woe” befall the whole earth. However, those calamities are the result of the breaking of each seal. They do not represent the content of the scroll itself. The content will not be revealed until all of the seals are broken. Also, it is very unlikely that all of heaven would be gathered around, eager to see devastation poured out on the inhabitants of the earth. Remember that Jesus was only qualified to open the scroll because He had been slain. Jesus did not die so that the world could be plagued with disasters. The calamities of the Seals are not the end in and of themselves, but are the means to an end. The calamities are the means by which the contents of the scroll are revealed. So this passage in Ezekiel does contain some very significant parallels, but it does not identify the content of the scroll. The content of Ezekiel’s scroll – lamentations, mourning, and woe – is not the same as the content of the scroll in Revelation 5.

Now we turn our attention to a very similar passage in the book of Jeremiah. To a certain degree Jeremiah and Ezekiel were contemporaries. While Ezekiel was sent as a prophet from God to the Jewish exiles in Babylon, Jeremiah was sent as a prophet of God to the remnant in Jerusalem and Judah.

**Jeremiah 36:1-3:** And it came about in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, that this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, “**Take a scroll and write on it all the words which I have spoken to you concerning Israel, and concerning Judah, and concerning all the nations,** from the day I first spoke to you, from the days of Josiah, even to this day. “**Perhaps the house of Judah will hear all the calamity which I plan to bring on them, in order that every man will turn from his evil way; then I will forgive their iniquity and their sin.**”

Jeremiah dictated the scroll to his friend Baruch as directed by the Lord, and sent it to King Jehoiakim. Against the advice of his advisors, the king ignored the warnings and burned the scroll. Jeremiah then dictated a second copy of the scroll that would stand as a witness against Judah when the calamities declared by the Lord would occur.

Notice some things about this scroll. Unlike Ezekiel's scroll, which was written by God and handed to Ezekiel, this scroll was dictated by Jeremiah and written by Baruch. Like Ezekiel's scroll, this was a message of warning from God to Israel and Judah. However, it was also a message of warning to "all nations." Apparently all nations had been guilty of rebellion against God, and God was using Babylon as a tool of executing His judgement on them. Israel and Judah are singled out among the nations because they had a special position before God. Because they had direct access to the revelations of God and the sanctuary services, etc., they were held to a higher accounting. "And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more." – Luke 12:48. Though judgement would extend to all nations, it would begin at the house of God.

Just like Ezekiel's scroll, Jeremiah's scroll contained descriptions of calamities. For the reasons that we discussed above, the calamities written on these scrolls are analogous to the calamities that occur at the breaking of the Seals in Revelation's scroll. *We should pay close attention to the circumstances surrounding the events in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. These calamities were predicted, and later executed, by God in order to bring His people and the other nations to repentance.* God said to Jeremiah, "Perhaps the house of Judah will hear all the calamity which I plan to bring on them, in order that every man will turn from his evil way; then I will forgive their iniquity and their sin." The purpose of the Seals in Revelation is the same. These calamities serve the purpose of getting the attention of the whole world. The calamities will serve as a calling to repentance for those who respond. They will serve as a testimony of rebellion to those who ignore God's call. Just as in the case of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, we can expect messages from God through prophets to accompany the calamities associated with the breaking of the Seals. As discussed above, however, the calamities themselves could not possibly constitute the content of the scroll in Revelation.

Let's look at another interesting event in the book of Jeremiah. At this point, Jeremiah is writing about the future fall of Babylon. This is a change in direction. For a large part of his ministry, Jeremiah was predicting that Babylon would be used as a tool of judgement against Judah and the surrounding nations. He correctly predicted that Babylon would conquer Judah and those other nations. He correctly predicted that Judah would be held captive in Babylon for 70 years. Then, before all of these events had completely been fulfilled, he changed directions. At this point, Jeremiah began to predict the eventual fall of Babylon and the deliverance of God's people from captivity. He even uses similar terms to those that are used in a later part of the book of Revelation, e.g. "Fallen is Babylon" (see Jeremiah 51:8, 44, 49). Now, let's look at the scroll that Jeremiah was directed to write in this context.

**Jeremiah 51:59-64:** The message which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the grandson of Mahseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. (Now Seraiah was quartermaster.) **So Jeremiah wrote in a single scroll all the calamity which would come upon Babylon**, that is, all these words which have been written concerning Babylon. Then Jeremiah said to Seraiah, "As soon as you

come to Babylon, then see that you read all these words aloud, and say, "Thou, O LORD, hast promised concerning this place to cut it off, so that there will be nothing dwelling in it, whether man or beast, but it will be a perpetual desolation." **And it will come about as soon as you finish reading this scroll, you will tie a stone to it and throw it into the middle of the Euphrates,** and say, **"Just so shall Babylon sink down and not rise again, because of the calamity that I am going to bring upon her; and they will become exhausted."**

Almost the exact same description is given in Revelation 18 about the eventual fall of spiritual Babylon in the last days. We can see an interesting trend in the content of the scrolls that we have studied. The scrolls all contain descriptions of calamities. The purpose of the calamities is both a judgement from God for rebellion and also a call to repentance. The calamities fall first on God's people and then on all nations as a call to repentance. But then, even greater calamities befall those who took part in the persecution of God's people. God uses evil nations to bring judgement on His people, but then eventually turns His attention to those evil nations themselves. The judgement on those nations is greater and more final.

This is the pattern of the Great Controversy. As mankind initially chose to rebel against God and to enter into sin, God allowed us to suffer under the consequences of sin. He allows this in order to bring about a complete and enduring abhorrence for sin in His people. He allows this in order to bring about a complete and enduring repentance in His people. He allows this in order that His people might turn from their sin and turn to Him. But in the end, God will turn against evil and the author of evil, and destroy sin forever. This is the pattern that God has taken in unfolding the complete plan of salvation. In this pattern we begin to get a glimpse of what the contents of the scroll in Revelation might be.

Now let's turn our attention to another background text in the book of Zechariah. This passage is very significant because of its literary parallels to the book of Revelation. In this passage, we see not only a scroll, but also the description of four sets of colored horses that parallel the description in Revelation 6. We also see a symbolic description of an unfaithful woman named, "Wickedness," who is brought to judgement. This parallels the description of the harlot Babylon in Revelation 17 and 18. Earlier in the book of Zechariah you can find other descriptions of the four colored horses, a description of God changing the garb of the High Priest, Joshua, from filthy rags to pure white vestments, a section where Zechariah is instructed to measure the temple of God, and a description of the eyes of God ranging to and fro throughout the earth. Later in Zechariah you find descriptions of the Two Witnesses, the Latter Rain, and the Second Coming of Christ as the bridegroom. All of these things have strong literary parallels to the imagery in the book of Revelation. That is the context in which we find this description of a scroll.

**Zechariah 5:1-6:3:** Then I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and **behold, there was a flying scroll.** And he said to me, **"What do you see?"** And I answered, **"I see a flying scroll;** its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits." **Then he said to me, "This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land; surely everyone who steals will be purged away according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears will be purged away according to the writing on the other side. I will make it go forth,"** declares the LORD of hosts, **"and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name; and it will spend the night within that house and consume it with its**

timber and stones.” Then the angel who was speaking with me went out, and said to me, “Lift up now your eyes, and see what this is, going forth.” And I said, “What is it?” And he said, “This is the ephah going forth.” Again he said, “This is their appearance in all the land (and behold, a lead cover was lifted up); and **this is a woman sitting inside the ephah.**” Then he said, “**This is Wickedness!**” **And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening.** Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens. And I said to the angel who was speaking with me, “Where are they taking the ephah?” Then he said to me, “To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal.” Now I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming forth from between the two mountains; and the mountains were bronze mountains. With the first chariot were **red horses**, with the second chariot **black horses**, with the third chariot **white horses**, and with the fourth chariot **strong dappled horses**.

Again, we see a number of parallels with the scroll in Revelation. It has writing on both sides. This scroll is said to contain a curse against those who rebel against God and His law. And as we noted before, it comes in a context which has strong literary parallels with the book of Revelation, particularly the description of the four colored horses. These themes are consistent with the ones we have already discussed in relation to the scrolls of Ezekiel and Jeremiah. We can draw the same types of conclusions here. Notice that this passage, like the latter of the two passages in Jeremiah, ties the scroll together with the Judgement of the wicked woman – i.e., spiritual Babylon. This is an end-time theme. If you study the book of Zechariah, you will discover that the whole book has an end time application.

As we look at these different Old Testament scrolls, we are beginning to get a picture of the themes that surround the scroll in Revelation. There is another significant passage in the book of Isaiah that will help round out that picture. Isaiah lived about a hundred and fifty years or so before Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Babylonian captivity. He prophesied about the same things. He warned about the apostasy of Israel and Judah. He called them to repentance. He predicted their persecution by Assyria and Babylon. And he predicted the eventual fall of Babylon and the restoration of God’s people. All of this is cached in Great Controversy style language. Isaiah gives detailed descriptions of Jesus’ first coming and of the New Earth. Let’s look at the scroll passage in Isaiah.

**Isaiah 34:1-17: Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples! Let the earth and all it contains hear**, and the world and all that springs from it. **For the LORD’S indignation is against all the nations**, and His wrath against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to slaughter. So their slain will be thrown out, and their corpses will give off their stench, and the mountains will be drenched with their blood. And all the host of heaven will wear away, and **the sky will be rolled up like a scroll**; all their hosts will also wither away as a leaf withers from the vine, or as one withers from the fig tree. For **My sword** is satiated in heaven, behold **it shall descend for judgment upon Edom**, and upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction. **The sword of the LORD** is filled with blood, it is sated with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. Wild oxen shall also fall with them, and young bulls with strong ones; thus their land shall be soaked with

blood, and their dust become greasy with fat. **For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. And its streams shall be turned into pitch, and its loose earth into brimstone, and its land shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night or day; its smoke shall go up forever;** from generation to generation it shall be desolate; none shall pass through it forever and ever. But pelican and hedgehog shall possess it, and owl and raven shall dwell in it; and He shall stretch over it the line of desolation and the plumb line of emptiness. Its nobles – there is no one there whom they may proclaim king – and all its princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in its fortified towers, Nettles and thistles in its fortified cities; it shall also be a haunt of jackals and an abode of ostriches. And the desert creatures shall meet with the wolves, the hairy goat also shall cry to its kind; yes, the night monster shall settle there and shall find herself a resting place. The tree snake shall make its nest and lay eggs there, and it will hatch and gather them under its protection. Yes, the hawks shall be gathered there, every one with its kind. **Seek from the book of the LORD, and read:** not one of these will be missing; none will lack its mate. For His mouth has commanded, and His Spirit has gathered them. And He has cast the lot for them, and His hand has divided it to them by line. They shall possess it forever; from generation to generation they shall dwell in it.

This is quite obviously a description of the final destruction of the earth at Jesus' Second Coming. It parallels a description given in Revelation 19. In this passage we see a reference to "the book of the Lord". This book apparently contains a description of the destruction of the earth as a result of the wickedness and rebellion found there.

Throughout the Old Testament, we have seen a number of descriptions of scrolls that parallel the scenes in Revelation. Almost all of these accounts have been of great devastation and calamity. *All have been introduced at times of apostasy. All have been associated with calls to repentance and with judgements from God.* Yet we have noted that these descriptions seem to be more closely associated with the breaking of the Seals on the scroll in Revelation 5. The descriptions stand in contrast to what we would expect to find written on Revelation's scroll. Remember that there is great rejoicing in heaven and on earth when the contents of Revelation's scroll is revealed. Remember that Jesus is the only One who was qualified to reveal the contents of the scroll. Even God the Father or the Holy Spirit were not qualified to open the scroll. This would make it apparent that the scroll is not a certification of the right to rule – for God the Father would certainly be worthy to open such a scroll.

In Revelation 4 & 5, the elders and the four living creatures sing two songs. In the first song, they praise the Father. Look at the words to this song. "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created." – Rev 4:11. God the Father is worthy to receive glory, power and honor because He created all things. Now compare that with the song that they sing to the Lamb in Revelation 5. "And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.'" Rev 5:9-10. Jesus is said to be worthy to open the scroll because He was slain. Jesus is unique in all of creation. In all of heaven and earth, He is the only One Who is qualified to open the scroll and reveal its contents. The reason that he is worthy is because He was slain for the sins of men and has

redeemed them. He is worthy because He purchased men from the earth with His blood and made them to be a kingdom and priests to God. The contents of the scroll must be specifically linked to those issues. The contents of the scroll must be related to the fact that only Jesus is qualified to open it.

Finally, let's consider the chiastic counterpart to the Seven Seals in Revelation 19 & 20. Look at this parallel passage.

**Revelation 20:11-15:** And I saw *a great white throne* and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and **books were opened**; and **another book was opened, which is the book of life**; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And **if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life**, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

In Revelation 5, we have the Lamb taking a book from God the Father who is seated on the throne. Then in this passage in Revelation 20, we see God the Father seated on the throne. Under the sixth Seal, the people of the world proclaim, "Fall on us and **hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne**, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?" – Rev 6:16-17. But in this passage, something is different. In Revelation 5, the Father hands the Lamb a sealed book. In Revelation 20, the book[s] . . . [are opened] . . . *Revelation 5 is the initiation of the final judgement. Revelation 20 is the consummation of the final judgement.* The judgement progresses in phases. First, the dead are judged. Next, God creates circumstances which clearly divide the living into two groups - those who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, and those who have rejected Him. Then God gives His final warning to repent. God now punishes the wicked for the torment that they have inflicted on the righteous. Then, at the Second Coming, the righteous receive their reward of eternal life in the presence of God and apart from the effects of sin. Then God gives the redeemed 1000 years to review His judgements. Only after all the questions have been answered will God execute the final sentence of the second death on the wicked. *The beginning of the Judgement process, the separating of the two groups, and the punishment of the wicked is seen in the Seven Seals.* The consummation of the judgement process, the rescuing of the redeemed, the 1000 year review of the judgements, and the execution of the final punishment of the wicked is described in the chiastic counterpart of the Seven Seals in Revelation 19 & 20. The central themes in the Introductory Sanctuary Scene of Seven Seals and its chiastic counterpart in Revelation 19 & 20 are the throne of judgement and the [books]. . . .

**Revelation 19:1-2:** After these things I heard, as it were, a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; **because His judgments are true and righteous**; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her."

Finally, in Revelation 20, the world gets to see the opened books.



**Revelation 20:12:** And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and **books were opened**; and **another book was opened, *which is the book of life***; and **the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books**, according to their deeds.

“As Jesus breaks each seal, events happen which cause the living to accept or reject Christ. The breaking of the Seals represent acts of redemption and of judgement. As each individual experiences the events of the Seals, he or she will turn toward or away from Christ, and bring redemption or judgement upon himself. When the last Seal is broken, the book will be open for all to see. “For nothing is hidden that shall not become evident, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light.” Luke 8:17 (NAS).

The chiastic tie between Revelation 4-7 is chapters 17-20. In the seals we see calamities as warnings of something to come. In the tie, we find the execution of those judgments. The warnings are for everyone but especially for God’s declared people. The judgments are against Babylon, the wicked woman and the beast. This imagery is a summation metaphor of what we pictured in the Old Testament.

What can we deduce from these exegetic ties?

**Ezekiel 2:1-3:11** – Ezekiel’s scroll contained:

- Lamentations – record of regrets
- Mourning – the anguish caused by sin
- Woes – the tribulation and judgments to come

**Jeremiah 36:1-3**

- Scroll written of judgment (calamities) to come to Israel to lead them to repentance

**Jeremiah 51:59-64**

- Scroll of calamity on Babylon (Israel’s enemy)

**Zechariah 5:1-6:3**

- Flying scroll passing over whole earth
- Spread curses (judgment) on evil – and the wicked woman – spiritual Babylon

**Isaiah 34:1-17**

- Judgments in book of the Lord of final destruction of earth

**Revelation 20:11-15**

- Books (plural) were opened

- Book of life – those who will be saved
- Another book of deeds that led to death

The motif of each of these parallels is warning of judgment (at times through calamities), judgment of avenge and final judgment of destruction.

There is another tie that bears mention. Daniel 7 and Revelation 4 and 5 are often templated together. But there is a major difference – one set of books was sealed the other was not. This is very important.

“[Daniel 7:13, 14 quoted] The coming of Christ here described is not His second coming to the earth. He comes to the Ancient of Days in heaven to receive dominion and glory and a kingdom, which will be given Him at the close of His work as a mediator. It is this coming, and not His second advent to the earth, that was foretold in prophecy to take place at the termination of the 2300 days in 1844. Attended by heavenly angels, our great High Priest enters the holy of holies and there appears in the presence of God to engage in the last acts of His ministration in behalf of man – to perform the work of *investigative judgment* and to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits.

“In the typical service only those who had come before God with confession and repentance, and whose sins, through the blood of the sin offering, were transferred to the sanctuary, had a part in the service of the Day of Atonement. So in the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment the only cases considered are those of the professed people of God.”[3]

Who are judged at that time (Daniel 7:10-13)?

“In the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment, the *only cases* considered are those of the professed people of God. The judgment of the wicked is a distinct and separate work, and takes place at a later period.”[4]

What book(s) is/are opened at that time?

“When we become children of God, our *names* are written in the Lamb’s book of life, and they remain there until the time of the investigative judgment. Then the name of every individual will be called, and his record examined, by Him who declares, ‘I know thy works.’ If in that day it shall appear that all our wicked deeds have not been fully repented of, our names will be blotted from the book of life, and our sins will stand against us (ST Aug. 6, 1885).”[5]

Is there an accompanying book to the Book of Life?

The book of life contains the *names* of all who have ever entered the service of God. Jesus bade His disciples, ‘Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.’ Luke 10:20. Paul speaks of his faithful fellow workers, ‘Whose names are in the book of life.’ Phil. 4:3. . . .

“‘A book of remembrance’ is written before God, in which are recorded the *good deeds* of ‘them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.’ Mal. 3:16. Their words of faith, their acts of love, are registered in heaven.”[6]

“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.”[7]

### **Is the Book of Life or Book of Remembrance the scroll Jesus took from the Father?**

“This roll was written within and without. John says: ‘I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon’ [verse 4]. The vision as presented to John made its impression upon his mind.

### **The destiny of every nation was contained in that book.”[8]**

“There in His open hand lay the book, the roll of the history of God’s providences, the prophetic history of nations and the church. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His *authority*, His *commandments*, His laws, the *whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal*, and the *history* of all *ruling powers* in the *nations*. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the *influence* of every nation, tongue, and people from the beginning of earth’s history to its close.”[9] If this scroll contains the destiny of all, it cannot be the Investigative “Book.” That book only dealt with the declared righteous *individuals*.

The sealed scroll is the story of the conflict of the ages as outlined in the Bible, as fulfilled in history and dispensed with in judgment, reaching right down to the very end of this earth’s history. It is the play and interplay of the drama between good and evil. This is not the book(s) opened in 1844 at the beginning of the Investigative Judgment. Though parallels exist, this is God the Father’s judgment and human destiny plan. Jesus will vindicate God’s character as it is implemented.

As a reference – End-time books:

1. Book of Life
2. Book of Remembrance
3. Sealed book
4. Book of Death
5. Statute Book (Bible)
6. Book of Destiny
7. Book of Lord

The sealed book, Book of Destiny and the Book of the Lord appear to be the same records.

“Although no name has been given to the book in the hands of Him who sat upon the throne, its nature is clear. It is the great book of destiny, the book which when opened will reveal *the*

*fate of the world* and of all who have ever lived upon it. This book has to do with condemnation – with the condemnation of those who put Christ to death, and all who reject His saving grace. It has to do with redemption and salvation – the salvation of all who accept Jesus as the Lamb of God. The One who opens this book is at once the one who smites and the one who redeems; He is the Lion and the Lamb, the One whose power it is to save and whose right it is to condemn. Only Christ has this power, and only Christ can open this book of destiny.”<sup>[10]</sup>

The sealed book is the outcome of the conflict with sin and how it is to be finally fulfilled. Only Jesus can *activate* the outcome of the judgment. This shows how judgment will be executed. ***As it is, it will be seen that it matches exactly what God had sealed in the scroll throughout the ages. His character will be vindicated.***

But – a judgment *setting* is portrayed. In Revelation 4-5:1-6 *preparation* for some judgment occurs. There is deeper imagery that must be explored. In Daniel we have the investigative judgment motif in a setting of corrupt power. But, the picture reassures, especially regarding papal power, “their dominion” will be “taken away,” “destroy it unto the end.” (7:12, 26). In Revelation we have a Feast of Tabernacle setting, the Shofar, the warning of calamities, the trumpet’s last call just before destiny of the world is revealed. There we have greater appeal and concern for the *last call* to repent that will come to the earth. This is the final pre-Day of Atonement cry to prepare.

The scroll is not open till all the seals are removed. First, we have warning events preceding the opening of the *bibilios*. The preparation to open the book is an *unsealing*. This sealing and opening draws on “end time happenings . . . found in the Old Testament in Daniel 12 and 7, Daniel 12:8-9 [and] implies future unsealing of the book in a latter-day period.”<sup>[11]</sup>

Can we discover additional understanding of this scroll? Let’s review again:

“[Revelation 5:1-3 quoted] There in His open hand lay the book, the roll of the history of God’s providences, the prophetic history of nations and the church. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His authority, His commandments, His laws, the whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal, and the history of all ruling powers in the nations. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the influence of every nation, tongue, and people from the beginning of earth’s history to its close.”<sup>[12]</sup>

This outlines the contents:

- History of God’s providences
- Prophetic history of nations
- Prophetic history of the church
- Divine utterances to man
- His authority
- His commandments
- His laws
- Whole symbolic prophecies and parallels of the Eternal
- History of all ruling powers in the nations

- Influence (lives) of every nation, tongue and people from beginning of earth's history to its close.

"Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness *this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah.*"[13] (Future to when this statement was written.)

"Then after quoting verses 6 and 7: 'As the book was unrolled, all who looked upon it were filled with awe. There were no blanks in the book. There was space for no more writing.' (12MR 296, 297; also 20MR 197; 9MR 7) . . . From that quote, the 'book' contains a comprehensive record of the entire history of every man, woman, child, and kingdom who ever lived from the beginning to the end of time."[14]

That scroll is earth's complete record. If this book was the one opened in 1844, when were the seals opened? If this is the Book of Life, why are we informed of so many other extraneous historical issues there? The Book of Life and Remembrance are records of "people who have claimed to be in God's service."

It is true there is chiastic ties between Revelation 4 and 5 and Revelation 17-20, and E. G. White ties part of Revelation 20 to the investigative judgment and to Daniel 7:13, 14.[15] But – the details segregate out their distinct meaning. Let's look at the three judgments portrayed.

## **JUDGEMENT OF GOD'S PEOPLE**

"In the typical service only those who had come before God with confession and repentance, and whose sins, through the blood of the sin offering, were transferred to the sanctuary, had a part in the service of the Day of Atonement. So in the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment the *only cases considered* are those of the professed people of God. The judgment of the wicked is a distinct and separate work, and takes place at a later period. 'Judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel?' 1 Peter 4:17."[16]

The judgment of the wicked is described in these thoughts.

## **JUDGMENT OF WICKED**

"*After* the saints are changed to immortality and caught up together with Jesus, *after* they receive their harps, their robes, and their crowns, and enter the city, Jesus and the saints sit in judgment. The books are opened—the book of life and the book of death. The book of life contains the good deeds of the saints; and the book of death contains the evil deeds of the wicked. These books are compared with the *statute book*, the Bible, and according to that men are judged. The saints, in unison with Jesus, pass their judgment upon the wicked dead. 'Behold ye,' said the angel, 'the saints, in unison with Jesus, sit in judgment, and mete out to the wicked according to the deeds done in the body, and that which they must receive at the *execution of the judgment* is set off against their names.' This, I saw, was the work of the

saints with Jesus through the one thousand years in the Holy City before it descends to the earth.”[17]

## EXECUTION OF THE JUDGMENT

“In the presence of the assembled inhabitants of earth and Heaven takes place the final coronation of the Son of God. And now, invested with supreme majesty and power, the King of kings pronounces sentence upon the rebels against his government, and executes justice upon those who have transgressed his law and oppressed his people. Says the prophet of God: ‘I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.’ [1 Rev. 20:11, 12.]”[18] As each of these books are opened, judgment is made. But which book (singular) is opened after seven seals are released? God has defined in ages past what the acts and destiny of this world will have. It is part of the final vindication of His character. But His character would be misunderstood if it was opened prematurely. As seals are broken, there is warnings that a final day is coming. There are even trumpets to follow that tell that God’s mercy is being withdrawn.

That book is the indelible judicial record of evidence gathered and judgment that must be executed. The heavenly steps outlined are so thorough that when the final summation of the conflict is made, even the ungodly acknowledge His supremacy.

“The whole wicked world stands arraigned at the bar of God on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them.

“It is now evident to all that the wages of sin is not noble independence and eternal life, but slavery, ruin, and death. The wicked see what they have forfeited by their life of rebellion. The far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory was despised when offered them; but how desirable it now appears. ‘All this,’ cries the lost soul, ‘I might have had; but I chose to put these things far from me. Oh, strange infatuation! I have exchanged peace, happiness, and honor for wretchedness, infamy, and despair.’ All see that their exclusion from heaven is just.”[19]

Through judicial acts of Jesus, God’s loving character will be vindicated. It will eventually be seen that God’s purpose in dealing with sin was just. What Jesus finally does to deal with sin will be found to be what God long ago proposed. Then the door will open for eternal harmony to come once again back into the universe.

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## **References** (emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted):

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- [2] *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, p. 297.
- [3] *The Great Controversy*, pp. 479-480.
- [4] *The Faith I Live By*, p. 210.
- [5] *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 987.
- [6] *The Faith I Live By*, p. 210
- [7] *The Great Controversy*, p. 483.
- [8] *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, pp. 296-297.
- [9] *Ibid.*, p. 296.
- [10] Thiele, Edwin R.; *Outline Studies in Revelation* (Emmanuel Missionary College; Berrien Springs, MI), p.98-99.
- [11] Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), p. 339.
- [12] *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 7.
- [13] *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 294.
- [14] Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 2.
- [15] *The Great Controversy*, p. 480.
- [16] *Ibid.*, p. 480.
- [17] *Early Writings*, pp. 52-53.
- [18] *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 480 (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 384-387).
- [19] *The Great Controversy*, p. 668.