

Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). He’s not only willing to defend you, He’s eager. It is His greatest pleasure to plead His perfect life and shed blood for the pardon of sinners. There’s only one qualification: Don’t try to justify yourself by either denying your true guilt or by endeavoring to earn your salvation by good deeds. Simply confess that you are a sinner and cast yourself on the mercy of the court. And once forgiven, determine that, in the light of His love, you will live to honor Him in all things.

There is another reason to believe that the sealed book in the hand of God is the history of the world and of every individual. When Christ begins to break the seals, events that transpire on earth are revealed. The rider on the red horse, under the second seal, takes “peace from the earth” (Revelation 6:4). Under the fourth seal the pale horse has “power over a fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth” (Revelation 6:8). Under the fifth seal we are shown the martyrs of earth (see Revelation 6:9). Under the sixth seal we are shown an earthquake and strange happenings with the sun, the moon, and the stars (see Revelation 6:12, 13). Also under the sixth seal we see the terror of the unrighteous of earth at the second coming of Christ (see Revelation 6:15-17).

As each seal opens we are shown events that happen on earth. This reveals that the contents of the book is the history of the world—every person’s name and life history; every war, every evil plotting, every secret

vice; every act of love, every deed of compassion, every decision for good; each person’s choice to follow Christ or to rebel against Him—all is recorded with unerring accuracy and perfect detail.

Jesus shed His blood to save every man, woman and child. He earned the authority and obtained the wisdom to judge each person by dying on the cross. His hatred for sin and His love for the sinner are poised with perfect balance on His scepter. He alone can open the book and deal justly with its long and complicated chronicles. With perfect compassion, born of His own experience as a man of sorrow and temptation, He will weigh all the varied circumstances of each life. The inherent strengths and weaknesses; the cultural setting and time; the privileges and opportunities; the obstacles and disadvantages; the light of truth within reach—all will be taken into account as Jesus pronounces the destiny of every person. Calvary persuades us that we can trust His verdicts with absolute confidence.

When every chapter of the book is finally acted out and each destiny is settled, “every creature which is in heaven and on earth” will proclaim, “Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever” (Revelation 5:13, NKJV). It is your privilege to join the glad chorus on that day. The One who was, and who is, will come to possess the everlasting kingdom. And we will never doubt His love again.

Unlocking Revelation

Mystery of the Sealed Book, Part I

One of the most intriguing prophecies in the book of Revelation is John’s vision of the book with seven seals. God is revealed seated upon His mighty throne holding a mysterious book in His right hand. The book is filled with writing. Its contents are obviously of great importance. But there is not a person to be found in all the vast universe who is worthy to open and read the book, that is, except the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this study we will learn the contents of the book and why Jesus alone is qualified to understand and deal with the information in the book.

The Backdrop

The prophecy of the book with seven seals is presented in a setting of expectancy. All the created intelligentsia of the unfallen universe long for the day when God will possess His kingdom without a rival. His right to reign will soon be unchallenged. The Archenemy of the Almighty Creator of the universe, Satan himself, will ultimately be conquered. The perfect harmony of love and righteousness will be established, nevermore to be disrupted.

This backdrop is brought to view in Revelation chapter four. The four living creatures that dwell in the throne room of the universe proclaim day and night: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come” (Revelation 4:8, NKJV). The twenty-four elders respond to the enlightened praise by saying, “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:11, NKJV).

The phrase “who was and is and is to come” occurs three other times in Revelation (see Revelation 1:4, 8;11:17). It is not a statement intended to speak of God’s eternal existence, for it announces that He “shall come.” If

the four creatures had meant to make a statement of God’s eternal existence, they would have said, “who was and is and *shall be*,” not “*shall come*.” Rather than a statement of God’s eternal *existence*, the four creatures are announcing God’s eternal, sovereign *reign* over the universe. They are not saying, “God has existed in the past, does exist now, and will exist in the future,” although that would be a true declaration also. What they are saying is that God has reigned supreme in all ages past, He does presently reign as the only One worthy to possess absolute dominion, and He will ultimately establish the reign of His kingdom as the battle for dominion reaches its climactic conclusion. The prophet Daniel comprehended this reality as well: “His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:14, NKJV).

The warfare between Christ and Satan is the backdrop against which the drama of Revelation is acted out. In the center of the book we see that long ago war broke out in heaven: “Michael and His angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:7-9, NKJV).

The primary application of these verses is to the cross of Christ. It was then that Satan was completely uprooted from the sympathies of heavenly beings. However, it is also applicable to the time when Satan was first cast out of heaven to earth back at the beginning of his rebellion.

The prophet Isaiah reveals the heart of Satan’s apostasy: “How are thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the



ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:12-14).

Lucifer, the most honored of all God’s angels, aspired to the throne of God. He sought to exalt himself above the Almighty One and receive the worship that rightfully belongs to the Lord by virtue of His authority as the Creator and Sustainer of all life. Through lies and false accusations against the character of God, he deceived a large number of angels. After he and his supporters were cast out of heaven, they took up their campaign on earth. Here they deceived our first parents, Adam and Eve, by telling them they could be equal with God if they would but break free from His restraint and disobey His will (see Genesis 3:1-5).

When Adam and Eve sinned, Satan proclaimed himself the prince of this world. It is recorded three times in the Gospel of John that Jesus referred to Satan as “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). But while Christ recognized the Devil’s claim to earthly dominion, He most certainly did not let it go unchallenged. Looking ahead to the triumph of the cross, Jesus announced that “the ruler of this world will be overthrown” (John 12:31, NEB). Once the victory of the cross was gained and Jesus was raised from the dead, He proclaimed, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18, NKJV). Christ is the rightful ruler of this world, and by His life of righteousness and His sacrifice of love, He demonstrated the superiority of the principles of God’s kingdom.

From the time that our first parents fell under Satan’s dominion, the instigator of evil has blamed God for all the chaos and pain that has filled the world as a result of sin. From time to time through the centuries leading up to the cross of Christ, Satan presented himself in heaven as the self-proclaimed lord of earth. He urged before the unfallen intelligentsia of the heavenly universe that God’s ways are unworthy of their allegiance, that the Lord rules on the basis of fear and bribery. His kingdom is selfish and too restraining, Satan charged. The Old Testament book of Job offers us these insights concerning the subtle warfare Satan has conducted against the God of heaven (see Job 1 and 2).

When Christ came to this world and was crucified, Satan fully manifested his true character. He revealed hatred, deceit and malicious intent against the Creator. His disguise was torn away. He was seen by all of heaven to be a murderer and a liar from the beginning. It was then, at Calvary, that every question was answered for

the angels. Christ’s love stood in broad and distinct contrast to Satan’s hate. The cross proved that God is love, and that He is worthy to receive the power and glory of the eternal kingdom. He has always reigned in the past. He continues to reign even now. And, though Satan has challenged His worthiness to reign into eternity, He will ultimately *come* into full possession of the kingdom. Every mouth will confess the rightful reign of God through Christ, and every knee will bow to Him.

With this background context we will now come into the throne room of the universe to ponder the vision of the sealed book.

The Sealed Book

“And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. 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. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne” (Revelation 5:1-7).

What are the contents of this sealed book?

We have a good clue in that no one in all of heaven and earth was found worthy to read it, except the Lion-Lamb, Jesus Christ. He alone has prevailed to open the book. How and when did He prevail to take authority over the book? In verse nine we are told that it is by virtue of the fact that He shed His blood at the cross: “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Revelation 5:9).

Because Jesus died for fallen man, He is the only one who can open and read the sealed book. Since it was for fallen sinners that He died, and since it is because He died for us that He can open and read the book, it follows that the contents of the book must have something to do with us. And it does, as we will see. To learn just what the sealed book is, we need to compare some Scriptures that will be helpful.

The Bible teaches that God records the tears, the

wanderings, the spiritual meditations—in short, the entire life history—of His children in His book:

“You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book?” (Psalm 56:8, NKJV).

“Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name” (Malachi 3:16, NKJV).

The Bible also teaches that all of mankind will be judged by the works of their lives as recorded in God’s book:

“A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened” (Daniel 7:10).

“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books” (Revelation 20:12-15, NKJV).

Notice in the following Scriptures that God has a book of life in which the names and characters of each of His people are recorded:

“Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book” (Exodus 32:32, 33).

“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).

“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).

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

“The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is” (Revelation 17:8).

“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).

“And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his

part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things, which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:19).

God has also recorded the woes and destruction that will come upon those who persist to spread wickedness and pain:

“Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. Then He spread it before me; and there was writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe” (Ezekiel 2:9, 10, NKJV).

Taking all these verses of Scripture into consideration, we can see that God keeps an accurate record of this world’s history, including each person’s name and the works and character that have made up each life. Eventually all will be judged by those things written in God’s books. Those who continue in rebellion will be judged by the deeds of their lives. Those who have confessed Christ will be judged by those things recorded in the book of life. Each one who continues in Christ will have his name retained forever in God’s book. Those who, having once trusted in Christ for salvation, have turned from Him to return to their life of sin will have their names blotted out of the book of life.

The reason Jesus is the only One worthy to open the book is because He is the only One who can, with perfect justice and mercy, judge the world and decide each person’s eternal destiny. By virtue of the fact that He became our brother, was tempted as we are, and shed His innocent blood for our sins, He has prevailed to investigate each person’s life and pass judgment. It is written of Him:

“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.... And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice.... I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me” (John 5:22, 27, 28, 30).

God the Father has appointed Jesus Christ as the ultimate Judge of every person. It is He who will pronounce the final verdict on each individual soul. You need not fear His judgment if you will obtain the services of the right lawyer. But don’t bother looking in *The Yellow Pages* for your attorney. Actually there is only one lawyer good enough to secure a verdict of acquittal for you—the Judge Himself. It seems a bit strange, pleasantly so, but it is true: Jesus, your Judge, is also your Advocate, if you will allow Him to stand in your defense. “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus