

“A Book with Seven Seals”
(Rev 5:1)



Truth Matters Church, Inc.

Contextual Overview



☞ In chapter 1:

☞ John gave testimony on how he received this vision:

☞ Revelation was from The Father → The Son → The Angel → John → 7 churches

☞ John described his encounter with the risen and glorified Son of Man and provided a description of how He looked and what He wore

☞ John was commanded to dictate and record this great vision and send 7 letters to the 7 churches all located in Ancient Minor (modern day Turkey)

☞ **In chapters 2-3:** Are the actual 7 letters to the angel over those 7 churches and those in it along with their assessment by the risen and glorified Son of Man

☞ **In chapter 4:** John was taken into heaven and gave testimony as to what he has seen and heard beginning with describing the One sitting on the throne, the power and majestic glory that comes out from the throne, and the perpetual and unending praise and worship led by the 4 Living Creatures and the 24 Elders

Contextual Overview



Which takes us to where we are in the text:

- ❧ **Chapter 5:** In this chapter John is still in heaven and turns his attention back to the One sitting on the throne and notices something in His right hand, a book with seven seals
 - ❧ Which leads us to the title of our study today, A Book with Seven Seals
- ❧ The goal for our study today is to find out what this vision means and what that book sealed with seven seals communicates
- ❧ We will see some common interpretations out there then of course compare it with Scripture to find out the most appropriate interpretation

- ❧ Without further ado, let's read our Scripture reading for today, all of ch. 5...

Scripture Reading



Revelation 5:1-10 (NASB)

1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. 4 Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; 5 and one of the elders *said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

Scripture Reading



7 And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they *sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

10 “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

Scripture Reading



11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying,

“To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”

14 And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

Exposit Rev 5:1



1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.

☞ Pretty straightforward to start, John saw in the right hand of the One sitting on the throne, a book sealed with 7 seals

☞ Again whose sitting on the throne?

☞ In His right hand was “a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals” [more on this]



“a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals”



- ❧ Lots of interpretations as to what that book is or what this vision means, here are some of them:
 - ❧ The title deed of the earth
 - ❧ Forfeited by Adam when he sinned
 - ❧ The title deed of man's inheritance
 - ❧ Reclaimed by Christ
 - ❧ The secret purposes of God about to be revealed
 - ❧ Symbolism to mean
 - ❧ God's covenant with mankind
 - ❧ God's promises and salvation
 - ❧ Israel's divorce certificate
 - ❧ God's judgments



“a book written inside and on the back,
sealed up with seven seals”



To find the interpretation, we'll continue to do what we've been practicing with the 7 letters to the 7 churches, we'll look to both:

- ✧ Historical backgrounds: seals
- ✧ Scripture: exposit our verse further
- ✧ Then we'll see where we land and what is the best interpretation
- ✧ Sound fair?



Historical Backgrounds: "seals"



- ✧ Since the Bible itself is a historical document, what better resource to start with than the Bible
- ✧ And since we're at the last book of the Bible, what better book to start with than the first book, and that is the book of Genesis
- ✧ The first and only mention of "seal" (chotham in Hebrew) was in Gen 38 in the account of the exchange between Judah and his widowed daughter in law Tamar and I'd like to go there for our first example

Historical Backgrounds: "seals"



Genesis 38:18-19 (at this time Judah had 3 sons - Er/Onan/Shelah; Tamar was Er's wife, but he died; when Er died Tamar was given to Onan, and he too died too, Judah told Tamar to wait until Shelah was of age, but Judah was afraid to give Tamar to Shelah thinking she was cursed. When time passed and Tamar realized this, she took matters into her own hands and dressed as a prostitute. Judah solicited her services not knowing it was her. We'll pick it up now v. 18 where after agreeing on price of a young goat they ironing out the details of that transaction in the form of a pledge)

18 He [Judah] said [to Tamar], "What pledge shall I give you?" And she said, "Your **seal (chotham)** and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him. 19 Then she arose and departed, and removed her veil and put on her widow's garments.

☞ From this most ancient text we can see that seal+cord+staff were significant articles that shows who you are and what family you are from

☞ The "seal" was often in the form of a signet ring with unique engravings

☞ These would be comparable to today's Driver's license and Passport

Historical Backgrounds: "seals"



- From Gen 38, we can see the significance of seal and its role in authenticating your identify and family
- "seal" (chotham) was used several other times in the OT, but the next example I'd like for us to look at is in 1Kings 21 when Jezebel used King Ahab's signet ring to authenticate a letter

Historical Backgrounds: "seals"



1 Kings 21:8-10 (King Ahab was depressed that he wasn't able to purchase a vineyard from a man named Naboth. When Jezebel learned of this she encouraged Ahab and told him that she'll take care of it. Her plan was to conspire a plot against Naboth and charge him with blasphemy invoking the death penalty. We'll pick it up now in v. 8)

8 So she [Ahab] wrote letters in Ahab's name and **sealed (chatham verb) them with his seal (chotham noun)**, and sent letters to the elders and to the nobles who were living with Naboth in his city. 9 Now she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast and seat Naboth at the head of the people; 10 and seat two worthless men before him, and let them testify against him, saying, 'You cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death."

- ✧ Jezebel's planned was carried out, Naboth was stoned to death, and Ahab got his vineyard
- ✧ But that's not the point, what I'd like for us to take from this account was how Ahab's authority and his seal are connected
- ✧ In other words, King Ahab's seal made that letter an official order and proclamation

Historical Backgrounds: "seals"



✧ This idea of a King's name + king's seal (signet ring) did not only apply to the divided kingdom of Israel, but this was also the case under Persian rule

✧ And for this next historical backgrounds example I'd like to cross reference:

Esther 8:8 (the context is a long one, long story short, a royal edict was issued back in ch. 3 orchestrated by a man Haman who despised Mordecai (Queen Esther's relative) and the Jews and conspired against them by convincing King Ahasuerus to sign into law the extermination of the Jews, thus, making it lawful to destroy them. By the time we get to ch. 8, Esther intervened and Haman was subsequently executed and his property given to Esther, however this did not negate the law enacted back in ch. 3. We'll pick it up now in v.8 when a counter law was signed) King Ahasuerus speaking:

8 Now you [Esther and Mordecai] write to the Jews as you see fit, **in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring**; for a decree which is written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's signet ring may not be revoked."

✧ Here king's seal of his name+signet ring is tied to his authority

✧ In the case of the Persians, a king's seal cannot be revoked. It is the final authority

✧ This would be comparable if the sitting President of the US signed a Bill into Law

Historical Backgrounds: "seals"



- ✧ And for this final historical backgrounds example into "seals" I'd like to cross reference Jeremiah where seal was associated with a legal deed:

Jeremiah 32:42-44 (NASB)

42 For thus says the LORD, 'Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them. 43 Fields will be bought in this land of which you say, "It is a desolation, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans." 44 **Men will buy fields for money, sign and seal (chatham verb) deeds**, and call in witnesses in the land of Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland and in the cities of the Negev; for I will restore their fortunes,' declares the LORD."

- ✧ From this passage, we can see that the purchase of a field would include the signing and sealing of a deed
- ✧ This would be comparable to an official and recorded Title Deed of a Property today

Historical Backgrounds: "seals"



- ❧ These OT examples I think are good enough to give us solid historical backgrounds concerning seals
- ❧ A seal is associated with a person's name and family
- ❧ A seal is associated with a king's name and authority
 - ❧ The issuing of a royal decree would be signed and sealed by the King
- ❧ In the case of property, a title or deed would be signed and sealed transferring legal rights of the ownership of that property to the new owner
- ❧ In all cases, from a historical backgrounds perspective, anything sealed would be official, ratified and legally binding and can only be opened by an authorized party

“a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals”



Let's exposit our verse further

- ✧ “book” is biblion which means a book or scroll
- ✧ Biblion is how we ended up with our English word “Bible” which is a collection of books or scrolls
- ✧ In the NT, biblion is only used to refer to these 2 things
 - ✧ **Holy Scripture**
 - ✧ Any of the 66 books or epistles
 - ✧ **Certificate of divorce**
 - ✧ The actual certificate used to legalize a Jewish divorce
 - ✧ Corroborates our historical backgrounds as to it being a legal and ratified doc



“a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals”



- ☞ I'd like to keep both NT usages in play for now
 - ☞ Holy Scripture
 - ☞ Certificate of Divorce
- ☞ To figure out the content in this book, I'd like for us to cross reference a similar vision in the OT that had a book or scroll with seals and that is in Ezekiel chapter 2...



Ezekiel 2



Ezekiel 2:1-10

1 Then He said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!” 2 As He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard Him speaking to me. 3 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. 4 I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’ 5 As for them, whether they listen or not – for they are a rebellious house – they will know that a prophet has been among them. 6 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. 7 But you shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious.

Ezekiel 2



8 “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.” 9 Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, **a scroll** was in it. 10 When He spread it out before me, it was **written on the front and back**, and **written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.**

☞ From here I'd like to put Rev 5:1 and Ezk 2:9-10 side by side and show some similarities

Side by Side Comparison



Rev 5	Ezk 2
<p>1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.</p>	<p>9 Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it. 10 When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back, and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.</p>

- ✎ In both visions a book/scroll had writing inside/front/back
- ✎ The difference is Ezk 2 gave us an extra detail of its contents “and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe”
- ✎ And if we were to take ROE #1 (Thou shalt interpret Scripture with Scripture), what can we deduce was written in scroll with 7 seals in Rev 5?

Side by Side Comparison



Rev 5	Ezk 2
<p>1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back [and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe], sealed up with seven seals.</p>	<p>9 Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it. 10 When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back, and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.</p>

- ☞ My next questions is does this flow in context and the rest of the text? Hell yes! Pardon my language, oh yes it does!
- ☞ When the 7 seals are broken one-by-one we're going to find it brings about lamentations, mourning, and woe! In fact, following the 7 seals, there will be 7 trumpets blown, and the 5th thru 7th trumpets are 3 woes pronounced by angels

“seven seals”



Let's continue to exposit our key verse. John says that book/scroll was sealed with “seven seals”:

- ❧ “seven” means 7 (1,2,3,4,5,6,7)
- ❧ Greek for “seals” is sphragis
- ❧ And the idea of sphragis is the same as what we learned from the OT use of chotham
- ❧ A seal is associated with a person's name, family, authority, transfer of ownership, or even divorce
- ❧ When a document is sealed, its contents are official, ratified and legally binding
- ❧ In the case here in Rev 5, who can we deduce wrote the contents in this book and sealed it with His Name + Authority?



“seven seals”



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- ❧ In the case here in Rev 5, who can we deduce wrote the contents in this book and sealed it with His Name + Authority? **GOD THE FATHER!**



“seven seals”



- ✧ Thus, whatever is written in this book sealed with 7 seals, is written from God the Father and the book was sealed with His Name and by His own authority
- ✧ Before we deduce what the Father wrote, I'd like for us to look a little further into sphragis (seal) to see what else we can learn from this word
- ✧ Since sphragis is only used 3 other times in the NT, I'd like for us to look at each of them
- ✧ Turns out that the apostle Paul is the only other NT author who used sphragis in his letters and I'd like for us to begin w/Paul's letter to the Romans



Romans 4



Romans 4:9-12 (Paul wanted to demonstrate that the blessing giving to Abraham was for both the circumcised and uncircumcised, he wrote)

9 Is this blessing [spoken by David in the Psalms; blessed is the man whose sin the LORD will not take into account] then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." 10 How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; 11 and he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal [sphragis] of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

Romans 4



✧ TRANSLATION: God legally ratified the blessing given to Abraham by giving him the sign of circumcision as "a seal [sphragis] of the righteousness of faith"

✧ TAKEAWAY: There is a correlation between sphragis and righteousness

1 Corinthians 9



In 1Cor 9, in Paul's defense of his apostleship, he makes mention of seal:

1 Corinthians 9:1-2

1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? 2 If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the **seal [sphragis]** of my apostleship in the Lord.

TRANSLATION: The proof of Paul's apostleship was the very fact that they received and believed the gospel preached by him. In other words, the believers themselves by virtue of their faith are proof that Paul's apostleship was legally by God in heaven.

TAKEAWAY: There is a correlation between sphragis and authenticity

We'll look at Paul's last mention of sphragis in his 2nd letter to Timothy...

2 Timothy 2



After instructing Timothy to be diligent to present himself as a workman approved by God, not being ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth, Paul tells him:

2 Timothy 2:16-19

6 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some. 19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this **seal [sphragis]**, “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.”

TRANSLATION: Believers have a seal [sphragis] because we belong to the Lord and the Lord knows who are His. In other words, believers our adoptions as sons and daughters have been ratified in the highest court in heaven, by GOD [the LORD YAHWEH] HIMSELF!

TAKEAWAY: There is a correlation between sphragis and our adoption

Paul's Uses of Sphragis



In these 3 passages, seal (sphragis) was associated with:

- ✧ Righteousness of faith
- ✧ Authentication of Paul's apostleship
- ✧ Our legal adoption as sons and daughters

Exposit Rev 5:1



Let's pull this all together...

Back to our key verse, when John says:
1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.

- ✧ There are several layers and several deductions to this
- ✧ I will attempt to summarize them
- ✧ Here is what this verse is communicating when we take Scripture with Scripture



Exposit Rev 5:1



When John says:

1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.

- ✧ By deduction God the Father was the One wrote the contents in that book/scroll
- ✧ By deduction after writing the contents God the Father then sealed them shut with the seal of His Name and authority – perhaps a signet ring
 - ✧ Did you know that God the Father wore jewelry? ☺
 - ✧ Precious stones (i.e. jasper, sardius, emerald - from ch.4) and here in chapter 5 perhaps a signet ring! ☺



Exposit Rev 5:1



There is more... when John says:

1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.

✧ By deduction because God the Father wrote and sealed them shut, and He is the Highest Authority, it is legally ratified in the HIGHEST COURT IN HEAVEN, it is legally binding, and absolutely irrevocable



Exposit Rev 5:1



As for its contents, when we considered Ezk 2, we can deduce what the nature of those contents were and allow me to fill that in for us again:

1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back [and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe], sealed up with seven seals.

- ☞ TRUTH: God the Father has determined His judgments in all 7 seals, proceeded by 7 trumpet judgments, proceeded by 7 bowl judgments
- ☞ A few questions on this...



Exposit Rev 5:1



- ❧ i. Who is the primary object of these judgments?
 - ❧ Hint: I made a summary statement when we wrapped up our Daniel series as the Bible being centered on a certain people and a certain geographic location
- ❧ ii. . Who is the secondary object of these judgments?
 - ❧ Hint: we just studied 7 of them and Jesus had grave warnings and admonitions to them ending with the Laodicea
- ❧ iii. Who else are also implicated by these judgments?
 - ❧ Hint: “those who dwell on the earth”



BIBILICAL INTERPRETATION



✧ The book sealed with seven seals are the Father's judgments beginning with the household of God then unbelievers!

✧ Is this not what Peter warned us:

1 Peter 4:14-19

14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. 17 **For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?** 18 AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? 19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

In Closing:

“a book written inside and on the back,
sealed up with seven seals”



Back to my earlier comment, there were

☞ Lots of interpretations as to what that book is or what this vision means, here they are again:

- ☞ The title deed of the earth
 - ☞ Forfeited by Adam when he sinned
- ☞ The title deed of man's inheritance
 - ☞ Reclaimed by Christ
- ☞ The secret purposes of God about to be revealed
- ☞ Symbolism to mean
 - ☞ God's covenant with mankind
 - ☞ God's promises and salvation
- ☞ Israel's divorce certificate
- ☞ God's judgments

WHICH OF THESE ARE TRUE?

In Closing:

“a book written inside and on the back,
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- ❧ The title deed of the earth
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Although these are truth implications, if we're being technical and staying true to our ROEs, I don't believe the book/scroll is a title deed of anything - Ezk 2 settled that in my mind that what is written in it were lamentations, mourning, and woe for that is precisely what happens when each seal was broken

In Closing:

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There is some truth to this. And I would agree with this teaching as long as those "secret purposes" are qualified in relation to God's judgments being disclosed

In Closing:

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I respectfully disagree for the text did not lend itself to say it is to be understood as “symbolic”. And we were able to compare with Ezekiel 2 among other Scripture to get a better understanding of this vision

NOTE: Later in Rev there will be symbolism (i.e. the dragon, the beast from the earth, a woman clothed with the sun, a red dragon, a male child, the great harlot, etc.), but even in these instances we need to take Scripture with Scripture to understand its literal meaning

In Closing:

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There is some truth to this. And I would agree with this to the extent that the book/scroll itself is NOT the actual divorce certificate, but God divorcing the unbelieving and unrepentant Israel is the result or the aftermath of those judgments. In view are those who did not heed the writer of Hebrews admonition and warning to be sure to enter God's rest - through faith

In Closing:

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AMEN! I believe this is the best and appropriate interpretation! It is supported when we took Scripture with Scripture! It is supported by the immediate and preceding context! We will find that the 7 seals are actual judgments administered to those on the earth beginning with the household of God and the unbelieving world. These judgments will come upon them like a thief! At a day and hour that they did not expect!

In Closing



- ✧ Now that we know what the book sealed with 7 seals is
- ✧ We'll pick it up in v. 2 for our next study when a strong angel proclaimed in a loud voice "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?"
- ✧ I think we all know Who was found worthy
- ✧ But we'll allow the drama to unfold as the attention will be turned away from the Father, but to the One who was found worthy
- ✧ He will be in the center spotlight from here on out
- ✧ Amen. Amen.