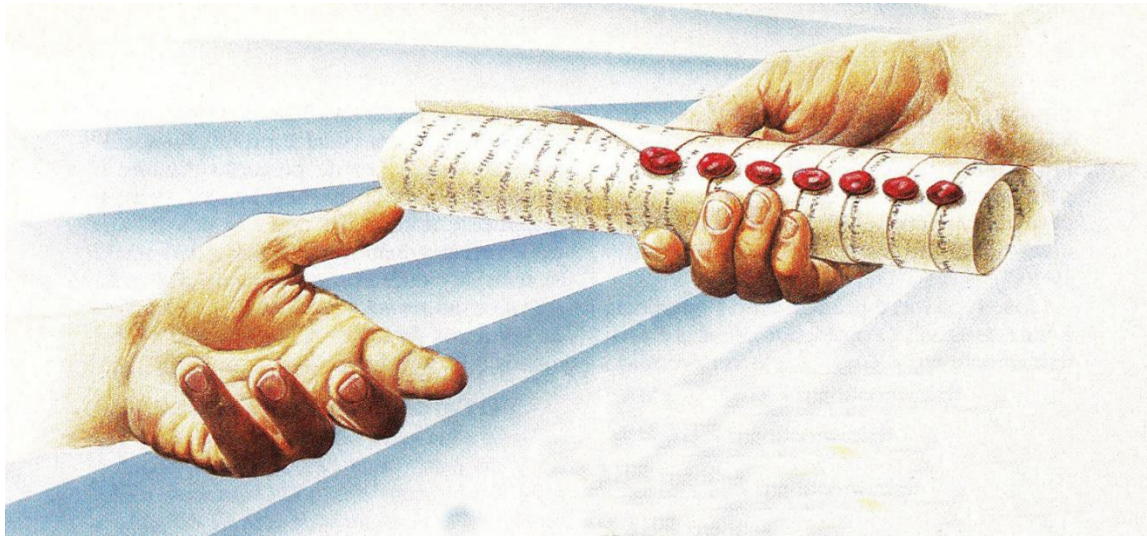




This chapter commences with a development of the vision before the eyes of John. *5 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.*

In ancient times, books were impractical to store, difficult to make, and generally unknown. Instead, apart from the common method of writing on clay tablets, important documents were carefully written on long rolled up scrolls made of animal skin or reed papyrus, furled around a wooden handle. These scrolls could be quite long even up to 30 feet. They were written on just the one side to preserve the writing. Very occasionally, on the back of the scroll, the scroll's contents may have been briefly scribbled down. The Dead Sea Scrolls which were discovered in Qumran in Israel in 1947, which contain much of the Old Testament, dating back to some 300 years before the birth of the Lord Jesus, do have a few scrolls which were written on both sides. But the only reason for this, was because those scrolls were reused. Normally scrolls were not written on both sides. This is an important point.

The leaders, priests and scribes that Ezekiel the prophet was sent to, some 600 years before the advent of the Lord Jesus, knew a bit about scrolls and documents. The second to last king of Judah, was given a scroll authored by God but written by the prophet Jeremiah, containing warnings and woe. The king did not like the contents, so he cut up the scroll into bits and threw it into the fire! God told Baruch the scribe to simply write another one.

Throwing scrolls on the fire does not prevent the purpose of God! Like the hearts and minds of the faithful, the purpose of God is *written in heaven* (Hebrews 12:23) and is unaffected by the will of man. To demonstrate this, the permanence of the purpose of God, was revealed to Ezekiel in vision. – He was shown a hand holding a scroll, and seeing it partly unfurled could see that it was written on both sides.

Ezekiel 2:9 -10: *And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.* Written on both sides. There are two sides to every story and especially two sides to HIS-story. God gave the nation – curses and blessings. He gives all mankind life and death. Condemnation or hope. Man only sees things in one dimension - from his viewpoint. Man is intrinsically selfish. But God sees all things. God revealed much to His people, but behind the scenes, there was much going on in the purpose of God, which He did not reveal – and could not be seen, but only by looking back did things become clear. – see John 14:29. This is then like two sides of the scroll. Ezekiel in vision was told to eat the scroll! He did so. The scroll was in his mouth sweet to the taste – the secret was revealed, the purpose of God laid out before him, but it filled his belly with bitterness (see Ezekiel 3) Sweet and bitter. Two sides of every story. It is no different with the experiences of all the saints.

The purpose of the Revelation of Jesus Christ was to show his servant things which were shortly to come to pass. (Revelation 1:1) Like the prophet Ezekiel, they would see events unfold before them, some good some bad, some experiences strengthening their faith, others severely testing their faith. Sweet and Bitter. Some events would be obvious fulfilments, others not easy to work out until they are able to look back and see.

It is only by looking at things through God's point of view that an accurate assessment can be made of where we are in God's purpose with man, and to see the truth about ourselves. Thus to the Hebrew mind at least – a scroll written on both sides, could only be by the finger of God. To those who are not the servants of God, the revelations of Jesus Christ are impossible to understand, the scroll not even unfurled, let alone see the back side of the scroll.

The scroll being tightly furled means the contents cannot be seen, they are locked away. John in his vision noticed the seal was sealed with **seven** seals. The scroll represented the unveiling, the revelation of the future purpose of God, of those things which were shortly to begin to come to pass. It was no good the scroll being sealed, what is the point of writing things out, if the words cannot be read? They are meant to be read of course.

So why was this scroll sealed up? Because up to this juncture the secrets of God would not have been appreciated. As we can read in Acts 17:26 *God has determined the times before appointed*, His purpose and Plan is known in its outpouring only to Him and in some aspects to Him alone (Matthew 24:36).

See Isaiah 48:6-7: ... *I have showed you new things from this time, even hidden things, and you did not know them. They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when you heard them not; lest you should say, Behold, I knew them.*

So it was, that when God revealed much to Daniel of the future empires which would invade Israel and wreak havoc and violence upon the world, He withheld further details and information, until the end of the Time of the Jewish Nation. He instructed Daniel in vision. *Daniel 12: 4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*

Thus, at the juncture of the Roman destruction and end of Jewish Times – its nationhood, its capital city, its law, its temple, the Scroll, was unsealed, the purpose of God further revealed with mankind – even the Times of the Gentiles. So we are informed in

Romans 16:25-26: Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

Key to this Revelation of God's purpose, and the giving of the Gospel to all nations, is the victory of Jesus Christ over sin. As the Apostle points out in the previous passage – it was the preaching of Jesus Christ – both by him, but particularly of him, that is the Good News – the sweet and bitter experience to all saints. Take Jesus out of the equation, and what is the scroll, what is the purpose of God, - there would be no one to read it let alone unfurl the scroll, there would be no one even existing to be part of God's purpose.

So in vision John had this point emphasised. No one worthy was found who would unfurl the scroll, and unlock the seven seals. No one was found who would be capable, to be used as the vehicle of God's Spirit, to ensure that the preordained order of events would take place exactly as God had determined, before the times appointed. John was rightly upset – why be shown such a scheme

existed, why be shown only part of the information, of what use is that? Not knowing – means ignorance, and ignorance means we have no part to play in the future purpose of God.

5 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.

It was Jesus – who was rooted in the Old Testament – actually before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20) who prevailed. He prevailed against his own temptations of his thoughts, he prevailed against his lusts, and against his flesh. He prevailed against the provocations and tormentors, he prevailed against sin, and through the Almighty prevailed against death. Jesus said I am the Way the Truth and the Life. Jesus has prevailed to unlock the little doorway – the strait and narrow path that leads to life everlasting. Rooted in David, the sure mercies of David, and rooted in the promises made to the Fathers, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the extraordinary Victor, the Royal heir, the Prince of Peace – through his Life, Death and Resurrection and ascension to the Father, that there can be a future for anyone – Life eternal. Through Jesus alone, is there a Future, and thus the scroll could be opened which revealed the Future to John, and all who believe in the preaching of Jesus. It is in this context that the passage in Colossians 1:16-18 should be understood.

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

So in vision John saw the scroll begin to be unlocked and the seals opened, the future unveiled...

Brother Terry