

82 THE TWO SCROLLS OF REVELATION

Introduction: It is generally believed that the 66 books of the Bible were sorted and chosen by a council of churchmen sometime in the 4th century. This elevates the judgment of errant man over God's Word and fosters uncertainty and doubt. In truth, scripture is self-authenticating and is the Word of God as soon as a prophet sets pen to parchment. In this brief study we will look at the nature of prophecy and seek to show the large scroll in the book of Revelation is the canon of scripture and the small scroll, the book of Revelation itself. Our guiding principle of interpretation is sola scriptura in which scripture interprets itself.

1. BACKGROUND: EZEKIEL'S SCROLLS

A. Ezekiel was told to "eat" a scroll/book, which became the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel's text was part of a larger book, the developing canon of scripture. "'Open your mouth, and eat that which I give you.' When I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it." Ezek 2:8-9

B. The eating of a scroll/book reminds us of Jesus' words in the Gospel of John. "Jesus therefore said to them, 'Most certainly I tell you, unless you eat [assimilate, possess] the flesh of the Son of Man [the Word] and drink his blood, you don't have life in yourselves.'" John 6:53

C. The book Yahweh presented to Ezekiel, was written on both sides. "He spread it before me. It was written within and without." Ezek 2:10

D. "Written on both sides" may be a way to represent it as a two-sided covenantal agreement. "Moses turned, and went down from the mountain, with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand; tablets that were written on both their sides. They were written on one side and on the other." Ex 32:15

2. BACKGROUND: DANIEL'S PROPHECIES AND SCROLL

A. The end of the Old Covenant would "seal up vision and prophet" i.e. would end the mission of the prophets. "Seventy weeks are decreed on your people and on your holy city, to finish disobedience, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint the most holy." Dan 9:24

B. The Jews themselves would destroy Jerusalem and the temple in a war, ending the Old Covenant. "The people [Jews] of the prince [Jesus] who comes will destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end will be with a flood, and war will be even to the end." Dan 9:26 (See PP #37, #54, and #76 for the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple)

C. Daniel sealed his book of prophecy until the time of the end of the Old Covenant. "Shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end. Many will run back and forth [disciples spreading the gospel], and knowledge [of the Lord] will be increased." Dan 12:4 (See PP #5 "The Christian Age Has No End")

3. PROPHETS SPOKE FOR GOD. ALL SCRIPTURE IS PROPHECY AND SELF-AUTHENTICATING.

A. Peter referred to all of scripture as prophecy. Prophecy was the work of the Holy Spirit in the mind of the prophets. "We have the more sure word of prophecy.... For no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke, being moved by the Holy Spirit." 2 Pt 1:19-21. (See also Rom 16:26, Lk 24:25-27)

B. The words John wrote were the inspired Word of God the moment he wrote them. "This is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His servants the things which must happen soon, which He sent and made known by His angel to His servant, John, who testified to God's word and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, about everything that he saw." Rev 1:1-2

C. Prophecy, oral and written, was finished with the sound of the 7th trumpet (AD 70). "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He declared to his servants the prophets." Rev 10:7

4. THE WHOLE CANON OF SCRIPTURE IS ABOUT JESUS.

A. The angel said, "Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy." Rev 19:10

B. Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and these are they which testify about me." Jn 5:39

5. THE LARGE BOOK/SCROLL IN REVELATION IS THE DEVELOPING SCRIPTURE CANON. (scroll=bibliou #975)

A. John saw Yahweh holding the sealed book/scroll on his outstretched hand. "I saw, in the right hand of him who sat on the throne, a book written inside and outside, sealed shut with seven seals." Rev 5:1

B. The scroll/book could not be opened except by Jesus Christ. "One of the elders said to me, "Don't weep. Behold, the Lion who is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome: He who opens the book and its seven seals. I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain.... He came, and He took it [the scroll] out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne." Rev 5:5-7.

C. Because of His redeeming work, only Jesus was worthy to execute the prophesied judgment. “You are worthy to take the book and to open its seals, for you were killed, and bought us for God with your blood out of every tribe, language, people, and nation.” Rev 5:9

D. Jesus came to fulfill scripture/prophecy. “Don’t think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I didn’t come to destroy, but to fulfill.” Mt 5:17

6. ISRAEL’S HARDNESS OF HEART CALLED FOR NATIONAL JUDGMENT.

In Leviticus, Moses warned Israel of the seven-fold judgment they would suffer with disobedience. “If... you won’t be reformed to me, but will walk contrary to me; then I will also walk contrary to you; and I will strike you, even I, seven times for your sins. I will bring a sword upon you, that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; and you will be gathered together within your cities: and I will send the pestilence among you; and you will be delivered into the hand of the enemy.... and you shall eat, and not be satisfied.” Lev 26:23-26 (See all of Lev 26 and Dt 32)

7. THE LITTLE SCROLL/BOOK IS THE BOOK OF REVELATION. (little scroll=biblaridion #974)

Like Ezekiel, John was told to eat the little scroll/book, the contents of Revelation.

“I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it. It was as sweet as honey in my mouth. When I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. They told me, ‘You must prophesy again...’” Rev. 10:10-11

8. THE SCROLL/BOOK BELIEVERS WERE KEEPING, WAS THE DEVELOPING CANON (#975), NOT THE LITTLE BOOK (#974) THAT JOHN WAS CURRENTLY WRITING INTO THE CANON.

Those keeping the words of “this book” (scroll/book=#975) were believers seeking to keep the whole of scripture.

“Now I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. When I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who had shown me these things. He said to me, ‘You must not do that! I am a fellow bondservant with you and with your brothers, the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book [975]. Worship God.” Rev 22:8-9

9. JOHN WROTE ABOUT BRINGING THE CANON (#975) OF SCRIPTURE TO A CLOSE.

A. “He said to me, ‘These words are faithful and true. The Lord God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel to show to his bondservants the things which must happen soon. Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book [975].’” Rev 22:6-7

B. “He said to me, ‘Don’t seal up the words of the prophecy of this book [975], for the time is at hand.’” Rev 22:10 Note: The book would be sealed (completed) when the last trumpet sounded and prophecy (including oral prophecy) was entirely finished AD 70. Rev 10:7

C. “In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as he declared to his servants the prophets.” Rev 10:7

10. DIRE WARNING REGARDING THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

Do not add to or subtract books from scripture: “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book [975]: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book. If anyone takes away from the words of the book [975] of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.” Rev 22:18-19

CLOSING THOUGHTS: It’s difficult to ignore the power and insistence of Jesus’ words in Revelation 22, when read in their first century context:

Rev. 22:7 “Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

Rev. 22:10 “He said to me, “Don’t seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.”

Rev. 22:12 “Behold, I come quickly. My reward is with me, to repay to each man according to his work.”

Rev. 22:20 “He who testifies these things says, ‘Yes, I come quickly.’ ‘Amen! Yes, come, Lord Jesus.’”

We need to submit ourselves to the Word of God, even when it contradicts our most ardently held beliefs.

NOTES:

Prophecy definition: 1. Inspired writing or utterance of the divine will. All scripture is prophecy. 2. A prediction of the future, made under divine inspiration.

Writing of Revelation: Around AD 65. See P.P.# 14

The destruction of Jerusalem by the “people of the prince”: see P.P. #54, #37, #76

Reference: “The Canon of Scripture” by Phillip Kayser (P. Kayser is a partial preterist)

Reference: “The Wars of the Jews” by Josephus