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Do the Seals on the Scroll in the Book of Revelation Express the Day of the Lord's Wrath? – Ep. 13

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Transcription results:

[music] It's time for the Biblical Prophecy Program, with your host Alan Kurschner of Eschatos Ministries. [music]

Do the seals on the scrolls in the Book of Revelation, express the day of the Lord's wrath? Before we get into this topic, and we have a lot to cover today, so I'm going to go relatively quickly. So it's going to be a mega show today. First of all, I'm going to make a quick announcement, not this weekend, but the following weekend. November 22nd 2014, there is a New Jersey Bible Prophecy Seminar. So one day seminar on a Saturday, so if you live on the East Coast, be sure to register for it. And it's going to be a really good seminar, especially for people who have never been to one of these seminars. Again, it's a Bible Prophecy Seminar and emphasis on - Bible, because we are going to be looking at key prophecy text that are related to the second coming of Christ. Again, that's November 22nd 2014 in New Jersey and the city is Parsippany, New Jersey, and it's actually right off of Interstate 80.

Okay, do the seals on the scroll in the book of Revelation, express the day of the Lord's wrath? Wow, this is a very important question because it's one of the most common objections that Pretribulationists have against the Prewrath position. Because they interpret the seven seals as God's Eschatological Wrath, which of course part of the seals being the day of the Lord's wrath. And given this premise, they presupposing that the rapture must have happened before the seals take place, even though no where in revelation that you have that. One of their most commonly cited arguments - it's not the only one, but it is the most commonly cited argument I hear all the time - and that is that the seals on the scroll are God's wrath because Jesus himself opens them, he opens the seals. In their mind, that means, that necessitates or requires that this must be day of the Lord's wrath. The problem with that-- well, problems with that is actually on a close examination of the nature and the function of the seals themselves, there is no support for that interpretation that the seals are part of the Eschatological day of the Lord's wrath, as I'm going to explain later. Now, Prewrath sees the seven seals as conditions of events that must be met before the scroll is opened, unleashing it's contents of the trumpets in both judgments. We see that the scroll represents the title deed of earth - Jesus. We're told in Book of Revelation that he's the only one that's worthy to open the scroll, to break the seals on the scroll and open them. And when Jesus does break all seven seals, that's when we know that the contents of the scroll are unleashed, which of course is the wrath of God. Incidentally in my book, I have a photo of a rare scroll that was discovered. It was a fourth century scroll. Actually, when they discovered it, it had all seven seals intact on the scroll and I have two photographs. Actually, I received permission and I had to pay a little pretty petty as well, to get permission to publish them in my book from a Jerusalem museum. But you can see the original, it's not the moment they discovered the scroll, but it was... you have a picture of the seven seals on one page and the scroll itself. Of course, they opened it up because they wanted to see the contents of it. And you can see a photograph, the actual photograph of that. That is in my book, *Anti-Christ Before the Day of the Lord: What Every Christian Needs to Know about the Return of Christ*.

The first four seals, they express natural events. These are going to be natural events. And when you

read the seals - particularly the first four seals and as well, the fifth seal - you see there's a contrast between these natural events. And if you read that, you juxtapose it to the trumpet judgements or the bowl judgements, which are obviously, they're supernatural wrath of God. So there's a contrast between that. The first four seals, you have the conquering wars, famine, and death, right? Nothing new there, right? The church has experienced these events throughout its existence. However, I do believe that these specific events - these seals' events - they're likely going to be in the future and will be on a large scale, very intense scale, I believe. During this time, this is going to be refining period for the church. Refining time for individuals, for believers to refine their faith. I believe - and I've written this, you can read that in my book - I argued that the first three seals corresponds with the beginning of the birth pains, that Jesus mentions in Mathew 24. Which actually, Jesus explicitly says it's before the end. That is, at the end and you have none other than the wrath of God. So the seals are going to be very difficult times for the church and the world at large, by the way. But I believe that scripture teaches us, it's going to happen before the Antichrist revelation at the midpoint, or the Antichrist revelation will be at the midpoint. And these events will happen before the midpoint, probably during the first half the seven year period. And during that first half, I believe the Antichrist will be in a position - most likely - as a world military leader. So that when he is revealed at the midpoint, he will be in a position to dominate the world. And as far as the fourth and the fifth seals, I see that expressing the Antichrist Great Tribulation during his revelation. And again, like I said, all that argumentation is laid out in the book.

So getting back to this Pretribulational argument. Sometimes, I feel like American Pretribulationists have lived in America too long. The reason I say that, is because I just get an impression, a vibe, from many Pretribulationists that-- in fact, I just heard this last week in so many words, "Why would God bring tribulation to Christians?" It was in objection to the Prewrath position. And I'm just flabbergasted. I'm just like, "Wow. What kind of bubble are you living in? Don't you know your Church history? Have you ever picked up a newspaper lately and seeing what's going on in the Middle East, and Christians being martyred and their heads being cut off, dying for their faith? Have you heard of voice for the martyrs? I'm just like-- I just get the sense that a lot of American Pretribulationists, they have this [?] and ignorant notion that God would not allow his people to suffer for his purposes. As if the church in America is as if we don't deserve judgement, right? As if we don't deserve-- we are, let's face it. Yes, there's different aspects of Christians in America, obviously you have the seven churches that represent different types of Christian and Christian churches. But for all practical purposes, the church in America is complacent, distracted. And of course, many are just simply dead - dead churches. So anyway, just moving on. Again, we have a lot to cover but I think that's important to note. It's just been my impression with a lot of American Pretribulationists, that this idea - this escapist idea - that God would not bring tribulation to Christians in America. When we look at God's historical judgements, that he's had obviously-- historical judgements, say for example against the wicked. Well, guess what? There were righteous people who were affected by God's judgements. Remember Daniel? For example Daniel, when God judged Israel with the Babylonian captivity. Well, guess what? If there were righteous people who were exiled along with the wicked Israelites, and Daniel and some of his righteous contemporary Jewish friends were exiled. They were affected by God's judgement. They experienced the effects of - the ramifications - of God's judgement against Judah, being exiled. They were not immune from the effects of God's judgement, even though they were righteous.

Even today, when believers-- let's say in America here. When believers today - or not just America but other nations as well - feel the consequences of rampant wickedness in her culture. Guess what? We have no choice but we're affected by it. We feel the effects of such Godlessness in our culture, in various aspects and it's getting worse, right? We're loosing our freedom. That's an effect, and I believe God is lifting His gracious hand of restraint from this country. As He lifts His hand, it's a judgement. It's a judgement. As He is lifting His hand of restraint away from America, because we know we don't seek God as a nation. The righteous remnant in America are also affected by this. And especially for the nominal church, I mean God's-- God's judgement purposes against the church. Guess what? It's a good thing. It's not a bad thing for God to judge his people. In judging in the sense of redeeming, not a

retributive judgement. But a judgment to redeem, to refine the faith, especially before Christ returns. Sometimes I think 1st Peter 4:17 is not found in Pretribulation Bibles. Let me read that, it says, "For it is time for judgement to begin at the household of God." Let me repeat that again, "It is time for judgement to begin at the household of God. And if it begins with us, what would be the outcome for those who do not obey the Gospel of God?" So those who think that, God will never judge or bring tribulation or other trials in the lives of the church or believers, is just a-- have you read your Bible today [laughter]? No, it's God has His all wise purposes. So I see the first four seals, especially the fourth seal, will purify the remnants' faith. Blessings of freedom and comfort can easily breed complacency and external religiosity. And this is something that Israel, we know Israel frequently testified on this score in The Old Testament. And what did God do? Consequently He brought these comparable type of judgements upon Jerusalem. In fact in Ezekiel 14:21, it says, "For this is what the Sovereign Lord says, 'How much worse will it be when I send my four terrible judgements - sword, famine, wild animals and plague - to Jerusalem, to kill both people and animals.'" So that's Ezekiel 14 21 and you can cross reference Leviticus 26:18-29, Deuteronomy 32:23-27. You have to understand though, these judgements, they had-- there's an aim to purify his people from the rebellious condition, and to bring them to repentance. Look at Ezekiel 14:22-23, it talks about the aim of bringing them to repentance. To be sure - and I don't want to be misunderstood here - Christians, we are not under the condemnation of God. This is not retributive, punitive type of punishment judgement. We're believers, and on that basis - because we've been redeemed by the blood of Jesus - we are not under condemnation. We've been forgiven, justified. But this does not mean that God will not test and refine the church with suffering, as he has done in the past. We can't be imbalanced here. We have to proclaim and embrace the full counsel of God's word.

So it's God's prerogative. It's His prerogative. And it's His loving purpose to purify his people before His return. If you don't believe me, then look at 1st Thessalonians 3:13, 5:23, 1st Corinthians 1:8, Philippians 1:10, Ephesians 5:27 - all of those passages show that God seeks to purify His people before His return. So this is not going to be a time, believers to fear. But it's going to be a time to faithfully stand firm for the occasion to bring glory to God in suffering and overcoming, no matter what the cost. And please when you have the chance, please read 1st Peter 4:12-19, that really brings that point out. So when Pretribs claim that the first four horseman seals express the day of the Lord's wrath, it begs the question - the burden of proof is on the Pretriber to show - number one, that the church is not on Earth at that time. And number two, the seals are on the day of the Lord's wrath. They can't demonstrate either of those two. The Biblical data just does not support what they wanted us to support. Another relevant example, before moving on, is I believe that the first seal - it depicts this enigmatic concrete writer, and I believe it's the Antichrist. In fact,

I'm not going to argue for that here. But in my book Antichrist Before The Day of the Lord, one of my longest in-notes in the book

argues that. I think I give good reasons to show that the first seal, this writer represents/symbolizes the Antichrist figure. And in 2nd Thessalonians 2, it's kind of interesting, Paul says that God's hand of restraint - when the Antichrist is revealed, just before he's revealed - God's hand of restraint is upon Satan to possess a certain figure. And I believe that the agent of this restraint is Michael the archangel - that's another show we can do on that - but that this restrainer will cease the restraining ministry. And then we're told that when the ceasing of the ministry happens, the Antichrist will be revealed and this will begin the campaign of terror against the church and against Israel, particularly a remnant of Israel.

So I want to also respond to the Pretrib claim that the fourth seal - this is something I hear often - the fourth seal depicts 1/4 of the world dying, being killed. And Pretribs conclude, "Well, if 1/4 of the world dies, that has to be God's wrath." The problem here is that they're not actually reading the text accurately. In fact, they're reading into the text. If you read the text, it says-- it needs to back up here. The text - the fourth seal text, that is, in Revelations 6 - shows a perspective from the world at large and shifts to a more limited scope, this 1/4. And the final course, this fourth course, is hell green symbolizing death personified by the final writer, "With Hades following him." It says. It says authority

was given to these two types of personified malevolent forces, by God's permission, to kill by various means: sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts on the Earth. But it says that the authority's limited to over a fourth of the earth. It doesn't say that they're killed. It says that there's this fear that they're given over a fourth. The term to kill, actually it indicates intention. It doesn't mean that this intention is accomplished as the Pretribulationists assumes. You cannot assume that. You can't assume that 1/4 is killed. In fact, it's interesting that-- actually, in the Book of Revelation when it actually states, "When such a massive number of people are actually killed." You find that in Revelation 9:18. It reads, "A third of humanity was killed by these three plagues." And then it says, "That is by fire, smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths." In that text, it actually states, "They die. They killed." Whereas in the fourth seal, it says that they were given authority over a fourth. So the Pretrib, they're definitely reading too much into that text. And of course, to try to fit their theology. So really the question is, whether the 1/4 of the Earth is a geographic or demographic - we don't actually know for sure. The fourth seal is not actually clear on that point. And I give a couple of suggestions in by book on that. Let's move on to the fifth seal. Notice, I'm actually engaging the biblical data [chuckles]. This is probably a good thing to do. Pretribulationists, they make just these sweeping claims, "Well, the seven seals--" And they'll try to make a couple surface level points, but they don't actually engage in the text. And there's one seal they completely ignore, almost virtually all the time - and that's the fifth seal. And there's a reason why they ignore it, because the fifth seal completely contradicts their whole claim that the seals are God's wrath, because the fifth seal definitely shows that it is not God's wrath. And it's very problematic when they insist that the seals are God's wrath, because it actually makes God out to be a liar. Their interpretation makes God out to be a liar. What I mean by that? Well, the fifth seal depicts the objects of the seal, and the content of the seal are martyrs. Well, guess who martyrs are? It's not the wicked. All right, we only have one other choice here [chuckles]. Yes, that's right. Righteous people die for the faith in Christ.

In Pretribs, when they take this stance, make God ought to be a liar because 1st Thessalonians 5:9, is a promise that believers are exempted from the day of the Lord's wrath. If they're exempted from the day of the Lord's wrath and we have the fifth seal as martyrs dying, then this seal cannot be God's wrath because God doesn't break His promises. It contradicts their claim that the seals are God's wrath. And again, the seal, it explicitly reveals that it's directed against believers. And it's interesting here, because they stress that, "Well, it's Jesus Himself who is opening up the seals." Well, guess what? Jesus Himself opens up the fifth seal. You never hear them say that, by the way. And again, there's a reason why - because they know it's problematic. If Jesus opens up the fifth seal himself, is he executing wrath against His own people? Of course not. What this means - this whole idea of Jesus himself opening up the seals - what this is means is not because the nature of the seals are God's wrath, but what it conveys is that Jesus - the Son - is in control. He's almighty, He's sovereign. And it conveys His sovereignty over these events, as they progress toward His Kingdom goal. And what is the accomplishment of the fifth seal? What it says in Revelations 6:11, it says, "They were given each a white robe and told to rest a little bit longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete. Who were to be killed as they themselves had been?" I challenge you to read this narrative, by the way, because the saints are crying out to God, "God, when are you going to execute your wrath?" To vindicate himself in His holiness. They're crying out to God saying that. So it's the martyrs themselves who recognize that. Their plight of martyrdom is not the result of God's wrath - no. In fact, they're crying out to God asking when will His wrath. It's confirmed, by the way, by Revelations 6:11, "The heavenly answer is said wait a little bit while." Which of course indicates that it hasn't happened yet, but the wrath of God will be coming soon. These believers, they have not have been killed by the day of the Lord's wrath, because again it has not started yet. Instead, it's a result of Antichrist Great Tribulation, and it explicitly states that the result of their being killed is due to not God's - day of the Lord's wrath - but because of the Word of God and because of the testimony they had given. Think about, that's the reason that's given why they're martyrs. It makes no sense to say, "Oh, they died because of the testimony. They were being faithful to Jesus, that's why Jesus put them to death because of His judgement against them." I'm sorry, but wow. As far as I'm concerned, that is blasphemy. The fifth seal cannot be construed as the day of the Lord's wrath. Now again, I just want to qualify myself. Revelation: The fifth seal, indicates that God sovereignly-- obviously, Jesus/ God, they

sovereignly are ordaining a certain number of martyrs. It explicitly says that. There is a certain number of martyrs that will happen. So they are in control. But of course, the secondary means of how they die is not because of the day of the Lord's wrath, but because of evil men - i.e. The Antichrist. Just wanted to stress that point.

Let's see here. One point I wanted to mention was in Revelations 6:10. Revelations 6:10, the martyrs themselves, they're crying out to God and they're saying, "How long Sovereign Master, holy and true, before you judge those who live on the Earth and avenge your blood?" I alluded to that earlier. And again, they themselves are not recognizing that. Their plight is because of the day of the Lord's wrath. They're given white robes and they're told to wait a little bit longer. Because of course with the white robes, they symbolize the hope of the resurrection and the promise of the soon-coming wrath. Obviously, there are responses from Pretribulationists with some of these points. And one I've heard quite often is-- it's really disheartening, actually, to hear this. One response is that they'll say that the reference to saints in the fifth seal are not part of the Church, therefore God can mete out His wrath on them. I'm sorry, but that is such a desperate attempt to defend Pretribulationism. It's absurd, it begs the question. Think about it: the PreTrib is so enslaved to the tradition, that they're willing to defend their system to actually claim that God will mete out his retributive Eschatological wrath against his own redeemed people. Not to mention that it falsely creates a new class of Christians apart from the Church. When Paul says in 1st Thessalonians 5:9 that we are not destined or believers are not destined to wrath - is because it's based on the work of Christ where believers who are redeemed by Christ are not condemned. It's just simply a desperate, and again in itself, blasphemous position for Pretribs to take and say, "Well, they're not the church, so that's okay if God metes out judgement or wrath against this martyrs." It just shows a vacuous nature of how Pretribs can't have the church in the Great Tribulation.

Let's move on to the sixth seal. If there is any seal that shows that the wrath of God has not begun, it is this one. Even though the sixth seal is this celestial event that signals to the world of God's impending judgement. You have the reaction from the wicked. And what are the wicked doing? They're fleeing. They're fleeing from the wrath, because they know what is coming. The wicked interpret this not as some freakish event, but it's divine. It's divine. In fact, it says, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of the one who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." This is not the first time that this celestial disturbance is mentioned in the Bible, other Eschatological passages depict this. Let me just quickly go through a few of these. One of the most important is Joel 2:30-31. It reads, "I will produce portents both in the sky and on the earth. Blood, fire, columns of smoke. The sunlight will be turned to darkness, and the moon to the color of blood before the day of the Lord comes, that great and terrible day." Notice, this is before the day of the Lord. Not during or after, but before. This cluster of celestial disturbances of the sixth seal, they function to signal the impending day of the Lord's wrath. The sixth seal is saying, "No, the wrath of God has not come." The condition for the wrath is the celestial cluster of disturbances that will signal. And we're going to see in the seventh seal, the seventh seal will actually pronounce the wrath of God. But another quick passage is found in Luke's account of this event - of the sixth seal event - highlights that there's going to be two polar responses. For Unbelievers, it's going to be a time of distress, anxious, fainting from fear, and from the expectation of what is coming on the world. And for Believers, we are told to stand up and raise your heads, because it says, "Your redemption is drawing near." You can read that in Luke 21:25-28. And then Matthew has account of the Olivet Discourse. Matthew highlights that the celestial event announces the day of the Lord's wrath, which will happen immediately after The Great Tribulation. In Matthew 24:29, it says, "Immediately after the suffering - i.e. Tribulation - of those days, " This referring back to The Great Tribulation, "the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken." And then you can continue to read that in Matthew 24:30-31. So the Antichrist Great Tribulation will happen, it's going to happen before the day of the Lord's wrath. The object of Antichrist persecution will be against God's people. The object of the Lord's wrath will be against the wicked, during the day of the Lord's wrath. So when the Son of Man pierces through the darkness and arrives on the clouds, He's going to wrath for God's people, which cuts short

the Antichrist persecution of them, and then that's when the Lord will unleash his wrath upon the world.

The seven seal. Before the seventh seal is opened - which will then open, of course, the scroll - there is a significant event that happens. Now recall the first six seals: we had the first seal opened, the second seal opened, the third seal, the fourth seal is opened, the fifth seal is opened, the sixth seal is opened. And then just before the seventh seal is opened - you have first six seals are opened without interruption - but before the seventh seal is opened, there's a pause in the narrative with two groups of people being delivered. There's a group of 144,000 Jews who are on earth and they're sealed and protected, and then there is a great multitude that cannot be numbered, it says in heaven. You can see Revelation 7. And why are they being delivered at this point? Well it makes sense. It makes sense that it happens at this point, because the seventh seal is about to be opened which is going to unleash the day of Lord's wrath, through the trumpet and bowl judgements. By the way it's note-worthy that the depiction of the great multitude in Heaven, they possess resurrected bodies. Which of course implies that they've just been raptured, since it says that they "Have come out of The Great Tribulation." Revelation 7:14, and this is consistent with what Jesus is teaching where he says that the elect are gathered out of The Great Tribulation. In Mathew 24:29-31, let me read this again here. It says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, The Great Tribulation." And in verse 31, it says "And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet of blast, and they will gather His elect from the four winds from one end of Heaven to the other." So this is consistent. The Book of Revelation is consistent with Mathew 24, which of course it should be. Because Mathew 24, 25, the Olivet Discourse is a teaching of Jesus. And the Book of Revelation is revelation from Jesus. So we shouldn't be surprise that these sequence of events line up perfectly. So finally, the account of the actual opening of the seventh seal, it depicts the-- go to Revelation 8 and start reading, you'll see the pronouncement of the the day of the Lord's wrath. There's silence in Heaven just before it happens. And then it introduces the trumpet, and then eventually the bowl of judgements. Just for the sake of time, I am going to read the introduction, the beginning of Revelation 8, which actually I called an overture to the trumpets and bowl of judgements. So in Revelation 8:1-6, it reads, "Now when the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there is silence in Heaven for about half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God and seven trumpets were given to them. Another angel, holding the golden censer came and was stationed at the altar. A large amount of incense was given to him to offer up with the prayers of all the saints, and on the golden altar that is before the throne. The smoke coming out from the incense along with the prayers of saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the Earth, and there were crashes of thunder roaring, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. Now, the seven angles holding the seven trumpets prepared to blow them." So that's the overture of the day of the Lord's wrath.

Now we have the day of the Lord's wrath being pronounced. And you can read the trumpet narratives in Revelation 8 and 9, and the bowl judgements in Chapters 15 and 16. Bringing these all together, I like to put in these terms as far as these latter seals - the fifth through the seventh seal. I say that the fifth seal, there's a progression here. Progression, and that is the fifth seal promises wrath. The sixth seal, portends wrath, and entered in Revelation 7, protects from wrath. And the seventh seal, pronounces wrath. So there's a beautiful progression here culminating, of course, in the day of the Lord's wrath. So the fact that Jesus opens himself, opens the seals, that does not mean that the seals contain God's wrath. It means that He is sovereignly orchestrating Eschatological history for the ungodly and the godly. Let's be thankful that it's not Satan opening up the seals, [chuckles] because that would mean that he's worthy to open them up. But because Jesus Himself is opening up the seals, that should give us comfort because it conveys to us - He is control, He is the almighty, He is sovereign over history and Eschatological history. Not just sovereign over the ungodly, but the godly, over all. And of course, over Satan himself. So the seals - the seven seals - they function as conditions that have to be met first before the scroll is opened containing God's wrath, and the trumpet and the bowl of judgements.

I hope this helps. I know I've gone kind of quickly here, but maybe you can go back and listen to it again and absorb it a little bit more than a first reading or a first listening to. Listen, we are not going to

escape from these events or the events before the seventh seal is opened. Let me put it more accurately. In his infinite wisdom, God has ordained that the last generation of the church will experience the seals, or at least the first six seals because the seventh seal is the wrath of God. And the overarching question - please listen to this - the overarching question in the Book of Revelation is not - are you going to be an escaper? But are you going to be an over-comer? When the Antichrist arrives - which may very well be in our generation, we don't know, but we should live as if it could happen in our generation - will you overcome the Antichrist by being faithful to Christ, and not capitulate to him by worshiping through taking his mark. When the Antichrist arrives, it's going to be too late, it's going to be too late to spiritually prepare, that is. Today is the day to prepare, and I want to leave you with Jesus's ominous warning. In Matthew 24:25, Jesus says, "Remember, I have told you ahead of time."
[music]