

Sabbath School Today
With the 1888 Message Dynamic

The Book of Revelation
Lesson 5: The Seven Seals

According to *The Great Controversy*, [1] the seven seals are historicist, virtually what we as a people have held to for 160 years. The new light we so desperately need is not computer-fed time calculations but the message of Christ's righteousness that will enable us to develop a Christlike character. The true motivation needed is not that which is inspired by sensational new time-frames, but by a deeper appreciation of what it cost the Son of God to redeem us by His cross and His sanctuary ministry. This is what complements the Adventist view of the prophecies and makes them relevant and inspiring.

The seven seals are one of these "great lines of prophecy" [2] which is historically parallel to the seven churches and the seven trumpets. The seals are a revelation of Christ via heavenly messengers from the time of the apostles to the second coming of Jesus.

Christ is telling us through the seals that the pristine gospel of the early church would be a tremendous blessing in the lives of those who received it and the gospel would be rejected over the course of time by even so-called Christianity, resulting in terrible woes and persecution for those who proclaimed it. It would take these long twenty centuries to recover the apostolic gospel and exceed with clarity its proclamation to the world. Just how this would be accomplished is an unveiling of Jesus Christ beginning in 1844 and its further unfolding in the 1888 message.

The "four living creatures" have an appreciation for what it cost the Son of God to lay down His life for the inhabitants of the earth. They love Him so much that they rivet John's attention (Rev. 6:1) on the commission of "God's angel messengers to earth, bringing people to repentance, life and victory; protecting the righteous and keeping under restraint the wicked." [3]

The early Christian church under the leadership of Jesus' apostles were moved with divine love to proclaim Christ crucified and risen from the dead. The "white horse" is that Ephesian era of the church before it had lost its first love (Rev. 2:4).

There follows in time the fiery red horse depicting the gospel meeting with violence and bloodshed. And, then, the famine conditions of the "black horse" during the dark ages (1260 years), when it was as difficult to find the purity of the gospel as when economic times are so bad it takes a day's wage to purchase a little bit of wheat and barley (Rev. 6:5, 6). The pale horse means death and destruction for the faithful martyrs.

The fifth seal finds the blood of the martyrs crying out for divine justice. Now follow earthquakes and celestial fireworks in the sixth seal drawing attention to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Writes Ellen White, “Especially should Daniel and the Revelation have attention as never before in the history of our work. ... When we as a people understand what this book [Revelation] means to us, there will be seen among us a *great revival*.” [4]

Here is our latter rain and loud cry which prepares a people, finally in earth’s long sordid history, to a clearer understanding of the gospel in order to proclaim it to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

The third angels’ message has been proclaimed in the four corners of the earth for well over a century. But as of yet, they have not prepared a people for Jesus’ coming. The three angels need help. They can’t do it all by themselves. They need the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter rain proportions just as did the apostles on the Day of Pentecost, only in a greater degree. That’s why John “saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with His glory” (Rev. 18:1).

How are these prophecies of the lineup of the seals related to the 1888 message of Christ’s righteousness? *The 1888 message was sent by the Lord to validate the understanding of the prophecies that our pioneers held*. Had the 1888 message been accepted, our prophetic understandings would have complemented it and the “great revival” promised would have prepared that generation for the coming of the Lord.

—Paul E. Penno

Endnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 321.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Robert J. Wieland, *The Gospel in Revelation*, p. 37.

[4] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 112, 113, emphasis added.

Notes:

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://youtu.be/ey5J9F-Cu4E>

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