

The Great Controversy Series

19 The Seven Seals

Last time we looked at the seven churches in the book of Revelation as prophecy. Yes, The risen Christ sent messages by the apostle John to the seven churches. Each message had a meaning for the each church at that time. But when Bible scholars inspected these messages more closely they found that the messages take on a larger dimension. The messages show a good parallel with the experience of God’s people from the time of Jesus’ time on earth until His second coming.

Church	Message	Age
Ephesus	Revelation 2:2 They bore those who are evil. Revelation 2:3 persevered and had patience, and labored for Jesus’ name's sake and did not become weary.	Apostolic Age (AD 31-100)
Smyrna	Revelation 2:10 They would suffer. The devil would throw <i>some</i> of them into prison. They would have tribulation ten days (years).	AD 100-313. The ten year persecution: 303-313.
Pergamum	Revelation 2:14 They had those who held the doctrine of Balaam. Revelation 2:15 They had those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans.	AD 313-538. Christianity became a recognized religion and the corruption began.
Thyatira	Revelation 2:20 They allowed that woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce Jesus’ servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.	AD 538-1565. From a doctrinal and practical standpoint Christianity became more corrupted. The Protestant Reformation began and a great resistance was shown against it.
Sardis		
Philadelphia		
Laodicea		

Why did we explain these negative developments? The New Testament is a reliable source of truth. Some people are always saying that the New Testament has been changed. But the New Testament predicts events through the prophetic word that have not happened yet. But the events are not always rosy. There are negative events as well. So we can trust the New Testament because it reveals the truth, whatever it is.

We did not explain the last three messages to the churches. While explaining history we did not come to that point yet. We will look at those periods later.

The Bible repeats important subjects. The Bible does not remain silent regarding what will happen to God's people. Also in the seven seals in the book of Revelation it explains church history. Again, not everything is good. Again, we will look at only the first 4 seals.

In the book of Revelation the apostle John in vision saw the Almighty sitting on His throne.

Revelation 5:1 And I saw in the right *hand* of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

What was the scroll? The Bible explains its own symbols. Today because of lack of time we won't get into deep detail. But we can say this. In the Old Testament the Lord gave to the Israelites a worship system. There was a temple and ceremonies of sacrifice. In the most holy place of that temple was the ark of the covenant. Inside was the 10 commandments. At the side of the ark was a scroll. In that scroll were other laws that God gave to the Israelites through Moses. Civil laws were written as well as laws concerning worship and ceremonies connected with the temple. In short, they were Moses' writings, that is the Pentateuch.

In Moses' writings, there was the covenant that God made with the Israelites. For this reason sometimes the scroll or book is referred to as the book of the Covenant. Because laws were written in it sometimes the scroll was referred to as the book of the Law. Because it talked about the inheritance of the Israelites sometimes it was referred to as the book of Inheritance.

In ancient times when two parties made a covenant, there were three copies. Each party had an open copy and kept it. One copy however as sealed and kept in a secure place. They rolled up the scroll and wrapped a string around it. Then they put soft clay on the string. While the clay was still soft, each party pressed their seal into the clay. Thus the scroll was sealed. If there arose a disagreement between the parties regarding the articles of the covenant they appealed to the copy that was sealed in the secure place. As if reserved in a notary, the original and unchanged copy remained in the secure place.

We see such a covenant scroll in the book of Revelation. O.K., who are the parties? God and His people are the parties. The covenant, the articles of inheritance and laws are written in the scroll. What did Jesus say when He was here on earth?

Luke 22:20 Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

Everyone who has accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior announces himself or herself as a party to the covenant. O.K., how did the believers conform to the covenant? In the temple in heaven, everything is written. In the seven seals we see how the church, that is, God's people gave witness. We cannot look in a detailed fashion but we can paint the big picture.

Revelation 6:1 Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."² And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

In the first seal we see a victorious church. History confirms this. In the period of the apostles, the gospel was announced in all of the then-known world and the church grew at an incredible rate.

Revelation 6:3 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see."⁴ Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that *people* should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

When we looked at Christian history we had read this verse:

Daniel 7:8 "I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, *were* eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

The little horn is the papacy. The papacy used its influence to uproot these three powers. The Catholic Church did not accept the Arian belief. According to Arianism Jesus Christ came into being and was not equal with the Father but was lower. In the Christian world in general and in the church of Rome the following belief was prevalent: Jesus Christ was equal with the Father and had no beginning.

I had said previously that these three uprooted powers were the Ostrogoths, the Visigoths and the Vandals. The emperor Justinian sent his general Belesarius to North Africa and by conquering the Arian Vandals the Catholics there were freed in their beliefs. In the 538 Belesarius drove the Arian Ostrogoths out of Rome. No king remained in Rome. The papacy was able to exercise religious and civil power without hindrance. The Frank king Clovis who accepted Catholicism carried Catholicism many place by war. In a large measure Clovis came against the Arian Visigoths and defeated them.

Many scholars believe that the Heruli and not the Visigoths are the third power uprooted. That may be. They also were Arians. The Ostrogoths eliminated them. But Clovis did not completely uproot the Visigoths. For this reason the uprooted powers may be the Heruli, the Ostrogoths and the Vandals.

Whatever power best fits the prophecy, one thing is clear: Christians were killing Christians. If we compare, the persecution of pagan Rome was much less than the persecution of papal Rome. What did the prophecy say?

Revelation 6:4 Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that *people* should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

Unfortunately, many Christians who signed the New Covenant who placed their seal on it, left a bloody witness. Their lives did not harmonize with the New Covenant. They remained outside of the inheritance. Because it is written in the scroll:

1 John 3:15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

It is seen that they set their seals but they were not true believers.

We continue:

Revelation 6:5 When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

This third horse is black. Black is the opposite of white. If white represents the first established and pure church, black represents the papal antichrist. The Dark Ages began with the establishment of the papacy.

In the book of the law, that is, in the scroll, wheat, barley, olive oil and wine, which was grape juice were commanded to be offered to God as first fruits, tithes and offerings. These were blessings that came from God. The amount mentioned in the third seal is the daily sustenance amount for a soldier or a slave. That is, it is a minimum amount for the poor. But the price was 16 times normal! It means there was a shortage! In the book of the law, scarcity was a punishment for disobedience. From a spiritual standpoint the symbols in these verses point to a moral corruption. The protection on the oil and the wine indicate that the corruption was not complete.

The rider has a scale in his hand which can point to commercializing religious things, physical economic oppression or injustice. In the Bible we see scales representing all three of these. All of this was fulfilled. In the first period of the papacy in various places the Bible was proscribed, truths were hidden; violence, oppression and war forwarded the church's power. In place of God's grace, ceremonies from paganism were instituted. Along with this, during this period there were famines, natural disasters and pestilences.

Revelation 6:7 When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." ⁸ So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to

them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

The name of the rider of this horse is Death. In the time of papal dominance millions of people were killed for their faith. The tortures of the inquisition and the Crusades are infamous. I will not now get into the details of these terrible events. In this period there were many massacres of true believers.

It is a very common practice for people to hide their evil behind a zeal for religion. This is true today as well.

What are we learning? The corruption of Christianity was not a hidden, unexpected surprise. Daniel, Jesus, Paul and John, sometimes openly and sometimes in symbolic form, in various ways predicted this. The Bible can be understood. The Bible explains events in history before they happen.

History confirms that the Bible predicts the future. The prophecies that predict history ratify the truthfulness and unchangeableness of the Old and New Testaments. No other book repeatedly explains future events. Thus I can trust the Old and New Testaments. The prophecies certify that the author of the Old and New Testaments is God.

But we have just begun. We will look at many other prophecies that predict the future.