

NEWS WATCH FOR *the* CHURCH OF GOD

News for the scattered Church of God—by Ron Weinland

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THE SEALS OF REVELATION

In the last four issues of *News Watch*, we focused on seven powerful proofs that we are now in the end-time that is spoken of so often in Bible prophecy. Most people within the scattered Church refuse to acknowledge that our recent history agrees fully with end-time prophecies concerning the Church. Those prophecies, which have now been fulfilled over the past couple of decades, actually testify to the truth that we are indeed the true Church of God. Yet most refuse to acknowledge that our recent history is in fact fulfilled prophecy about God's Church.

This issue of *News Watch* is being written in order to help clarify the opening of the seals of Revelation. It is difficult for brethren to grasp that the first five seals are exclusively about the Church and not the physical world around us. Even the sixth seal is very much about the Church, as it reveals a time for the end of spiritual tribulation upon the Church and the beginning of physical tribulation upon this world.

The reason these seals can be so difficult to understand, on a spiritual plane, is that we have only understood them on a physical plane in the past. We need to grasp that there is a very important reason for that being true. And when we grasp that reality, we should be in even greater awe that the sequence of these seals reveals yet another powerful proof that we are in the end-time. Not only are we in the end-time, but we are **far** into it.

We Need to Understand

God gave us His written word. In all that He gave us, nearly a third is prophetic and nearly ninety percent of that prophetic word is for the end-time in which we are now living. We live in awesome times. The focus of nearly a quarter of the entire Bible is for our time. It is hard for us to grasp that the time in which we live is among the

most momentous in all of human history, yet the last three decades of the 6,000 years allotted to mankind is the focus of a fourth of all that is written in your Bible.

During the time of Philadelphia, God used Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong to restore truth to His Church. All truth had nearly died out by the end of Sardis. In past issues of *News Watch*, we covered those foundational truths that God restored in order to once again give life to His Church and to accomplish His Work at the end of this age. But God did not restore prophecy through Mr. Armstrong. Prophecy is not something that must be restored. Prophecy is something that is to be revealed!

It was not God's purpose to reveal prophecy, concerning the end of this age, to the Philadelphian era. God had a different work that was to be accomplished during that time. It was a work of restoring truth to the Church and raising up a Church to help support a work being done through Mr. Armstrong. This truth, going into all the world—especially to world leaders, would be a witness that man is the same in this age of great technology as he has ever been over the past 6,000 years. Man still rejects the truth of God! This witness was essential in order that the end **could** come.

That is why it is written, "*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come*" (Mat. 24:14). It is only after that witness had gone into all the world that the end could come, thus fulfilling the righteousness and justice of God to bring end-time judgment upon this world.

During Philadelphia, God gave certain prophetic keys to Mr. Armstrong, especially those that were needed concerning the restoration of truth as to the identity of the modern-day nations of Israel. Although this was given, as well as the revelation

that the Olivet prophecy was the key to understanding the seals of revelation, God did not fully reveal understanding of everything that was contained in the Olivet prophecies given by Jesus Christ. So concerning end-time prophecies, God only allowed us to see through a glass darkly, as the apostle Paul had explained concerning other matters on a spiritual plane.

God did not reveal complete understanding of prophecy concerning the Church, nor even this world, because it was intended that we live by faith and be tried and tested through those things that would later happen to us.

It should be such a basic truth to all of God's people why prophecy could not be revealed during Philadelphia and why it would only begin to be revealed during the time of Laodicea. All in God's Church are aware of a statement God made to Daniel, yet still fail to grasp that this is also a very basic truth concerning the timing for the revelation of end-time prophecy.

God's people through time have wanted to know more about the specifics of those things God has said would come on this world at the end-time; Daniel was no different. When he asked God about these end-time wonders, because he wanted to understand these prophecies God had given, God simply said, "*Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end*" (Daniel 12:9).

If God sealed the understanding of end-time prophecy until the end, then certainly those things could not have been revealed during the time of Philadelphia. Although this era saw a great restoration of truth through Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, this was not yet the end-time. Philadelphia existed next to the end-time era, but it was not the end; God did not unseal prophetic understanding at that time. Again, only prophecy that affected the restoration of the truth to the Church, which

primarily involved the understanding of the modern-day identity of the nations of Israel, was restored.

Once truth was fully restored to the Church during Philadelphia, the time would come for all to be tried as to whether they would be faithful to that truth. The means of trying the Church was through end-time prophecies that would now become reality—prophecies that would now be fulfilled.

The unsealing of end-time prophecy, when God would bring these events to fulfillment, would actually begin when Jesus Christ began to open the seals of Revelation. Jesus Christ alone was given the responsibility to open these end-time seals of all prophetic events upon the Church and upon the world that were to come to pass—to be fulfilled upon those who lived in the very end-time.

Understanding this truth is one of the greatest proofs of all that God Almighty reigns and that we are well into the end-time of all prophetic events spoken of in a quarter of your Bible. The end could only come—end-time prophecy could only begin to be

made manifest—when Jesus Christ began to open the seals of Revelation because God Himself had sealed prophecy until such time!

Once Prophecy—Now History

When written prophecies are fulfilled, they become history. Some of these prophecies are those concerning the rise and fall of kingdoms. We are all familiar with prophecies concerning the many resurrections of the Holy Roman Empire. We know that one final resurrection of that empire remains before the Kingdom of God is established upon this earth.

We are also familiar with prophecies that God gave concerning Israel, and we know the timing that was involved in those prophecies. So many of those are now history, and we see that God is true and performs His promises just as He said. We see a royal monarchy that still exists to this day because God revealed that Jesus Christ would come back to claim that existing throne to rule not only over Israel, but all the world. We see that God fulfilled His promise concerning national greatness,

and we see through those promises why Great Britain, as a great nation and company of nations, fulfilled God's word concerning the tribe of Ephraim. We see God's prophetic promise fulfilled toward Manasseh as the single greatest nation on earth in the modern-day United States of America. The truth of these prophetic matters was revealed and restored to the Church through Mr. Armstrong. The restoration of those truths was a revelation of prophecy that has actually become history. But God did not reveal the understanding of prophecy, that had not yet been unsealed, which was to happen in the near future.

We live in a time when much of that end-time prophecy, contained in a quarter of your Bible, has now become history because the first five seals of Revelation are now history! For those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, our recent history as a Church is witness to the opening of those seals! You can believe it or not, but if you refuse to acknowledge it, you alone will be held accountable for those horrifying things that will come upon

★ **Time-line with previous understanding from old literature.**

★ **Corrected order. (This is NOT a time-line.)**

— 2 ½ years —

First Seal	Second Seal	Third Seal	Fourth Seal	Fifth Seal	Sixth Seal
White Horse	Red Horse	Black Horse	Pale Horse	Great Tribulation	Heavenly Signs
Deception	War	Famine	Pestilence	National Captivity	
False Ministers	False Doctrine	Spiritual Famine	Repetition of the first 3 seals on the scattered Church	Announced that spiritual tribulation is nearly over	Sealing of the 144,000 & announcement of great physical tribulation about to begin

— Great spiritual tribulation upon the Church —

your life for refusal to heed your God. If you refuse to listen, then God's testimony will be against you! If you refuse to hear God, and thereby refuse to repent, then you will not receive the favor and protection of God during the physical tribulation that is about to be unleashed on this earth. The Day of God's wrath has come, and, ever so sadly, many in God's Church have refused to hear.

Yes, the first seal that Jesus Christ opened, as recorded in Revelation 6, is about a time of great trying and testing upon the Church. It was the time when many false ministers flooded the Church with power to conquer those who would not remain faithful to the truth God had restored to the Church. The result was massive destruction through the twisting and misuse of God's word. This was the opening of the second seal.

The result of false ministers wielding a great false sword was that peace was taken from the Church around this world—throughout the Worldwide Church of God. Ministers and brethren began to turn on one another—brother against brother, father against son and children against their parents. Such betrayal and hatred led to horrible

destruction and spiritual death within the Church. Yes, this was the opening of the second seal that for the most part is now history. The affects of that seal being opened are still ongoing in the scattered Church.

A further result of this great false sword being wielded by false ministers and of brethren turning on one another led to the proliferation of many false doctrines and the consequences that followed—spiritual food became scarce. Spiritual famine had finally come upon God's people with tremendous power and force. Then came to pass the prophecy written by Amos, *"Behold, the days come, says the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: "* (Amos 8:11). This was the opening of the third seal.

Even today, many brethren deny the truth that great spiritual famine has come upon the Church. Instead, false ministers or ministers who are yet asleep say this famine spoken of by Amos is not yet upon the Church because they say we are still being fed strong spiritual meat. They are liars! They deceive God's people and put them to sleep. These ministers and

evangelists lie against the truth, they lie to God's people, they deny God's spirit that exposes such lies, and they bring swift destruction upon themselves and others who listen to them. Yes, they are the primary cause of the destruction from the spiritual famine.

After the initial destruction caused by the first three seals being opened, the Church was scattered, but the destruction did not end. The scattering did not mean that everyone repented of the **reason** these things came upon the Church (for all of us were guilty of becoming spiritually sluggish and falling to sleep). The Church became so weak that God spewed it out of His mouth—He separated it from His presence and would only bring those back into His presence that repented.

So all in the Church were scattered, but all would not repent. The failure to repent caused the continued scattering and destruction of that smaller portion that yet remained. This was the opening of the fourth seal.

So again, the result, from a massive failure of so many to repent, was the opening of the fourth seal. This was simply a continuation of the same kind of destruction that took place in the first three seals previously opened.

1 year

A very short time

Seventh Seal: Seven Trumpet Plagues

First Trumpet	Second Trumpet	Third Trumpet	Fourth Trumpet	Fifth Trumpet	Sixth Trumpet	Seventh Trumpet: Seven Last Plagues						
				1 st Woe	2 nd Woe	3 rd Woe						
				Beast Power		1 st Plague	2 nd Plague	3 rd Plague	4 th Plague	5 th Plague	6 th Plague	7 th Plague
				Last revival of the Holy Roman Empire								

Beginning of great physical tribulation upon the world

Confusion About the 5th Seal

Now we come to a seal that has been deeply misunderstood—our interpretation has been in error. We have been blind to a glaring contradiction which was printed in past literature and given in past sermons. The reason we have not seen the truth of this matter must be repeated again. Although we wanted to know the meaning of end-time prophecies, God had not yet revealed them. It was not time! This prophecy had not yet been unsealed.

The unsealing and understanding of end-time prophecies could only be given after Jesus Christ began opening the seals of Revelation. Although God had given us several keys and basic building blocks to end-time prophetic events, He did not reveal specific understanding of most events because they yet remained sealed.

We once believed that the opening of the 5th seal was a time for the beginning of the great tribulation. We even had charts in our literature showing that the period of time for this seal would be 2 1/2 years of the entire 3 1/2 years of great tribulation.

In the booklet "The Book of Revelation Unveiled At Last" we are shown that the opening of the 5th seal is a time of religious persecution and national captivity. On page 26, some in the Church are described as *"truly Spirit-begotten Christians who have become so lukewarm, so out of prayerful contact with God, that they will not be accounted worthy to escape all these things."* Further down on the same page, notice what it says. *"Notice that! Here is the Great Tribulation! And this fifth seal pictures it as a time of martyrdom of saints—of truly converted, begotten children of God!"*

During this period of the first 2 1/2 years of the Great Tribulation in the fifth seal, not only was there to be a great spiritual martyrdom of lukewarm saints, but this same booklet says it would also be a time of national captivity. *"And this is speaking of the final Great Tribulation. It will be a time of war and national invasion and captivity of God's nation Israel! Not Judah! These prophecies refer to the*

so-called Lost Ten Tribes of Israel" (Page 27).

In another booklet, "Inside the Book of Revelation" (pages 13 & 14) it states that, *"The fifth seal pictures a time of great tribulation—including a martyrdom for religious convictions. The N.T., along with Revelation, emphasizes its impact on the spiritual people of God—his own Church. The great tribulation also falls on what was God's physical nation—the House of Israel, or the descendants of Jacob's 12 sons."*

In sermons and in literature this great religious persecution and time of captivity of the modern-day nations of Israel has always been described as being caused by the final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire, composed of nations that unite in Europe under the Beast power that emerges at that time. We have always believed that the ancient nation of Assyria would be used by God to take the modern-day nations of Israel captive, and this was to occur at the beginning of the great tribulation. Isn't that what you have always believed as well?

So everyone in the Church, who had any basic understanding of what we believed concerning the great tribulation which was to last for 3 1/2 years, believed that when the tribulation started the final revival of the Holy Roman Empire would emerge out of Europe and take the modern-day nations of Israel into captivity. But there was a great error in this.

As we cover this, you may want to occasionally look at the chart provided which shows what we once believed as well as the chart that shows what God has now revealed to be true in this matter. Understanding has now been given because Jesus Christ has already opened the first five seals and revealed by our recent history that these seals have been about the Church and not the world.

In the booklet "The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last," we move ahead to a time described as the "first woe" which occurs when the fifth trumpet within the seventh seal is blown.

When the seventh seal is opened God reveals that seven trumpets are

now to sound with each one revealing different segments of the wrath of God on mankind at the end of 6,000 years. On the old chart you will notice that the timing of this event could only last for less than a year because the last year of the final 3 1/2 years of tribulation is shown as beginning at the opening of the sixth seal.

So now we find ourselves well into that final year when we finally come to the fifth trumpet being blown. *"The first WOE, which is also the fifth trumpet, is described in chapter 9, verses 1-11. The power that causes the destruction, this time to men, comes out of the symbolic 'bottomless pit.' This is interpreted in Revelation 17:8-14. There we learn that a rebirth of the ancient ROMAN EMPIRE is the power which emerges out of 'the bottomless pit' or abyss—a condition of underground existence not visible to the world. Verse 7 shows this FUTURE power will be a WAR-making, revived fascist power"* (page 38).

The time for captivity of the modern-day nations of Israel, that was believed to occur during the fifth seal, could not be done in secret by a large military power that would emerge in Europe as the final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire. The whole world will be witness to this horrific event when it comes. God makes it clear that when the Beast power does arise in the form of a final resurrection of the Roman Empire, a final world war will come on this world and the modern-day nations of Israel will be conquered. We have always been correct in understanding that a final rebirth of the old Roman Empire will occur during the blowing of the fifth trumpet of the seventh seal!

So, when we understand the truth in this matter that the emergence of the Beast power, in the form of the last resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire, does not occur in the opening of the fifth seal, but during the fifth trumpet of the seventh seal, then other matters will also become more obvious to us. Those will be covered in the next issue of *News Watch*.