

FUTURE NEWS

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“GATHER YOURSELVES TOGETHER, YEA, GATHER TOGETHER,
O NATION NOT DESIRED” ZEPHANIAH 2:1

The Invitation

Afraid to trust themselves with God *The Desire of Ages, 330, 331*

There are many whose hearts are aching under a load of care because they seek to reach the world's standard. They have chosen its service, accepted its perplexities, adopted its customs. Thus their character is marred, and their life made a weariness. In order to gratify ambition and worldly desires, they wound the conscience, and bring upon themselves an additional burden of remorse. The continual worry is wearing out the life forces. Our Lord desires them to lay aside this yoke of bondage. He invites them to accept His yoke; He says, “My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” He bids them seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and His promise is that all things needful to them for this life shall be added. Worry is blind, and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet.

“Learn of Me,” says Jesus; “for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest.” We are to enter the school of Christ, to learn from Him meekness and lowliness. Redemption is that process by which the soul is trained for heaven. This training means a knowledge of Christ. It means emancipation from ideas, habits, and practices that have been gained in the school of the prince of darkness. The soul must be delivered from all that is opposed to loyalty to God.

In the heart of Christ, where reigned perfect harmony with God, there was perfect peace. He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment. Amid the greatest opposition and the most cruel treatment, He was still of good courage. But many who profess to be His followers have an anxious, troubled heart, because they are afraid to trust themselves with God. They do not make a complete surrender to Him; for they shrink from the consequences that such a surrender may involve. Unless they do make this surrender, they cannot find peace.

It is the love of self that brings unrest. When we are born from above, the same mind will be in us that was in Jesus, the mind that led Him to humble Himself that we might be saved. Then we shall not be seeking the highest place. We shall desire to sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn of

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Coupled with the prophetic message, **Future for America** emphasizes all aspects of the medical missionary work. The "entering wedge"—medical missionary work—must be practiced by those who are to finish God's work in these final hours.

During this time period, country living becomes more essential with each passing moment. **Future for America** upholds and promotes this end-time truth. God's people must prepare for the coming storm, and that preparation includes the experience of learning how to survive in a simple fashion, away from the great centers of population.

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Him. We shall understand that the value of our work does not consist in making a show and noise in the world, and in being active and zealous in our own strength. The value of our work is in proportion to the impartation of the Holy Spirit. Trust in God brings holier qualities of mind, so that in patience we may possess our souls.

THE BINDING-OFF

By B. Krebec

Introduction

Prophecy is to be delineated upon a line and defined by the waymarks thereon.¹ Historical events throughout time have been “markers”² along the line that portrays the internal work performed by God’s people, as well as the external work achieved through other mediums of society. Since we understand that history repeats itself³ (and more specifically, Millerite history will be repeated to the very letter in our time period⁴), it is vital to our salvation that through a personal knowledge of the prophetic Word we know where we stand in the sequence of events. Furthermore, an education like this entails a knowledge of what the waymarks represent and what their defining characteristics are,⁵ so that we will know what our corresponding (or paralleling) waymarks are and what we should expect when they arrive (when looking onwards). That being said, the waymark that has been under a great deal of discussion as of late is the “binding-off.” So, to address the various characteristics of this waymark and to provide a clear comprehension upon this subject in prophetic history, the following particulars are set forth.

Origin of the Binding-Off

At first, what we now call the “binding-off” was only recognized as a short period of time that immediately preceded the third step of the everlasting gospel. This period of time began to be recognized in many lines of prophecy, where a longer period was depicted with a shorter period just preceding its close. For

example, the 1260 years of Papal dominion which were cut short by twenty-five years of relatively no persecution from the Roman Church; the 70 years of captivity in Babylon which were understood by Daniel just two years before they were over; Elisabeth’s six months of pregnancy where five months were spent in hiding and a short time later Mary came to visit; the 120 days that led to the Exeter camp-meeting in the summer of 1844 which was preceded by the preaching of Samuel Snow in the Boston Tabernacle on July 21, just twenty-five days earlier. Each of these lines, and others also, added to the significance of this short time period, but it was not until Matthew 13:30 was connected to the discussion that the term “binding-off” was coined. This verse contains some core defining characteristics of this waymark:

Matthew 13:30 is the primary source of where the term “binding-off” was coined, in addition to *Manuscript Releases*, volume 9, 212 as a secondary source. These passages contain the core defining characteristics of this waymark:

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather ye together **first** the **tares**, and **bind them in bundles** to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. Matthew 13:30.

“The natural heart is not to bring its own tainted, corrupting principles into the work of God. There must be no concealing of the principles of our faith. The third angel’s message is to be sounded by God’s people. It is to swell to the loud cry. The Lord has a time appointed when He will **bind off** the work; but when is that time?—when the truth to be proclaimed for these last days shall go forth as a witness to all nations, then shall the end come. If the power of Satan can come into the very temple of God, and manipulate things as he pleases, the time of preparation will be prolonged.” *Manuscript Releases*, volume 9, 212.

The quoted passage from Matthew 13 is contained in the parable of the wheat and tares, which is a



parable illustrating God's people at the end of the world where two classes of worshippers are manifested—the righteous and the unrighteous.⁶ In Matthew 13:30 we see that the tares and the wheat grow together until the time of harvest, where the tares are bound in bundles first. This indicates that there is a progression of events within the binding-off—the tares (the unrighteous) are bound first, and then the wheat (the righteous) is bound afterwards. We find a second witness to this fact in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 where a “falling away” comes first, that the man of sin might thereafter be revealed. In what time period on the line of prophetic history does this take place? Sister White informs us where in the following quote:

“I asked the angel if there were none left. He bade me look in an opposite direction, and I saw a little company traveling a narrow pathway. All seemed to be firmly united, **bound** together by the truth, **in bundles**, or companies. Said the angel, “The **third angel is binding**, or sealing, them in bundles for the heavenly garner.” *Early Writings*, 88.

The Spirit of Prophecy has made it plain that it is the work of the third angel to bind (or seal) both the tares and the wheat, and this can only take place after the first and the second have done their appointed work, for “you cannot have a third without a first and a second.” This is in agreement with Brother Pippenger's definition of the everlasting gospel:

“The everlasting gospel is the work of Christ in **developing** and thereafter **demonstrating** two classes of worshippers based upon a three-step prophetic testing message.” *Jeff Pippenger*.

The everlasting gospel, as stated above, very succinctly identifies what takes place at the third step—the demonstration of character that the two classes of worshippers have been developing over the course of the first two steps. Therefore, the binding (or demonstration) done by the third angel can only take place once the first two angels

have done their work in developing the wheat and the tares.

An example of the demonstration of character that takes place in the third step can be seen in the life of Judas—he left the table at the last supper and went forth to betray His master which began a progression of events where his character was demonstrated. The “falling away” marked by Judas preceded the revealing of Barabbas (the man of sin). This would indicate that the binding-off is a short space of time which proceeds the point where men must choose between the man of sin and the Son of Man, for it was only the next day that this choice had to be made by the Jews. Other lines of prophecy, which have briefly been mentioned earlier in this study and will be explained more in a moment, attest to the rapidity of this period of time.

Matthew 25

Since the parable of the wheat and the tares is representative of the two classes within the house of God, we have the prophetic justification (also by the means of 1 Corinthians 10:11) to marry this passage up with the parable of the ten virgins which Sister White says, “illustrates the experience of the Adventist people.”⁷ In the parable of the ten virgins of Matthew 25, a cry goes forth at midnight; this we have come to understand to be the Midnight Cry—a waymark which was imperfectly fulfilled in the time of the Millerites, and which will be perfectly fulfilled in our time.

In the Millerite time period, the Midnight Cry message was given on August 15, 1844 in Exeter, New Hampshire by Samuel Snow.⁸ However, this message was first presented at the Boston Tabernacle one month prior on July 21, 1844.⁹ Snow, and other Millerites, identified that July 21 marks the exact midway point (to the very day) between April 19 (the arrival of the second angel) and October 22 (the arrival of the third angel).¹⁰ This event preceded the point where the true Midnight Cry went forth with power on August 15, 1844 at the Exeter camp-meeting, just twenty-five days later.

Other Prophetic Lines

Initially, it was understood that the binding-off was marked before the Midnight Cry in all of the reform lines. But, recently, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah has revealed to us that a “binding-off” takes place prior to every major waymark in the reform lines (i.e. 9/11, the Midnight Cry, the Sunday Law, and the Close of Probation). We have since classified the binding-off to be a brief period of time that takes place within its corresponding reform line segments—whether it be the time of the Adventist leadership (1989–9/11), the time of the priests (9/11–Midnight Cry), the time of the Levites (Midnight Cry–Sunday Law), or the time of the eleventh-hour workers (Sunday Law–Close of Probation).

With that in mind, let us examine some examples of the binding-off in Scripture, beginning with the lines of Luke 1 and Revelation 9 (where the discovery of this short period of time took place):

Luke 1

In Luke 1, the line of Elizabeth’s pregnancy delineates the rudimentary understanding of a “binding-off.” Prophetically speaking, Elisabeth’s pregnancy began on 9/11 (witnesses: Zacharias; dumb; tarrying). During the first five months of her pregnancy, she hid herself until the sixth month, which was when Mary came to visit her. This period of six months takes place between 9/11 and the Midnight Cry (witnesses for the six months ending at the Midnight Cry: an angel came down; incarnation; double prophecy). The distinction between the period of five months and the period of one month (for a total of six months) marks the beginning of the binding-off.

Revelation 9

Revelation 9 is the “binding tie,” so to speak, between these two passages. Revelation 9:5 says that Islam is to torment Rome for “five months,” which is one hundred and fifty prophetic years. The symbol of “five months” perfectly parallels the five months in the time of Elisabeth because it links us to the first

woe of Revelation 9, where Islam is restrained in their purposes against Rome (i.e. 9/11). At the end of five months, Islam is given power to kill, thus the beginning of the sixth trumpet and the second woe are marked—July 27, 1449. This date, along with several others, marks the beginning of the binding-off period and it corresponds to the end of the five months of Elizabeth’s hiding. Moreover, four years after 1449, Constantinople was annihilated—1453. This date (and others) marks the end of the binding-off.

Matthew 4

Matthew 4 contains the history of Christ being in the wilderness for 40 days. This period of 40 days ends with a three-step testing process. These three tests mark the short space that precedes the end of the fortieth day. In addition, there are numerous witnesses to a wilderness in Scripture ending with a short space of time, including:

1. Papal persecution: began in 538; ended in 1773; papacy received deadly wound in 1798.
2. Pagan persecution: began in 723; ended with the falling away of Pergamos in 508; 30 years later marks the official reign of the papacy.

Daniel 10

In Daniel 10, Daniel fasted for twenty-one days. The end of this period of three weeks is marked by three touches from Christ.

Various Specifications

Each passage mentioned above adds a different layer of prophetic truth that helps to bring to light the dynamics of the binding-off as a prophetic symbol. There are a couple of layers that are especially worth noting, namely the *marah* experience had by the prophets, and the three steps that take place inside the third step of the everlasting gospel.

The Marah Experience

Daniel 10:7 informs us that the vision Daniel is having is the *marah*.¹¹ This vision signifies an experience that is had by all of those who see the



work of Christ in prophetic history and are humbled in the dust by the revelation of their glorious Savior. This is to be the experience of all who are bound as wheat for the heavenly garner.

The *marah*, and the experience that it symbolizes, becomes a specification that helps to prophetically place the prophets at the beginning of a binding-off at the end of the world. The context of the passage helps to place their experience in the most appropriate time frame (i.e. priest, Levite, etc.).

A Three-Step Process

We have come to understand that the binding-off is synonymous with the third step of the everlasting gospel, and therefore the third step is a progressive process where character is manifested. Since the binding-off is the third step, the one who is experiencing it and has found favor in God's eyes, has fully developed the character of Christ during the previous two steps of the everlasting gospel. It is important that we keep this in mind when discussing the period of the binding-off, for this period consists of a three-step process within itself, but the steps that take place herein cannot be identified as "steps of development" (as in the first two steps of the everlasting gospel), they must be "steps of manifestation."

An example that really helps to clarify this matter can be found in Christ's three temptations in the wilderness. Was Christ's character being developed by the first two temptations so that He could demonstrate His character in the third? No. Christ had already developed His character prior to this point in time. When He was tested by these three steps He was simply manifesting His righteousness. Christ became a symbol of those who, during the testing process from 9/11 to the beginning of the binding-off, fully settle into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, and have their minds fitted up for the divine impress.

Another example of this three-step process that takes place within the third step is found in Daniel 10. Here Daniel describes a vision which caused him to be separated from those who were with him. He then proceeds to describe how he was touched by an angel three times, and how he was raised a little higher each time he was touched. The separation described is the separation that takes place between the wise and the foolish at the beginning of the binding-off; it illustrates the tares being bound or falling away, while the wheat remains. The three touches represent a progressive process of lifting up; they illustrate the wheat being bound and lifted up as an ensign that they might manifest the character of their Savior to the world. These three touches could not be the three steps of the everlasting gospel, for it is in the third step that the two classes are separated, and Daniel was separated just prior to the first touch.

Conclusion

"The natural heart is not to bring its own tainted, corrupting principles into the work of God. There must be no concealing of the principles of our faith. The third angel's message is to be sounded by God's people. It is to swell to the loud cry. **The Lord has a time appointed when He will bind off the work;** but when is that time?—when the truth to be proclaimed for these last days shall go forth as a witness to all nations, then shall the end come. If the power of Satan can come into the very temple of God, and manipulate things as he pleases, the time of preparation will be prolonged." *Manuscript Releases*, volume 9, 212.

Brothers and Sisters, it is our duty as present truth believers to know where we stand in history and what to expect so that we will be ready for what is to come. The binding-off is the next waymark to take place in the prophetic chain of truth, and our characters must be found favorable to our Heavenly Father for us to receive the seal of His approval to enter His kingdom. It is therefore imperative that we prepare ourselves for this short space of time where our characters will be manifested. The question we must continually be



asking ourselves is “what must I do to be saved?” Let us be daily eating the little book and allowing the messages therein contained to develop in us that hope of glory.

Summary

The binding-off:

1. Is illustrated, by many witnesses, as a short period of time just preceding the end of a longer period of time.
2. Or sealing, is characterized as the work of the third angel, who first binds the tares for the flames of fire, and then binds the wheat for the heavenly garner.
3. Is illustrated by the experience the prophets have when they see the *marah*.
4. Contains three steps.
5. Does not begin a new segment of the everlasting gospel in regard to the testing; it is simply the third step of the current everlasting gospel.

Study Resources

1. “The Binding-Off,” Jeff Pippenger
a. https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1eSM5f5b5RR1UOR1VRH9x_xaTwGx5hmP
2. *School of the Prophets*, Class Videos
a. <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEW7ywH-uu0iIvVneXPqX4Qf4H0w2sXY6>
3. *Future News, Frequently Asked Questions*, volume 2, 343
a. <http://www.arkansasschooloftheprophets.org/faqs>

Endnotes

1. *Selected Messages*, book 2, 102
2. *Selected Messages*, book 2, 101
3. Ecclesiastes 1:9; 3:15; 1 Corinthians 10:11; *Selected Messages*, book 3, 339
4. *The Publishing Ministry*, 175; *The Review and Herald*, August 19, 1890

5. *Review and Herald*, July 31, 1888
6. *Christ's Object Lessons*, 75
7. *The Review and Herald*, August 19, 1890
8. *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, volume 1, 93
9. *Second Advent Waymarks and High Heaps* (1847), Joseph Bates, 72
10. *The Great Controversy*, 398; *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, volume 4, 802
11. For more information on this vision, see the section of *Future News, Frequently Asked Questions* titled “Three Visions of Prophecy”

CHURCHES & SEALS

By M. Chapman

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand the present truth application of the seven churches and seals, found in the book of Revelation, and how these prophetic truths affect us in our time. In order to do this, we must first understand the position of the pioneers of our faith for, “the old truths are all essential; new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it. It is only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new.”¹

Building upon the sound principles and expositions established by the early Adventists, we will be able to broaden their understanding without contradiction. In essence, we may pick up their tools and torches and burrow deeper into the Mine of Knowledge, all the while following the glorious vein of truth discovered by our predecessors. In addition to the pioneer position, we will here discuss the application of the seven churches and seals in ancient Israel, and how they apply at the end of the world.

Pioneer Position

William Miller, the chosen leader² of the Millerite people, whose mind was directed by God and who was given a special set of rules³ by the angel Gabriel to understand the prophecies, also received of God “great light upon the book of Revelation.”⁴ For this



reason Miller is the best point of reference for the purpose of understanding the pioneer position of the seven churches and seals.

“The seven churches of Asia is a history of the church of Christ in her seven forms, in all her windings and turnings, in all her prosperity and adversity, from the days of the apostles down to the end of the world. The seven seals are a history of the transactions of the powers and kings of the earth over the church, and God’s protection of his people during the same time. The seven trumpets are a history of seven peculiar and heavy judgments sent upon the earth, or Roman kingdom.” *William Miller, Miller’s Lectures*, volume 2, Lecture 12, 178.

As can be seen above, Miller understood that the seven churches represent the history of the church of Christ from the time of the apostles to the end of the world, and the seals are the history of the kings of the earth during the same period of time. In the following quote, Sister White confirms Miller’s understanding:

“The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in **different periods of the Christian Era**. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages **extend to the end of time**, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world.” *The Acts of the Apostles*, 585.

Though Sister White does not say anything about the seals in the quote above, she does corroborate Miller’s understanding of the churches, that is, that the churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian dispensation and they span from the time of the Apostles to the second coming of Christ. In another place however, Sister White confirms that Miller’s understanding of the seals was also correct, that is, that the seals span the same history as the churches and are symbolic of the events that transpire in relation to the kings of the earth and God’s providential dealings with His people.

“**[Revelation 5:1–3 quoted]**. There in His open hand lay the book, **the roll of the history of God’s providences, the prophetic history of nations and the church**. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His authority, His commandments, His laws, the whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal, and the history of all ruling powers in the nations. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the influence of every nation, tongue, and people from the beginning of earth’s history to its close.

“This roll was written within and without. John says: [Revelation 5:4, 5, 8–14; 6:8–11; Revelation 8:1–4; quoted.]

“**The same spirit is seen today that is represented in Revelation 6:6–8**. History is to be repeated. That which has been will be again.—Letter 65, 1898, pp. 6–9, 12. (To Brethren Griggs and Howe, August 23, 1898.)” *Manuscript Releases*, volume 9, 7.

Though she does not directly say what Miller said concerning the seals, she does provide us with enough detail to extract the same meaning. She says that the roll that was sealed with seven seals contained the history of “nations and the church.” The roll is the Bible. Within the Bible is contained the history of nations and the church. These two parallel histories must be found in the book of Revelation, for they are a very important theme found in every book of the Bible, and we are informed by the Spirit of Prophecy that “in the Revelation all the books of the Bible meet and end.” Where are they found in Revelation? They are found in the symbolic language expressed in the chapters and verses that deal with the seven churches and seals.

Furthermore, Sister White states that history is to be repeated. Which history? Revelation 6:6–8, which is the history of the third and fourth seals. The history here which she refers to directly relates to the political events that transpired in the history leading to, and continuing on through the dark ages.



In agreement with Brother Miller and Sister White, Uriah Smith furnishes us with a concise definition of the seven churches and their connection to the seven seals, which becomes a nice rule of thumb when dealing with this subject:

“While the seven churches present the **internal** history of the church, the seven seals bring to view the great events of its **external** history.” Uriah Smith, *The Bible Institute*, 253.

An additional point to consider in connection with the pioneer position on the seven churches is the fact that the first four are different from the last three. Specifically, the first four delineate a progressive historical sequence⁵ while the last three exist simultaneously.⁶

There is still much to be understood about the pioneer position, but the information provided here should at least spark the sanctified curiosity of the student of prophecy, that they might dig a little deeper themselves.

Ancient Israel

We have come to understand that “the Bible has accumulated and bound up together its treasures for this last generation. All the great events and solemn transactions of Old Testament history have been, and are, repeating themselves in the church in these last days.”⁷ Therefore, what occurs in these last days must have also happened in Old Testament history. As we have just shown, the churches and seals occur in these last days, for they are to span “from the days of the apostles down to the end of the world.” So, if the history of the churches and seals takes place in our time—the end of the world—then, there must have been a type of these same great and solemn transactions in the history of ancient Israel.

The logic just conveyed above has been established for several years in the present truth movement. When relating to the churches at this level, we see them as symbols which have more than one meaning and must be properly placed by prophetic context.

An example of the principle that the churches and the seals took place in type during the dispensation of ancient Israel is given to us through the relationship of Laodicea and Ephesus. Sister White, when speaking for our time, describes the Pharisees of Adventism as Laodiceans.⁸ She prefaces this comparison with the fact that “as it was in the days of Christ, so it is now.” Therefore, the Pharisees in the time of Christ were Laodiceans, and the message borne by Christ was the message to the Laodicean church. What was the result of this message? A new organized body of individuals denominated as “Christians.” Thus began the first of the seven historical periods within the Christian era, in other words, Ephesus. So, the relationship of Ephesus and Laodicea is that the message of Christ’s righteousness is borne to the Laodiceans and the church of Ephesus is the result of the acceptance of this message.

If Laodicea symbolically existed at the end of ancient Israel as the last church, then what church symbolizes the beginning of ancient Israel? Ephesus. What took place at the beginning of ancient Israel? Was there not a birth of a denominated people who accepted the message of Christ’s righteousness? Yes, there was—the Hebrew nation. From the time of Moses to the time of Christ, we have come to understand the seven churches to apply as follows: Ephesus is equivalent to the time of Moses, Smyrna to the time of the judges, Pergamos to the time of the kings, Thyatira to the time of the seventy years of captivity in Babylon, and Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea to the time spanning from the end of the captivity to the establishment of the Christian church, where the cycle of seven restarts with Ephesus, the first dispensation of the Christian era.



A Repetition of History

When we understand that the seven churches not only delineate the history of the Christian church from the time of the apostles to the end of the world, but also unveil profound insights concerning the history of ancient Israel, we are better equipped to comprehend the meaning of the seven churches in the light of the very present truth.

“The Bible has accumulated and bound up together its treasures **for this last generation. All the great events** and solemn transactions of Old Testament history have been, and are, repeating themselves in the church in these last days.” *Selected Messages*, book 3, 339.

All of sacred history points the student of prophecy to the last generation that will exist just before Christ returns; all of sacred history was recorded that this final generation could understand what is about to take place; all the great events and solemn transactions are repeating themselves to the very letter in our time and we would do well to take heed to the messages conveyed to us through the written record, for they have been recorded for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world have come.

The seven churches, as they were correctly understood by the pioneers, apply from the rise of the Christian era to its close. This history was typified by the history of God’s ancient people; when you arrive at the end of the Christian era, where every vision meets its ultimate effect,⁹ both the history of the ancient people of God and the history of the Christian era must be combined. When the two dispensations are merged correctly and the principles understood, great light illuminates the path of the people of God at the end of the world.

The idea of bringing all of the churches together under the dispensation of the seventh church was not foreign to the pioneers:

“It should be remembered that, as the experience of **Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos**, will be repeated in the **last church** before the second

coming of Christ, so the history of **Thyatira** will have its counterpart in the last generation.” Stephen N. Haskell, *Story of the Seer of Patmos*, 69.

Brother Haskell plainly states that the experience of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, and Thyatira will have their counterpart in the history of the Laodicean church. What about Sardis and Philadelphia?

“Oh, what a description! How many there are in this fearful condition. I earnestly entreat every minister to study diligently **the third chapter of Revelation**, for in it is portrayed **the condition of things existing in the last days**. Study carefully every verse in this chapter, for through these words Jesus is speaking to you.” *Manuscript Releases*, volume 18, 193.

“In all the land saith the Lord; *two parts* therein shall be cut off, and die; but the *third* shall be left therein. God says he will bring the *third part* through the fire, and refine them. They shall call upon him, and he will hear them. He will say *it is my people*; and they shall say the *lord is my god*.’ First part, **Sardis**, the nominal church or **Babylon**. Second part, **Laodicea**, the **nominal Adventist**. Third part, **Philadelphia, the only true church of God on earth**, for they ask to be translated to the city of God. Revelation 3:12; Hebrews 12:22–24. In the name of Jesus, I exhort you again to flee from the Laodiceans, as from Sodom and Gomorrah. Their teachings are false and delusive; and lead to utter destruction. Death! *Death!!** Eternal *death!!!* is on their track. Remember Lot’s wife.” Joseph Bates, *The Review and Herald*, volume 1, November 1850.

According to Sister White and Brother Bates, Sardis and Philadelphia portray “the condition of things existing in the last days.”

Therefore, not only do the seven churches have a meaning that is applied to ancient Israel and the whole dispensation of Christianity, but they also illustrate the experience of God’s people in the last generation of earth’s history.

We must also keep in mind the fact that the



churches are paralleled by the seals, and thus whenever the churches are applied the seals must also be considered.

Four Generations

As we can see on a broader historical scope, there is more than one way to apply the lessons conveyed by the churches and the seals. Not surprisingly, these symbols meet their counterparts in more than one way in the history of Laodicea. If we consider the four generations of Adventism, spanning from 1844 to our current day, we might well apply the first four churches. Ephesus would meet its counterpart in the early advent believers—the first generation (1844–1888); Smyrna would correspond to the second generation (1888–1919); the church of compromise—Pergamos—meets an easy parallel in the history of the third generation (1919–1989); and lastly, Thyatira would agree to the fourth and final generation (1989—the second coming of Christ).

We must remember that the last three churches are distinct from the first four, in that they do not span consecutive time periods as the first four do. This may seem to complicate the dynamics of these things, but when we view each church as a symbol that bears certain characteristics the harmonization of these truths becomes less difficult. Take the first church, or first generation, for example. This church brings with it the characteristics of fervent labor, patience, and firm adherence to principle. Was this not the condition of the early Adventist church? “But Ephesus lost its fervor,” the reader suggests. Did not our pioneers grow weary in their labors? Take for example one of our greatest leaders—Brother James White. If we are indeed correct in understanding that the early Adventists were typified by the church of Ephesus, does this negate what Sister White and Brother Haskell told us earlier—that all of the last three churches exist together until the close of time? No. You must simply bring these things together. Pulling from our example, Ephesus is told to return to its first love—this is the very message the Laodiceans are

given.¹⁰ What happens to the Ephesian who accepts this call to repentance? According to Brother Bates, they join “the only true church of God on earth.” All the while the Sardisians are still living in a defiled condition due to their rejection of the first and second angel’s messages just prior to the establishment of the people of God (the Adventists in 1844).

The Final Reformation

Another way that the churches apply in the history of Laodicea can be seen within the final reformation that takes place in the fourth generation of Adventism. There are four major parts to this reformation: 1989 to 9/11, 9/11 to the Midnight Cry, the Midnight Cry to the Sunday Law, and the Sunday Law to the Close of human Probation. Each of the first four churches apply respectively to the aforementioned periods (i.e. Ephesus corresponds to the history from 1989 to 9/11, Smyrna to the history from 9/11 to the Midnight Cry, etc.).

A Personal Application

The several meanings that the churches and seals convey do not exclude profound personal, moral lessons. For example, the message borne to the Laodiceans is that they are lukewarm, and the message borne to the Ephesians is that they have lost their first love. These two messages are quite the same, and can be applied to every professed follower of Christ whose eye is not single to the Glory of God. Let all take heed, lest we be found in such an undesirable position.

Conclusion

Though we have briefly discussed several applications of the seven churches and their external counterpart (the seven seals), in no way is this short summary exhaustive. There is much, even in what we have touched upon, that needs to be said and understood, but this information must be gleaned through individual effort and application. What we have attempted to do here is lay out several frameworks whereupon the students of prophecy can build as they investigate these matters.

Definitions of the Seven Churches (Thayer)

1. **Ephesus** – G2181 “permitted”
2. **Smyrna** – G4667 “Myrrh”
3. **Pergamos** – G4010 “height or elevation”
4. **Thyatira** – G2363 “odour of affliction”
5. **Sardis** – G4554 “red ones”
6. **Philadelphia** – G5359 “brotherly love”
7. **Laodicea** – G2993 “justice of the people”

Summary

The seven churches and seals:

1. Are symbols which convey various levels of prophetic understanding
 2. Apply to the history of ancient Israel
 3. Apply to the whole of the Christian era
 4. Apply to the four generations of Adventism
5. Apply to the final reformation which takes place within the fourth generation of Adventism
 6. Convey not only prophetic, but moral lessons

Study Resources

1. Stephen N. Haskell, *Bible Handbook*, 122–127
2. Stephen N. Haskell, *The Story of the Seer of Patmos*, 39–90, 109–126
 3. *Habakkuk's Tables*, Jeff Pippenger
 - a. *Episodes 42, 43*
- i. <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD76E648C83403E0F>
4. “The Churches and the Seals,” Michael Chapman
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf3Vwyize>

Endnotes

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, 127
2. *The Great Controversy*, 317
3. *The Review and Herald*, November 25, 1884
 4. *Early Writings*, 231
5. James White, *The Review and Herald*, February 12, 1857
6. *Manuscript Releases*, volume 18, 193; S. N. Haskell, *Story of the Seer of Patmos*, 69-76
 7. *Selected Messages*, book 3, 339
 8. *The Desire of Ages*, 280
 9. Ezekiel 12:21–28
 10. *The Desire of Ages*, 280