

NeoHistoricism

Why Islamic Terror and Clergy Sex Abuse
wouldn't surprise Luther, Calvin, Wycliffe, Knox,
Wesley, Spurgeon or Jonathan Edwards

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NeoHistoricism: Why Islamic Terror and Clergy Sex Abuse Wouldn't Surprise Luther, Calvin, Wycliffe, Knox, Wesley, Spurgeon or Jonathan Edwards

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LB The Living Bible © 1971 by Tyndale House Publishers

NASB New American Standard Bible © 1995 by Lockman Foundation

NCV The Holy Bible, New Century Version © 2005 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

NIV The Holy Bible, New International Version © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society

NKJV New King James Version, Holy Bible © 1983 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

NLT New Living Translation © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Publishers

RSV Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by Division of Christian Education of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America

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NeoHistoricism Is Historicism

Brought up to Date

There was a time when, if you were a Bible-believing Christian, you were also an historicist. In fact, this was the case for a very long time—more than five hundred years. Historicism was taught by the great preachers and teachers from the 1300s through the 1800s. And they possessed wisdom and Bible insight that can help us understand and better deal with Islamic terror, clergy sex abuse and other modern-day issues.

Wycliffe, Hus, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, Spurgeon, Roger Williams & Jonathan Edwards

Historicism was the approach to prophecy taught by early English Bible translator John Wycliffe in the 1300s. It cost the lives of Czech priest Jan Hus, who was burned at the stake in 1417, and William Tyndale who was martyred in 1536. It was the approach detailed in the commentaries authored during the 1500s by the giants of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther and John Calvin.

Historicism was taught by John Knox (c. 1514-1572), the father of the Church of Scotland and Presbyterianism. It was included in the 1646 Westminster Confession of Faith and the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith. It was taught by Roger Williams (1603-1683), the first Baptist pastor in America.

Historicism continued to be taught in the 1700s by Jonathan Edwards, noted Bible scholar and early president of Princeton University. It was the prophetic view of Methodist founding father John Wesley (1703-1791), and his brother Charles Wesley (1707-1778) whose hymns we continue to sing today. It was upheld through the 1800s by “the Prince of Preachers,” Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Their approach to prophecy is called ‘historicism’—related to the word ‘history’—because historicists see Bible prophecy undergoing fulfillment throughout human history. As we will see from what they wrote and preached, Martin Luther, John Calvin and the other historicists understood that prophecy was fulfilled in ancient Israel, and later during

the reigns of the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman empires, as well as during the time of the Protestant Reformation. And they expected the Bible's specific predictions to continue to come true in the generations to come. They clearly identified the beasts of Revelation, they saw the corruption of the Vatican foretold in Scripture, and they understood the role of radical Islam during the end times.

Dispensationalism Sweeps Historicism out of the Churches

But then a new fad began to sweep through the churches during the late 1800s and early 1900s, tossing aside the long-cherished teachings of Wycliffe, Hus, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Knox, Edwards and Spurgeon on the fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

By the early 20th Century, many if not most Bible-centered churches had forgotten these historicist understandings, and adopted instead the 'dispensational futurist' interpretations of John Nelson Darby—the theory that God's dealings with mankind are defined by a series of fixed time periods or *dispensations*. A future seven-year 'tribulation' is one of many such time periods marked out on dispensationalist time charts. Dispensational futurists assign the fulfillment of the end times prophecies of Daniel and Revelation to that supposed seven-year period. As portrayed in the Left Behind series of movies and novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, they expect a supernaturally evil individual Antichrist to rule the entire planet earth and rebuild the Jerusalem temple. And this is the view that prevails today in most Bible-believing churches.

According to that view believers will be raptured to heaven just before the seven year tribulation begins, while everyone else will be 'left behind' for a 'second chance' to accept Christ during the tribulation—including half-hearted churchgoers, phony pretend 'Christians' and wolves in sheep's clothing. *Second Chance* is the title of one of the novels in the children's series *Left Behind: The Kids*. And in their nonfiction book *Are We Living in the End Times*, Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins state specifically that the seven-year interval grants this second chance to those "left behind after the Rapture" because they had "rejected God's offer of salvation." (page 158)

Calvin, Luther and the other Reformers did not write anything to refute the idea that unbelievers would have a seven-year-long second chance after the Rapture, because they never heard of such an idea. It was not being taught by anyone. The idea that Christ would return *twice*—once invisibly to rapture believers, and again seven years later to

destroy this wicked world at the end of a tribulation period—was a totally foreign concept. Luther and Calvin never encountered such a teaching, so they did not need to refute it. Because that teaching is popular today, I have attempted to refute dispensational futurism in my book *LEFT BEHIND Answered Verse by Verse* (See LeftBehindAnswered.com). But I will concentrate here on a positive presentation of what I will call ‘neohistoricism.’

Why *NeoHistoricism*, Rather than Historicism?

Why employ the term *neohistoricism* when historicism is already well established? Mainly because, when historicism is mentioned, people immediately think of the teachings of the Reformers as they were presented in their writings from the 1300s to the 1800s—without applying their methods to events that have occurred since that time. And so, historicism is generally viewed as out of date.

This book, *NeoHistoricism*, will attempt to apply the understandings of the Reformers to the world events that have transpired since their writings, and the events yet to come, from that perspective.

If Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon and the others who shared their approach to prophecy were alive today, would they update their teaching about the papacy in view of the clergy sex abuse scandal that has shattered the faith of millions?

If Jonathan Edwards and Sir Isaac Newton were alive to see the modern rise of radical Islam, would they update the chapters in their commentaries that spoke of Islam fulfilling prophecy to cover this also?

If Spurgeon and the earlier Reformers had lived to see the Holocaust, the restoration of the state of Israel, the wars between modern Israel and its neighbors, and the on-going tensions over the status of Jerusalem, is it conceivable that they would ignore all of these developments? Or would they incorporate these events in their sermons and writings on fulfillment of prophecy?

This book *NeoHistoricism* constitutes an attempt to do that for them.

Why Don't Today's Churches Stick to the Historicism of Their Founders?

Beginning in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Bible-believing churches began putting aside the prophetic understanding held by their founders, to embrace instead 'preterist' or 'futurist' teachings that had been formulated by Jesuits to oppose the Reformation. Why? How did that happen?

Jesuit Preterism—a Tool to Defend the Vatican

Since critics were calling the pope 'Antichrist,' Jesuit preterism responded by declaring that most or all of the end times prophecies had already been fulfilled—back in the first century. The Antichrist, the 'beasts' of Revelation, the Great Tribulation, the Day of the Lord all refer to entities and events that happened long ago, it said. They are ancient history, not anything for the Church to anticipate or to be concerned about today. It is widely agreed that the Jesuit Luis de Alcasar (1554–1613) wrote the first systematic preterist exposition of prophecy, his *Vestigatio arcani sensus in Apocalypsi* (published in 1614), as part of the Vatican's response to the Protestant Reformation. The Reformers named the pope as Antichrist, and the papacy responded by attempting to document an ancient Antichrist instead.

Jesuit Futurism—Another Tool to Defend the Vatican

Another approach in the campaign to defend the papacy proposed an Antichrist in the distant future. In 1590 Jesuit priest Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) published a commentary on Revelation titled *In Sacrum Beati Ioannis Apostoli, & Evangelistiae Apocalypsin Commentarj*, in which he taught that there would be a future end-times Antichrist. Another Jesuit priest, Manuel De Lacunza, later wrote *La Venida del Mesias en Gloria y Magestad* in Spanish under a Jewish pen name, Juan Josafa Ben-Ezra. It was published in a number of places during the early 1800s. This book countered the Reformers' identification of the Antichrist with the papacy by arguing that there would be future antichrists instead.

A pastor named Edward Irving translated Lacunza's book into English, added his own lengthy preface, and had it published in London in 1827

as *Preliminary Discourse to the Work of Ben Ezra entitled the Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*.

Jesuit Futurism Leads to Darby's Dispensationalism

A reader of pastor Edward Irving's writings, John Nelson Darby, began teaching 'dispensationalism'—the theory that God's dealings with mankind are defined by a series of fixed time periods or *dispensations*. A future seven-year tribulation was one of many such time periods marked out on dispensationalist time charts. Dispensational futurists assign the fulfillment of the end times prophecies of Daniel and Revelation to that supposed seven-year period.

And it was this futurist approach that swept through the Protestant churches during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Born in England in 1800, Darby graduated from Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, and eventually took up Christian ministry. He helped form a small fellowship in Dublin that branched out to Plymouth, England and came to be called "Plymouth Brethren." It was to this group that Darby proclaimed the seven-year tribulation concept as part of his overall teaching of dispensationalism.

Darby spent a couple decades modifying and refining dispensations to fully develop the theory of dispensationalism. At first the teaching was confined to the Plymouth Brethren, but it was soon picked up by others. By the late 1800s major Protestant seminaries were coming under its influence, and dispensational timelines and tables were being published by a number of writers.

But dispensationalism did not widely influence the thinking of Christian lay people until it was popularized through the *Scotfield Reference Bible*. According to researcher Richard R. Reiter, Congregationalist pastor Cyrus I. Scofield came into a financial relationship with "some wealthy Plymouth Brethren." They enabled him and other pretribulationists to start the Sea Cliff Bible Conference in 1901 on Long Island, New York. (*Three Views on the Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulation* by Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Paul D. Feinberg, Douglas J. Moo, and Richard R. Reiter [Zondervan, 1996]) Less than a decade later Scofield incorporated Darby's ideas in the notes of his study Bible published in 1909. This gave Darby's teachings leverage to color the way many Bible readers understood Scripture.

A host of Bible teachers, pastors and non-fiction writers kept the dispensationalist theory alive during most of the twentieth century. Then,

more than a generation after Scofield, the novel *Left Behind* by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins spread the teaching among readers of popular fiction.

Some supporters of dispensationalism see foregleams of Darby's teachings in the writings of early Church penman Irenaeus and his disciple Hippolytus, who reigned as bishop of Rome from 200 to 235 A.D., but there is no clear evidence connecting Darby with these sources. In fact, the advocates of a variety of other end times interpretations point to other early Church writers to support their views as well. The problem is that those associated with the early Church during the centuries following the Apostles held a variety of views, just like Christians today. After quoting many of them, one researcher spoke of "the variety and complexity of patristic views concerning the Antichrist." ("Antichrist in the Early Church" by William C. Weinrich in the April/July 1985 issue of *Concordia Theological Quarterly*) So, the writings of the "Early Church Fathers" can be used to support a variety of interpretations. The writings that truly count are those found in the Holy Scriptures. And it was the great Bible translators and teachers Wycliffe, Hus, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley and Spurgeon who were led to the historicist approach to prophecy by their own Bible reading and study.

Some believe that the 'left behind' teachings originated with supernatural revelations to a teenage girl named Margaret MacDonald around 1830, and they set aside the teachings of Luther, Calvin and the other Reformers, to accept those new teachings. Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel writes,

"The story goes that in a meeting in England a woman began to exhort the Church through the gift of prophecy, and she said that the Lord was going to take His Church out and save it from the wrath to come. We're told that men like Darby and Scofield then began to popularize this view. . . . Why would the Lord reveal it to Luther, Calvin, or any of the Reformation Church leaders? They weren't living in the age when the Church was to be taken out."

(From an article titled "The Tribulation and the Church" by Chuck Smith found online, as of this writing, at http://www.CalvaryChapelRiverside.org/pdf_documents/TheTribulationAndTheChurch.pdf)

But, Margaret MacDonald and John Nelson Darby in the early 1800s weren't living "in the age when the Church was to be taken out" either. They lived two hundred years ago.

It is clear that "dispensationalism is not a part of the historic faith of

the church,” the conclusion reached by Clarence B. Bass, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Bethel Theological Seminary, in his book *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism: Its Historical Genesis and Ecclesiastical Implications*. (page 155) It is a relatively new teaching.

What if the Reformers were correct, rather than Darby and Scofield? What if, as Luther and Calvin indicated, the Antichrist is already ruling, and the dispensationalist interpretation keeps people from recognizing him? What if the return of Christ and the rapture are accompanied immediately by the pouring out of God’s wrath on this wicked world—without giving those who reject Christ the seven-year-long ‘second chance’ promised by the Left Behind novels?

Readers interested in a thorough refutation of the dispensationalist end-times vision may read my earlier book *LEFT BEHIND Answered Verse by Verse* which can be read for free online at LeftBehindAnswered.com. But this book will focus on a positive exposition of the historicism of Luther, Calvin and the other Reformers, enlightened by events of more recent history that appear to have fulfilled prophecy according to their interpretive approach.

Islamic Terror and Clergy Sex Abuse

In our modern world, especially since the World Trade Center's Twin Towers were toppled by Osama Bin Laden on September 11, 2001, billions of people's lives have been affected by Islamic terror—either directly through attacks at various locations around the world, or indirectly by security measures imposed at airports and other venues, by fear and suspicion, or by government surveillance of private conversations aimed at preventing additional attacks.

Simultaneously, ever since *The Boston Globe's* “Spotlight” team of investigative reporters uncovered the extent of Roman Catholic clergy sex abuse and the Vatican hierarchy's tolerance and systematic cover-up, millions of lives have also been affected either directly when the child of a friend or relative was shown to have been victimized or their local priest was named as a molester, or indirectly as the global extent of the scandal and cover-up undermined the faith of millions of believers, both Catholic and non-Catholic.

Historicists Would Not Have Been Surprised

Could there be an explanation in the Bible as to why these evils took place?

Yes. And readers familiar with the historicist Bible commentators would not have been surprised by either Islamic terror or the clergy sex abuse scandal. In fact, they would have anticipated both, as quotes in the next two chapters will show.

Applying historicism's time-tested methods to today's world through neohistoricism reminds us what Bible prophecy says about the Vatican and Islam. Luther, Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Sir Isaac Newton and other historicist commentators saw the Vatican and Islam in several Bible passages that spoke of the atrocities both would commit in the name of God, as the next two chapters will outline in detail.

Clergy Sex Abuse in the Light of Historicism

A turning point in Martin Luther's life that eventually led to the Protestant Reformation occurred in 1511 when young Catholic monk Luther made a pilgrimage to the Vatican in Rome. He expected a spiritually-uplifting experience. But instead he was shocked by what he saw—blatant commercialization and sexual immorality on the part of Vatican clergy. He is widely quoted as saying,

"No one can imagine, what sins and infamous actions are committed in Rome; they must be seen and heard to be believed; thus they are in the habit of saying, 'If there is a hell, Rome is built over it;' it is an abyss, whence issues every kind of sin."

Later, Luther wrote in his 1520 letter to Pope Leo X that "the Church of Rome, formerly the most holy of all Churches, has become the most lawless den of thieves, the most shameless of all brothels."

Thousands of Cases Reported Worldwide

Is it any wonder then, that some five hundred years later an investigative team of journalists at *The Boston Globe* would document far-reaching clergy sexual abuse of minors, tolerated for decades and systematically covered up by the Church's hierarchy? Accusations against individual priests began to receive wide publicity in the news media during the 1980s. In 2001 *The Boston Globe's* "Spotlight" team received a secret assignment to find out whether there was a connection between these cases—a systemic issue in the Church itself. Eventually, their findings, published beginning in early 2002, resulted in thousands of additional cases being reported in hundreds of locations worldwide.

The Cardinal, the Pope and the Vatican

But the most shocking aspect of the story was that bishops and cardinals routinely moved abusing priests to other parishes, where they continued to abuse children, and did their best to hide the evidence. In the Boston area alone, "When Bernard Cardinal Law, Archbishop of Boston, fled to the Vatican in 2002, he left behind a trail of human and financial wreckage: 550 victims abused by parish priests and court

judgments that eventually topped \$85 million,” according to the transcript of a WGBH radio news report found online at <http://www.pri.org/stories/2015-08-04/4000-miles-boston-search-disgraced-cardinal-bernard-law>. That report went on to say, “Law was assigned a comfortable post in Rome, where he disappeared from the headlines.” Two years after Law left Boston, Pope John Paul II appointed him to the prestigious position of Archbishop of the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, which many viewed as a reward for his misconduct.

And that was just Boston.

“U.S. bishops received complaints of sexual abuse by more than 6,000 priests, or 5.6 percent of the priests in the United States, between 1950 and 2011,” according to a June 2012 Philadelphia *Inquirer* article, and “More than 3,000 civil lawsuits have been filed against the church in the United States, which has paid out more than \$3 billion in settlements.”

But those numbers reflect only victims who complained to U.S. bishops or who filed civil lawsuits. “Most victims will never seek help or make their experience public,” according to Snapnetwork.org, the web site of SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests.

Many priests intimidated the children, telling them that no one would believe them, and threatening them with every sort of punishment if they told anyone about the abuse. In rare cases some children did speak up—only to be taken to another priest who then repeated the abuse. Other children were dismissed as naughty “liars” by the adult community. Most just kept the horrific experience (or long sequence of experiences) to themselves, blaming themselves, feeling dirty, feeling hopeless and condemned—throughout their childhood and on into adulthood.

Their emotional trauma is so great that most victims are not strong enough ever to speak up. Those who have been interviewed years later as adults typically describe lives filled with depression, suicidal thoughts, and desperation, often leading to a resort to drugs and alcohol in order to drown the pain. Many attempt or actually commit suicide.

The scandal of widespread clergy sex abuse and organized, systematic cover-up by the Church hierarchy surprised and shocked millions of people, and has arguably led to declining church attendance and loss of faith by Roman Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

But people familiar with the writings of the historicist Reformers would not have been surprised at all. Why not? Consider what these

writers knew and taught concerning the Vatican and the papacy for hundreds of years.

What Martin Luther, John Knox, Wycliffe, Tyndale, Wesley and Roger Williams Said about the Papacy

Martin Luther declared that “the Pope” is “the true Antichrist, of whom it is written that he sitteth in the temple of God, among the people.” (Martin Luther’s “Sermon for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity; Matthew 24:15-28” from his *Church Postil*, first published in 1525)

John Knox (c.1514-1572), the father of the Church of Scotland and Presbyterianism, wrote of “the vanity of the Papistical Religion, and the deceit, pride, and tyranny of that Roman Antichrist.” (*History of the Reformation of Religion within the Realm of Scotland* by John Knox, book 4, chapter 1)

But this notion did not arise first in the Reformation of the 1500s. During the early 1200s Eberhard II, archbishop of Salzburg, examined the history of the papacy and drew the same conclusion. In the mid-1300s Michael of Cesena (or Michael Sesenas) declared the Pope to be “Antichrist.” John Wycliffe (1320-1384) wrote that “It is supposed, and with much probability, that the Roman pontiff is the great Antichrist.” Jan Hus (1372-1417) declared a century before the Reformation that the pope was “antichrist, or at least the chief and principal minister or vicar of antichrist.” And John Calvin joined his contemporary, Luther, in making the same identification.

So, also, did English Bible translator William Tyndale (1490-1536). He is quoted in *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* as asking an acquaintance, “Do you not know that the pope is very Antichrist, whom the Scripture speaketh of? But beware what you say; for if you shall be perceived to be of that opinion, it will cost you your life.” And, not long after that, Tyndale did indeed pay with his life.

Roger Williams and John Wesley likewise agreed in attaching the title Antichrist to the papacy, and the 1646 Westminster Confession of Faith confirmed the same teaching. In the late 1800s preacher Charles Spurgeon summed up the prevailing view this way: “Who is this Pope of Rome? His Holiness? Call him not so, but call him His Blasphemy! His Profanity! His Impudence! What are he and his cardinals, and his legates, but the image and incarnation of Antichrist, to be in due time cast with the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire?” (Spurgeon’s *The Treasury of David—Psalm 108*)

So for hundreds and hundreds of years, from Eberhard in the 1200s to Spurgeon in the late 1800s, respected teachers and serious students of the Bible have concluded that the pope is an Antichrist. It was the majority opinion in Protestantism until the early 1900s, and many denominations still hold to this doctrine. Can it be dismissed as some sort of ‘anti-Catholic prejudice’?

Why Respected Teachers Said Such Aweful Things

Why has the pope been identified as Antichrist? Entire books have been written on the topic. I can hardly do it justice here. For more information than is found in this book, please turn to the writings of Luther, Calvin and the Reformers. Their works can be obtained through the inter-library loan desk of most public libraries and can be found online in the Christian Classics Ethereal Library at www.CCEL.org. Their reasoning revolves around the way the papacy has usurped the position of Christ himself. As the London Baptist Confession of 1689 puts it,

“The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order or government of the church, is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner; neither can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ.”

The pope’s self-exalting titles include Holy Father, Vicar of Christ, Successor of the Prince of the Apostles and Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church (from Pontifex Maximus, originally the title of the pagan high priest of Rome).

Also central to the thinking of those who have identified the papacy with the Antichrist, is the way the popes have enforced their power against ordinary people who studied the Bible and sought to follow Christ instead as head. Over a span of hundreds of years the Inquisition imprisoned, tortured, tried and executed countless thousands of believers. In the days of Luther and Calvin the smell of roasting human flesh still hung in the air from the flames where men and women were slowly burned alive. Later, stripped of its secular power by Napoleon’s conquest at the very end of the 1700s, the papacy began behaving better toward Bible-believers in Catholic lands. As a result, today’s evangelicals seem to have forgotten the papacy’s abuses. But C. H. Spurgeon was certain we would never forget. He said:

Whether it may be traced to want of will or want of inclination on the part of other establishments, it is

certain that the Popish Antichrist alone has been able to drink of the overflowing blood-cup filled by familiars and tormentors. Long pampered by the state, she came to be its lord and tyrant, using fire and sword, prison and rack, to work her accursed will.

The Inquisition was the masterpiece of infernal craft and malice, and its deeds were far more worthy of fiends than men. If the church of Rome could at this moment change its Ethiopian skin for ever, lay aside its leopard's spots, and become a pure community, ten thousand years of immaculate holiness and self-denying philanthropy could not avail to blot out the remembrance of the enormous crimes with which the Inquisition has loaded it.

There is a deep and indelible sentence of damnation written upon the apostate church by avenging justice for its more than infernal cruelties, and the curse is registered in heaven; nor can any pretences to present liberality reverse the condemnation which outraged humanity has pronounced against it; its infamy is engraved in the rock for ever.

Centuries of the most liberal policy would not convince mankind that Popery had become tolerant at heart; she wallowed so greedily in oppression, torture, and murder in her palmy days, that the foam of human gore hangs around her wolfish hugs, and men will not believe her to be a gentle lamb, let her bleat as she may. Against her common humanity is up in arms as much as evangelical religion.

("The Inquisition" by C. H. Spurgeon, from the August 1868 *Sword and Trowel* magazine)

Spurgeon was wrong—not about the papacy, but about mankind's memory and even the memory of evangelicals. Just as in our day one church after another is abandoning the biblical view of homosexual practice in favor of 'politically correct' thinking, so during the 1900s the Protestant churches put aside their founders' view of the pope, in the name of broad-minded tolerance.

Few today remember that Martin Luther called "the Church of Rome" "the most shameless of all brothels."

But the widespread clergy sex abuse scandal of recent decades surprises and puzzles only those who forgot, or who never read, what the historicist Reformers had to say.

Islamic Terror in the Light of Historicism

Folks who catch the daily news on radio, TV, or the Internet may see Islamic terror as a modern phenomenon, perhaps beginning with the September 11, 2001 attack on the Twin Towers of New York's World Trade Center. That is when it seems to have come to the attention of the general public. But historicist Bible commentators have been writing about Islam for a long time, with its attacks presented as a fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

Readers familiar with Muslim history know that 21st Century terrorists are simply following the pattern of Islam's founder, and the script spelled out in the Koran at 8:12, which says,

"I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them."

The classical historicist Bible commentators had additional insight on Islam—beyond such passages from the Koran. They had certain prophecies in the Hebrew and Christian Greek Scriptures, which they widely understood as foretelling the rise of Islam, and the things that Muslim jihadis would do.

Who Saw Islam Foretold in the Bible?

According to Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at Queensland Presbyterian Theological Seminary, in his article "Islam in the Bible" (found online at <http://www.historicism.net/readingmaterials/iitb.pdf>), dozens of historicist writers and preachers saw Islam prefigured in the Bible book of Revelation:

Also among the Protestant Reformers, then, Islam is seen to have been predicted also in the Book of Revelation. Thus: Luther (1522); Melancthon (1543); and Bullinger (1577). Soon afterward, this same view was advocated also by: Foxe (1584); Napier (1793); Downham (1603); Brightman (1614); Pareus (1618); Davenport (1633); and Mede (1637). Just before, and during, and right after the time of the Westminster Assembly—which itself tells Christians "to pray for the propagation of the Gospel and Kingdom of

Christ to all nations" and specifically for "the Turk"—this view is seen to have been championed also by: John Cotton (1639); Thomas Goodwin (1639); Thomas Parker (1646); James Durham (1657); and Increase Mather (1669).

Indeed, also from the eighteenth century onward—this view has had very many advocates. For it has been maintained, among others, even by: Campegius Vitringa (1705); Matthew Henry (1712); Jonathan Edwards (1739); John Gill (1758); George Stanley Faber (1806); Edward Bickersteth (1836); Louis Gaussen (1837); Edward Elliott (1845); Albert Barnes (1851); Apostolos Makrakis (1881); Philip Mauro (1908); Leroy Edwin Froom (1948)—and by the present writer, Francis Nigel Lee (2000).

Calvin and Luther lived in an era when people who chose to read the Bible and follow Jesus were being put to death by enemies of biblical Christianity. The pope of Rome was executing people who wanted to read and follow the Bible, and Islamic armies were conquering Christian lands and leading their inhabitants to renounce belief in Christ. Luther and Calvin identified both of those enemies as anti-Christ.

What Is the Name for Those Who Ban the Bible and Impose Death Sentences on Bible-Translators and Bible-Readers?

For centuries the Roman Catholic papacy had been using the Inquisition to stop ordinary people from reading the Bible in their own language. The Vatican was burning Bible-readers at the stake as “heretics.” Prominent among these were Czech Bible translator Jan Hus, executed in 1415, and English Bible translator William Tyndale, executed in 1536—but there were thousands of others killed by the Inquisition and other papal authorities. And, during the same time period, the armies of Islam were threatening Christendom from the east and from the west—Moors in Spain until the late 1400s and Ottoman Turks invading eastern Europe and even besieging Vienna, Austria, in 1529.

Francis Nigel Lee, Professor of Systematic Theology and Caldwell-Morrow Lecturer in Church History at the Queensland Presbyterian Theological College explained in his widely-published article “Luther on Islam and the Papacy,” that

“Rev. Dr. Luther believed, then, that the ‘two regimes, that of the Pope and that of the Turk, are no doubt the true Antichrist’—in the broader sense of that word. . . .
—Luther’s Works, Weimer ed., 52, 549.”

Christian Nations Forced to Become Muslim Nations

Sir Isaac Newton saw prophecy fulfilled in the Islamic conquest of the Middle East and North Africa. But before looking at what Newton

wrote, a brief history and geography lesson will help to put it in perspective.

The disciples of Jesus obeyed Christ's command to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19 NIV), and by the year 600 A.D. Christianity was the prevailing religion from the British Isles across Europe and Eurasia to the Black Sea, south to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, farther south to the Nile River in Egypt, and across North Africa to the straits of Gibraltar. The southern European countries and the lands we know today as Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Turkey and Iraq were largely Christian by the seventh century A.D. Then came the Islamic conquest of the mid-to-late 600s and early 700s. Today those same countries of North Africa and the Middle East are almost exclusively Muslim.

During the centuries after the Muslim armies swept across the region there were periods of intense pressure on the Christian inhabitants to convert to Islam, interspersed with other periods of hostile toleration of Christianity. Even during the best of times believers in Jesus were relegated to second-class citizenship, and were burdened with extra taxation for not being Muslims.

The Bible book of Acts and the letters of the Apostle Paul focus largely on cities in modern-day Turkey—Lystra, Iconium, Derbe, Galatia, Ephesus, Colossae. Tradition has it that the Christian church in Antioch, Turkey, near the border with Syria, was founded by the Apostle Peter in the year 37 A.D. And it was there that the term "Christians" was first used: "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." (Acts 11:26 NIV) The seven churches named in the opening chapters of the Bible book of Revelation were all located in Turkey. And the Apostle Paul's letters to the churches of the Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians were written to churches in Turkey. Today Turkey is 99.8% Muslim. It is illegal for Christians to preach the Gospel to Muslims, and Muslims who choose to follow Jesus may face violence and even death.

According to tradition the Christian Gospel was brought to Iraq by two of the original Twelve Apostles—Thomas and Thaddeus. And Iraq was largely Christian for centuries prior to the Islamic invasion. Modern Iraq is now 97% Muslim. Christians are forbidden to preach the Gospel to the Islamic majority, and Muslims who convert to Christianity may be killed.

Egypt was predominantly Christian for centuries prior to the Muslim invasion. Today Egypt is 90% Muslim, with only 10% of Egyptians professing Christianity.

Syria, more than 90% Muslim today, had been largely Christian for centuries.

Ancient Carthage covered the area known today as Tunisia and Algeria. It was a prominent center for Christian thought before the Islamic conquest, home to early Christian writers Tertullian and St. Augustine. Today Tunisia is 98% Muslim, and Algeria is 99% Muslim.

So, the Islamic conquest of this area was not a conquest of pagan lands. It was a conquest of Christian countries filled with Christian inhabitants.

Islamic Conquest Foretold in the Bible?

Daniel's Prophecies

Was this Muslim conquest foretold in the Bible? Some notable commentators see the spread of Islam in this passage from the book of Daniel:

“And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all. . . .

“And at the time of the end . . . the king of the north shall come . . . like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians [shall be] at his steps. . . .

“And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.”

—Daniel 11:36-45 KJV

Discussing Daniel 11:36-45, Sir Isaac Newton saw this passage as fulfilled in the Islamic conquest—the lands ruled by the Muslim Turks. He commented to the effect that

these nations compose the Empire of the Turks, and therefore this Empire is here to be understood by the King

of the North. (Newton's *The Prophecies of Daniel and The Apocalypse*, p. 189)

That Islamic empire and its successors held the Holy Land until the Turks suffered defeat along with their German allies during the First World War and Jerusalem was taken from them by the British in 1917. Considering Muslim hostility toward other religions, along with the oppression of women in Islamic countries, this passage's description of a king rejecting the gods of his fathers and the desire of women could well fit Islam.

In his article "Islam in the Bible" Dr. F. N. Lee writes:

In Daniel 11:37, that Prophet predicts yet more about this tyrant who was so terrible that his coming was predicted already so many centuries before it fully came to pass. There, that Prophet declared: "Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god. For he shall magnify himself above all."

Luther comments: 38 "The coarse undiligent Mohammed takes all wives, yet has none; the chaste Pope takes no wife, but yet has all wives.... He who has no wife, has all wives. He who has all wives, has none. What happens? This is what happens -- the unashamed undiligent Mohammed makes no pretence of chastity, and (like the whoremonger) takes as many 'wives' as he wishes. Thus he has no marriage and cannot have a marriage -- and is thus without wife, and in no state of matrimony."

Comments Calvin: 39 "Some refer this prophecy to the Pope and to Mahomet, and the phrase 'the love of women' seems to give probability to this view. For Mahomet allowed to men the brutal liberty of chastising their wives, and thus he corrupted that conjugal love and fidelity which binds the husband to the wife.... Mahomet allowed full scope to various lusts -- by permitting a man to have a number of wives. This seems like an explanation."

Those who think the Pope to be intended here -- remind us of their enforcing celibacy, by means of which the honour of marriage is trodden underfoot.... We observe, then, some slight correspondence.... As Mahomet invented a new form of religion, so did the Pope. True indeed!

(Footnote 38) Dr. M. Luther's *Deutscher Thesaurus* (*Deutscher Thesaurus des Hochgelerten wertberuembten und theuren Man D. Mart. Luthers*), ed. T. Kirchner [Franckfort am Mayn, 1570], Luedenscheid: Christlicher Verlag Johann Berg, 1983 rep., pp. 407

(Footnote 39) J. Calvin: *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel* [1561], Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948, II:346.

So, as Dr. Lee notes, both Martin Luther and John Calvin spoke of Islam's role in fulfilling Daniel's prophecies.

Historicists Saw Islam Foretold in the Book of Revelation

In that same article Dr. F. N. Lee writes further that the symbolic language of John's Revelation (chapters 9 and 16) pointed forward to the Muslim Saracens and Turks, whose conquests spread Islam as a divine punishment against an apostate Church:

"When the fifth angel sounded his trumpet, wrote John, 'I saw a star fall from the sky...and he opened the bottomless pit. And there arose a smoke out of the pit.... And out of the smoke, locusts came upon the Earth.... And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the Earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those who do not have the seal of God upon their foreheads.'

This seems to be descriptive of the Saracens, who followed Mohammed like locusts. However, they had no power to shake the faith of those Trinitarians who had in baptism been sealed with the mark of the living God upon their foreheads. "Then the sixth angel sounded [his trumpet]. And I heard a voice say... 'Loosen the four Angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates!' Then the four Angels were unleashed...to slay the third part of men."

This seems to describe the actions of the islamified Turks when they would later cross the River Euphrates on their way from Turkmenistan toward their new home in Turkey. They would slaughter many, and indeed succeed in ousting an idolatrous Church from that entire region.

Later, after the angels finish sounding their trumpets, there follows God's pouring out of his seven last plagues upon a wayward civilization. Wrote John: "Then the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates. And its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared.""

(<http://www.historicism.net/readingmaterials/iitb.pdf>)

Historicist Thomas Goodwin (1600-1679) writes concerning the symbolic trumpets and vials (or bowls) in Revelation, that the Islamist Saracens and Turks fulfilled prophecy by taking over land formerly controlled by the fallen Roman Empire—the pope ruling over the western half of that territory, and the Muslims ruling over the eastern half:

First He ruins the imperial western state and power in Europe by the four first trumpets... in the 8th chapter.... Then [He ruins] the imperial eastern state which stood after the other..., first by the Saracens [and] then by the Turks (and these two are the fifth and

sixth trumpets) which two possess all that eastern part unto this day....

That eastern part of it is left possessed by the Turks, chapter 9.... This western part of it, in Europe -- being by the Goths broken into ten kingdoms -- they all consented to give their power to the Beast, the Pope...

These two, the Pope and the Turk, both enemies to Christ, thus succeeding in the [Roman] empire and sharing the two parts of it between them -- we see.... Mohammedanism, under the Turk, tyranniseth in the one; and idolatry, under the Pope, overspreads the other...

The plagues of these vials are the contents of the 15th and 16th chapters. The first five vials do dissolve and by degrees ruin the Pope's power in the west. Then the sixth vial breaks the power of the Turk in the east...

(T. Goodwin: An Exposition of the Revelation, in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, Edinburgh: James Nichol, rep. 1961, III:27-29, as quoted by FN Lee in "Islam in the Bible")

Colonial American Congregationalist theologian and missionary Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), who served also as president of Princeton University, expressed the historic view that prevailed in the Church for hundreds of years that the Islamic sweep over the remnant of the eastern Roman Empire was foretold in Scripture—in the horsemen of Revelation 9:15-19, which says:

The four angels were freed who had been prepared for that hour and day and month and year, so that they might kill one third of mankind. The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million. I heard the number of them. Thus I saw the horses in the vision, and those who sat on them, having breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of lions. Out of their mouths proceed fire, smoke, and sulfur. By these three plagues were one third of mankind killed: by the fire, the smoke, and the sulfur, which proceeded out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths, and in their tails. For their tails are like serpents, and have heads, and with them they harm.

Jonathan Edwards summed up his historicist interpretation this way, applying the passage to the spread of Islam:

The Mahometan kingdom is another of mighty power and vast extent, set up by Satan against the kingdom of Christ. ... And then the Turks, who were originally different from the Saracens, became followers of Mahomet, and conquered all the Eastern empire. They began their empire about the year of Christ twelve hundred and ninety-six; began to invade Europe in the year thirteen hundred; took Constantinople, and so became masters of all the Eastern empire, in the year fourteen hundred and fifty-three. And thus all the cities and countries where stood those famous churches of which we read in the New Testament, as

Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, &c. now became subject to the Turks. These are supposed to be prophesied of by the horsemen in the 9th chapter of Revelation, beginning with the 15th verse.

(Quoted from Jonathan Edwards' classic, *A History of the Work of Redemption*)

Islam Not Just a Religion

In our modern world political observers in the West have expressed concern over Islamists rising to political power in Muslim countries of the Middle East and North Africa. The world took notice when an Islamic revolution in Iran brought the Ayatollahs to power in the 1970s, and again when the “Arab Spring” of 2011 toppled secular dictators across the region and gave more political power to Islamic political parties. Dramatic events in Afghanistan and Iraq replaced secular leaders there with others determined to impose Sharia Law based on the Muslim holy book, the Koran.

But, as documented above, Islamic political power is really nothing new. In fact, from its beginnings in the seventh century, Islam was both a religion and a political power. The Constitution of Medina united a few Arab tribes under the prophet Mohammed, and then they conquered Mecca, also on the Arabian Peninsula. During the next few years the lands we know today as Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Iraq fell under Muslim control. Egypt was seized from the Byzantine Empire in the year 645. (Still, historians report that Egypt was majority Christian until around 1400 A.D.)

The prevailing model in countries that are overwhelmingly Muslim, is that Christians are forbidden to preach the Gospel to others. Christian evangelism is outlawed, and conversion to Christianity is illegal. Muslims who decide to follow Jesus may be punished with death—either through the judicial system or by way of extra-judicial mob violence, with authorities turning a blind eye.

There are many Christians who believe that an Antichrist will arise someday during a future tribulation, and that this future Antichrist will make it difficult for believers to practice Christianity. But even today a sizeable portion of the world's population already lives under such circumstances. In April 2012 alone, the news media reported violent Muslim attacks on Christian churches in Kenya, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Nigeria, Sudan and Tunisia, criminal charges of apostasy or blasphemy being brought against Christians in Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran and

Pakistan, and Christians being otherwise abused or oppressed by Muslim authorities in Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

Could anything be more “anti”-Christ than that?

Understanding Revelation’s “Locusts”

As mentioned above, historicist writers have seen Islam foreshadowed in the symbolic locusts of Revelation chapter 9:1-12, which says:

The fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from the sky which had fallen to the earth. The key to the pit of the abyss was given to him.

He opened the pit of the abyss, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke from a burning furnace. The sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke from the pit.

Then out of the smoke came locusts on the earth, and power was given to them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were told that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those people who don’t have God’s seal on their foreheads.

They were given power not to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion, when it strikes a person. In those days people will seek death, and will in no way find it. They will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

The shapes of the locusts were like horses prepared for war. On their heads were something like golden crowns, and their faces were like people’s faces. They had hair like women’s hair, and their teeth were like those of lions. They had breastplates, like breastplates of iron. The sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, or of many horses rushing to war. They have tails like those of scorpions, and stings. In their tails they have power to harm men for five months.

They have over them as king the angel of the abyss. His name in Hebrew is “Abaddon,” but in Greek, he has the name “Apollyon.” The first woe is past. Behold, there are still two woes coming after this.

The dispensationalist novels of the Left Behind series portray these ‘locusts’ as actual insects, with the novel’s protagonists swinging tennis racquets to knock the freakish bugs out of the air. But historicists have always seen these locusts as symbolic—representing the Islamic hordes that plagued unfaithful Christendom for centuries.

Dr. F.N. Lee writes in his article “Islam in the Bible”:

Those horse-like "locusts" went forth unto conquest; in regal attire; with savage appearance; and armed to the teeth. Predicted John: "On their heads were, as it were, crowns of gold; but their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. And they had breastplates like iron

breastplates. And the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots of many horses running unto battle."

Jihad!

For, as from A.D. 622, Mohammad's Arabian armies of Muslim horsemen swept not only northward and eastward—but also westward across Christian North Africa and then on into Western Europe. Thus they terrorized the previously-'christianized' Armenia, Cyprus, Crete, Syria, Persia, Kazakstan, Babylonia, Arabia, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, Numidia, Mauretania, Sicily, Spain, Portugal, Sardinia, Corsica, and France—until the great Charles Martel the 'Hammer' finally stopped them in A.D. 732 at the Battle of Tours in Northern France.

Writes Rev. Prof. Dr. Alexander Keith: "There is practically no part of the entire Book [of Revelation] which is interpreted so uniformly as the exposition of the fifth and sixth seals.... It is applied to the Saracens and the Turks." Indeed, Professor Davis (in his *Short History of the Near East*) adds: "The cloud of the Saracenic invasion from the Arabian deserts rolled northward!" Cf. Revelation 9:7b-9.

In his *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse*, originally published in 1733, Sir Isaac Newton commented similarly on the symbolic locusts in Revelation chapter 9, applying the passage to the rise of the Islamic empire or caliphate:

The King of these locusts was the Angel of the bottomless pit, being chief governor as well in religious as in civil affairs, such as was the Caliph of the Saracens. Swarms of locusts often arise in Arabia felix, and from thence infest the neighbouring nations and so are a very fit type of the numerous armies of Arabians invading the Romans. They built Bagdad A.D. 766, and reigned over Persia, Syria, Arabia, Egypt, Africa and Spain. (page 298)

Colonial Congregationalist minister and missionary Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) expressed the same view when he wrote this about Revelation's locusts in his book, *A History of the Work of Redemption*:

The two great works of the devil, in this space of time, against the kingdom of Christ, are his creating his Antichristian [papal] and Mahometan kingdoms; which both together comprehend the ancient Roman empire; the kingdom of Antichrist [the pope] the Western, and the Mahometan kingdom the Eastern, empire.

As the Scriptures in the book of Revelation represent it, it is in the destruction of these that the glorious victory of Christ, at the introduction of the glorious times of the church, will mainly consist. . . .

First, the Saracens were some of his [Mohammed's] followers, who were a people of Arabia, where Mahomet

lived, and who about the year seven hundred, dreadfully wasted the Roman empire.—They overran a great many countries belonging to the empire, and continued their conquests for a long time. These are supposed to be meant by the locusts mentioned in the 9th chapter of Revelation.

Islam Not a Separate World Religion, but Rather a Departure from Christianity

Contrary to the popular stories of a future ‘Antichrist’ who arises somewhere outside the Church, and then attacks the Church, the Bible’s definition specifies that an Antichrist “went out from among us.” (1 John 2:18-19) How does history show that to be the case for Islam?

Islam is, in fact, the only major world religion based on a foundation of refuting Christian belief. While Buddhism and Hinduism affirm their own doctrines and teachings, Islam started out from the very beginning agreeing with Christians that Jesus was a representative sent by God, while denying that he was God’s Son. In fact, one of the chief tenets of Islam—adopted to repudiate the teachings of Christianity—is the assertion that God has no son.

The founders of Hinduism and Buddhism knew nothing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but the founders of the Islamic religion were already familiar with the Christian Gospel message, and they rejected it—denying that Jesus is the Son of God.

Interestingly, that is exactly how the Bible describes the “Antichrist.” There are only three passages in the Bible that use the term “Antichrist,” and they are all found in the letters of the Apostle John. This is what he wrote:

“you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. . . . They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. . . . Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. . . . I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.”

— 1 John 2:18-26 NIV

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.”

— 1 John 4:1-3 NIV

“Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.”

— 2 John 7 NIV

Islam certainly fits that description. Mohammed rejected what he had learned about the Son of God, and started a new sect that denies the Son.

Jesus is discussed over and over again throughout the Muslim holy book, the *Koran*, where he is called “Isa, the son of Marium” (Jesus, the son of Mary). The Koran admonishes Mohammed’s followers to believe in the revelation given by God “to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus.” (2:136) It says that Jesus was sent by God, empowered to do miracles and strengthened through the Holy Spirit. (2:87, 253) It acknowledges that he healed lepers, gave sight to the blind and raised the dead by the power of God. (5:110) It affirms that Jesus was born of a virgin and was taken up to God’s presence. (19:20; 4:158) It speaks of the crucifixion, but claims that someone else was crucified in Jesus’ place. (4:157)

And then Islam goes on to deny that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God, and instead lowers him to a position on a par with all the other prophets.

According to ancient church writer John of Damascus, in his *Fount of Knowledge* written in the year 749, Mohammed was conversant with the Old and New Testaments, and with an Arian monk—so he learned the basics of Christianity, and then departed from Christianity by devising his own religious teachings:

They are descended from Ishmael, [who] was born to Abraham of Agar, and for this reason they are called both Agarenes and Ishmaelites... From that time to the present a false prophet named Mohammed has appeared in their midst. This man, after having chanced upon the Old and New Testaments and likewise, it seems, having conversed with an Arian monk, devised his own heresy.

Dr. F.N. Lee explained in his article, “Islam in the Bible”:

It is significant that Mohammed derived his antitrinitarian unitarianism from Anti-Christian Arabian Judaists—also with the assistance of an Arian called Joannes Antiochenus. His heretical christology, Mohammed got from sub-christian sects in Arabia. These he patched all together, with the help of his friend Baheira or Sergius, who himself became a Muslim after apostasizing from Nestorianism

So, Professor Lee traced Mohammed’s teachings on Christ to apostate

‘Christian’ groups that flourished in Arabia at that time.

So, Islam is actually an apostasy from Christianity, and therefore fits John’s description of “antichrists” who “went out from among us.” (1 John 2:18-19) Moreover, Islam forbids its subjects from becoming followers of Jesus, from accepting him as their Lord and Savior. Those who do embrace Christ face intense persecution, prison and even death.

Their stories seldom become headlines in Western news media, but there are currently a number of Muslim converts to Christianity on death row in strict Muslim countries, convicted in court of such offenses as “apostasy,” “leaving Islam,” or “insulting the Prophet Mohammed.” And there are many others who have been murdered by relatives or neighbors for the same reasons, with Muslim police and authorities turning a blind eye.

So, Islam also establishes itself as being “anti,” or opposed to, Christ in the way that it actively blocks millions from coming to faith in the Son of God.

‘If you become a Christian, we will kill you.’ That is what Islam officially teaches more than a billion of its followers worldwide.

According to the Wikipedia article “Apostasy in Islam”

Until the late 1800s, the vast majority of Islamic scholars . . . held that for adult men, apostasy in Islam was a crime as well as a sin, an act of treason punishable with the death penalty

. . .

The majority of modern Muslim scholars continue to hold the traditional view that the death penalty for apostasy is required by the two primary sources of Sharia - the Quran and the Hadiths

Sometimes the death sentence is imposed by governments. Other times the execution is carried out by neighborhood thugs. But it is the official position of Islamic authorities that Muslim converts to Christianity must be killed according to Islamic law. And it is a threat that does not have to be carried out very often to accomplish its intended result—to intimidate Muslims and prevent them from choosing to follow Jesus.

A popular notion among many American churchgoers today is that a future Antichrist will arise who will make it punishable by death if anyone declares himself to be a follower of Jesus. But that is already the case in much of the world where Islam holds sway.

If the papacy has earned the title of Antichrist, then Islam deserves this title even more so, especially in our day. Using the Inquisition and other instruments, the papacy put thousands of Bible-believers to death for their faith over the centuries, and today Islam does the same to any who dare preach the Gospel or embrace Christ within its borders. Calvin compared Islam and the papacy this way: “The revolt, it is true, has spread more widely, for Mahomet, as he was an apostate, turned away the Turks, his followers, from Christ.” Calvin elaborated that “the sect of Mahomet was like a violent bursting forth of water, that took away about the half of the Church by its violence. It remained, also, that Antichrist should infect the remaining part with his poison.” (Calvin’s *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*) See also the article “Calvin on Islam” by Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee at <http://www.dr-fnlee.org/docs6/calvislam/calvislam.pdf>

The ‘Man of Sin’ Sitting in God’s Place on Temple Mount

Islam has also fulfilled Bible prophecy by constructing the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock on Temple Mount in Jerusalem. How so?

As noted earlier in this book, historicists have applied to the Islamic Empire the passage in Daniel chapter 11 which speaks of a king entering “the glorious land” (Israel), and which climaxes in these words:

“And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain . . .”

—Daniel 11:45 KJV

Jerusalem’s Temple Mount is clearly the only “glorious holy mountain” in the Holy Land. “The entire top of the mountain where the Temple is built is holy.” (Ezekiel 43:12 NLT) And that is where Islam has built its Al Aqsa Mosque and its Dome of the Rock—in God’s place on Temple Mount. That seems to be what Paul speaks of prophetically in his second letter to the Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians 2:4 speaks of a coming person or entity called the “man of sin” or man of lawlessness “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” (KJV)

The *New International Version* puts it this way: “He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.” (NIV)

Preterists see this as having been fulfilled centuries ago by an ancient Greek ruler or a Roman Emperor. Dispensationalists say that Jerusalem's temple will be rebuilt during a future seven-year Tribulation, so that a future antichrist may take his seat there. "Clearly, if the temple is to be desecrated at that point, it must be built earlier," say Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins in their book *Are We Living in the End Times?* (page 123) Either way—ancient past or distant future—this 'man of sin' is no danger to us today, according to the preterist and dispensationalist interpretations.

But, what if they are wrong? What if the 'man of sin' is present now in today's world? Then, he would be a danger we ought to make ourselves aware of.

Historicists over the centuries have typically taken a position quite different from the preterists and dispensationalists. Many have concluded that Paul was referring, not to the Jerusalem temple, but to God's spiritual temple, the Church. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple." (1 Cor. 3:16-17) So, perhaps he wrote to the Thessalonians, too, of the spiritual temple—Christ's church—rather than a reconstructed building in Jerusalem.

Did Paul mean the 'man of sin' would take God's place in the Church, or on Temple Mount in Jerusalem? Or both?

In his commentary on 2 Thessalonians written in the 1800s, Albert Barnes acknowledged that "Most Protestant commentators have referred it to the great apostasy under the Papacy, and by the 'man of sin,' they suppose there is allusion to the Roman Pontiff, the pope." But Barnes also acknowledged that "Others have supposed that the reference is to Mohammed."

"The entire top of the hill where the Temple is built is holy," according to Ezekiel 43:12 (LB), and Islamic temples called the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque sit there today, on Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Canadian Pastor Joe Haynes, wrote this in his fascinating April 2014 article "An Historicist Exposition of Daniel 8" found on his web site at <http://historicism.com/Haynes/Daniel8Exposition.pdf>

"The regular burnt offering" is removed and the "place of his sanctuary" is overthrown. Until recent times it had been long forgotten that before Omar built his famous Al-

Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock on Temple Mount in Jerusalem, there was a Byzantine Christian church on the site. Archaeology has "turned-up" evidence that a once impressive structure, almost certainly a church given the dominance of Christianity among the Byzantines and the significance of the Temple Mount, stood on that location during Christian times, before it was demolished and replaced by a mosque in 687 AD. (<http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Was-the-Aksa-Mosque-built-over-the-remains-of-a-Byzantine-church>) This fits the overthrow of the "place of his sanctuary" when it is kept in mind that the word "temple" in Hebrew does not appear at all in this chapter. Rather, this phrase, "m'kon miqdashu" could also just mean "the foundation of his sanctuary", "the ground where his sanctuary sits", etc. In other words, merely the site of Temple Mount . . .

So it's not a stretch at all, and is likely a safer, less interpretive translation, to read *hatamid* as "the regular worship". And that is what was removed, not only each time the Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586BC and then by the Romans in 70AD—but also when that lost Christian church of the Byzantines was razed in order to make way for Omar's mosque. . . .

From that point forward, from the collapse of the Christian Levant, the building of Omar's Al-Aqsa Mosque on Temple Mount, the expansion of the Muslim Arab Empire and the later rise of the Muslim Ottoman Empire, these Islamic powers, more than any other candidate in history, accurately and comprehensively fulfilled the predictions of these verses, and particularly these words of verse 12, "it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper."

Could it be that a physical temple has already been built on Temple Mount in Jerusalem, occupied by Daniel's "man of sin," but we have failed to recognize it? That notion may seem absurd. But consider a similar situation: The long-awaited Messiah appeared, and the people who had been waiting for him failed to recognize him. They expected a king, and he came as a carpenter's son; they expected a royal birth, and he was born in a stable; they expected a conquering liberator, but he died on a cross. No wonder they failed to recognize him! Similarly, could it be that the temple has already been rebuilt, but students of prophecy have failed to recognize it?

As a matter of fact, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem does not sit empty today. It is occupied by the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. The latter bears an inscription saying it was built by "the servant of God Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan, emir of the faithful, in the year seventy-two." (72 in the Muslim calendar is 691-692 A.D.) Do the builders and

maintainers of the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome fit the biblical description of an Antichrist—the ‘man of sin’?

The inscriptions on the walls of the Dome of the Rock make bold declarations about Jesus Christ. Are they the sort of statements we should expect of an Antichrist? Consider these, which appear prominently displayed in Arabic, and notice that they deny that Jesus is the Son of God:

"Oh God, bless Your Messenger and Your servant Jesus son of Mary. Peace be on him the day he was born, and the day he dies, and the day he shall be raised alive!"

"God is only One God. Far be it removed from His transcendent majesty that He should have a son."

"The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a Messenger of God, and His Word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him."

"Such was Jesus, son of Mary... It befitteth not God that He should take unto Himself a son."

"Praise be to God, Who hath not taken unto Himself a son."

Notice how closely these inscriptions fit the Apostle John's definition of an Antichrist as "the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father." (1 John 2:22-23)

Similar statements denying the Son of God are made on a regular basis in the Islamic preaching that takes place in the Al Aqsa Mosque. So, could the Dome of the Rock or the Al Aqsa Mosque, which sit in the place of God's temple on Temple Mount in Jerusalem, be the antichrist temple where the 'man of sin' sits in God's place?

Consider, again, this Bible passage that commentators often apply to the Antichrist:

"Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."

—2 Thessalonians 2:4 KJV

The New International Version puts it this way:

“He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”

—2 Thessalonians 2:4 NIV

Islam opposes all other forms of worship, but what about God’s temple in Jerusalem? Has Islam set itself up there, in God’s place? God’s temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by Roman armies almost two thousand years ago. Some students of the Bible expect a future Antichrist to build another temple there, to fulfill the prophecy of 2 Thessalonians 2:4. But Islam has already built a temple there. Might the prophecy be fulfilled by the structures sitting in God’s place on Temple Mount since shortly after the Islamic conquest?

To fulfill the prophecy, is it necessary for someone or some group to say the words “I am God”? Or is sitting in God’s place equivalent to declaring oneself to be God?

Islam Was Foretold to Wreak Havoc

As we have seen above, historicist Bible commentators have written about Islam for five hundred years, or more—from the time of Martin Luther until now. They have identified the Muslim conquest of previously Christian lands as a judicial punishment sent by God against corrupt Christendom.

The historicists saw Islam foretold in Daniel’s prophecies, in Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians, in the Apostle John’s letters, and in the book of Revelation. They saw Islam as an apostate antichrist religion and as a conquering empire, opposing God and opposing the people of God.

But there remain a number of Bible prophecies—covered later in this book—that foretold Islam’s role in the Holocaust, in the First and Second World Wars, in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and in the global community’s efforts to resolve the status of Jerusalem.

The historicists shed light on these, and they will help us better understand why we see Islamic terror striking fear into hearts today.

“This Generation” and “the Abomination of Desolation”

Of all the words of Jesus recorded in the Bible, about twenty-five percent of his teaching was devoted to prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, the scattering of the Jewish people worldwide, and the end of the world. He spoke of these events in advance and discussed the rewards and punishments that nations and individuals would experience.

Jesus evidently had a number of things in mind when he spoke on these matters, and he sought to accomplish several things:

- to forewarn his first-century followers when to flee the city of Jerusalem so that they would survive its destruction by the legions of the Roman Empire
- to bring others who heard his message to repentance—both those who heard him speak in person, and those who would read his words down through the centuries
- to motivate believers to keep on the watch for Christ’s return by paying attention to world events
- to let everyone know that God has already determined the outcome of human history, and that his victory over the nations is guaranteed
- to make it clear that those who obey God will be rewarded and those who ignore God will be punished when God intervenes to put an end to human rule and establish the rule of the Kingdom of God.

In Matthew’s gospel, chapters 23 through 25 are devoted to these matters. But, because the discussion ranges from first century events through end times events, parts of it can be difficult to understand. The call to repentance comes through loud and clear. And the assurance of God’s ultimate victory over rebellious mankind is equally clear. But the exact timing of the events foretold in these chapters is less certain—because Jesus left it that way intentionally.

The entire twenty-third chapter of Matthew's gospel is devoted to Jesus' denunciation of the Jewish religious leaders as "hypocrites" who would provoke God's punishment upon the Jewish nation within that generation. He told them,

"Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."

—Matthew 23:36 KJV

And that generation of Jews who heard Jesus speak actually did see Jerusalem and its temple destroyed.

Taking "this generation" Out of Context

But when Jesus again uses the expression "this generation" a few verses later at Matthew 24:34, dispensational futurists insist on applying it to a different generation at the end of the world. Many writers have tried to identify it with a particular generation in modern times. Watchtower founder Charles Taze Russell identified it with "the 'generation' from 1878 to 1914." (Russell's *Studies in the Scriptures*, vol. 4, 1908 edition, page 605) His successors in the Jehovah's Witnesses leadership changed it to "the generation that saw the events of 1914." (*Awake!* magazine, October 22, 1995, page 4). *Left Behind* authors LaHaye and Jenkins say, "we believe 'this generation' refers to those alive in 1948. It may, however, mean those alive in 1967 or those alive in some yet future war when the Jews will once again gain total control of their holy city." (Their book *Are We Living in the End Times?* page 59)

But Matthew's chapters 23 and 24 form a continuous discourse. Matthew tells us Jesus spoke the words found in chapter 23, then "went out, and departed from the temple" (24:1) and spoke the words found in chapter 24. Is it reasonable to believe that Jesus would say "this generation" to refer to his own contemporaries and then use the same term with a different meaning a few moments later?

Let's look more closely at chapter 23. What "things" are referred to here? And which "generation"? Jesus makes it unmistakably clear.

In Matthew chapter 23 Jesus was addressing the Pharisees. He called down "woes" upon them: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" because they shut up the kingdom of heaven (vs. 13), because they devour widows' houses (vs. 14), because they make disciples for hell (vs. 15), because they elevate gold above the temple (vss. 16-22), because they engage in nit picking while neglecting the weightier matters of the law (vss. 23-24), and because they appear outwardly clean but are inwardly corrupt (vss. 25-33). He then reminded the Pharisees that they

are “the sons of them who killed the prophets” and called them “ye generation of vipers.” (vs. 31, 33) After foretelling that they would persecute and kill his disciples the same way their fathers killed the prophets, “that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zechariah, son of Barachiah,” Jesus concluded with the sentence above: “Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.”

Clearly this was the generation that stood there in Jesus’ presence, the generation he was addressing in person. The punishment for their hypocrisy and their wickedness would come upon that very generation. Just upon the scribes and Pharisees? No, in his next sentence Jesus went on to say, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them who are sent unto thee.” The punishment would come upon those religious leaders and their city of Jerusalem in that very generation.

Jesus pronounced these words in or around 30 - 33 A.D., and the armies of the Roman empire brought the destruction Jesus predicted upon the city in 70 A.D., less than forty years later, within the lifetime of “this generation.”

So, Jesus’ use of the term “this generation” in Matthew chapter 23 defines his use of the same term in chapter 24, and makes it likely that the Great Tribulation he goes on to describe there began upon the Jewish people back in the first century, and is not an end-times event yet to come.

Likewise, Jesus’ pronouncement to the Jewish religious leaders that “your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:38 KJV) is a key to understanding “the abomination of desolation” that Jesus refers to sixteen verses later.

“Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . ,” Jesus said. “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” (Matt. 23:37-38 KJV) He was warning of the coming desolation of the Holy City and its temple. And he was still speaking of the same thing when he quoted Daniel about “the abomination of desolation” and the need for “them who are in Judea” to “flee into the mountains.” (Matt. 24:15-16 KJV) All of this happened in 70 A.D., when the city and temple were desolated by Roman armies.

But Jesus’ disciples asked him a question that complicated the issue. Their question involved not just the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, but also the end of the world—and the timing of all these things.

They asked their question shortly after Jesus finished speaking as above in the temple:

“Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ‘Do you see all these things?’ he asked. ‘I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.’ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’ Jesus answered: ‘Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, “I am the Christ,” and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.””

—Matthew 24:1-8 NIV

So, the question the disciples asked Jesus had three parts to it:

- (1) When will this happen?—the Jerusalem temple being torn down, stone by stone.
- (2) What will be the sign of Jesus’ coming?
- (3) What will be the sign of the end of the age?

Jesus went on to answer them with a lengthy answer that covered all three parts of their question. So, it becomes necessary to discern which parts of Jesus’ response refer to the first century devastation on Jerusalem, and which parts apply to his coming and the end of the world.

The Gospel writers Matthew, Mark and Luke all recorded this discussion, each mentioning some different things Jesus said, but all three presenting the same basic message. The great Reformation teacher Martin Luther explained the differences among the three Gospel accounts this way, starting with a comment on Matthew, chapter 24:

In this chapter there is a description of the end of two kingdoms; of the kingdom of the Jews, and also of the kingdom of the world. But the two Evangelists, Matthew and Mark, unite the two—and do not follow the order as Luke did, for they have nothing more in view than to relate and give the words of Christ, and are not concerned about what was said either before or after.

But Luke takes special pains to write clearly and in the true order, and relates this discourse twice; first briefly in the 19th chapter, where he speaks of the destruction of the Jews at Jerusalem; afterwards in the 21st chapter he speaks of both, one following the other. Notice therefore that Matthew unites the two and at the same time conceives the end, both of the Jewish nation and

of the world. He therefore cooks both into one soup. But if you want to understand it, you must separate and put each by itself, that which really treats of the Jews, and that which relates to the whole world.

(That quote is from Martin Luther's "Sermon for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity; Matthew 24:15-28" from his *Church Postil*, first published in 1525)

The best way to grasp what Jesus said would be to read the Gospels yourself—especially Matthew chapters 23 through 25, and parallel accounts in Mark chapter 13 and Luke chapters 19 and 21. (For help comparing the three accounts side by side, you may wish to use a book like my own *Parallel Gospels in Harmony—with Study Guide*.)

Desolation Inflicted by ‘the abomination of desolation’

One of the most controversial aspects of Jesus’ prophecy is his reference to ‘the abomination that causes desolation’:

“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”

—Matthew 24:15-16 NIV

Many modern teachers say that “the holy place” is a temple that will be built in Jerusalem in the future, and that a coming Antichrist will then desecrate that temple. But a closer examination of Jesus’ own words places “the abomination that causes desolation” in the first century, when the Romans entered the existing temple and subsequently desolated it and the city of Jerusalem.

The immediate context should make this clear. Just a few verses before mentioning “the abomination that causes desolation,” Matthew records that Jesus said, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . Look, your house is left to you desolate.” (Matt. 23:38 NIV) That same “house” or temple would be left desolate by something that causes desolation—the abomination that causes desolation.

Two verses further on, at Matthew 24:1, we read that “Jesus left the temple” and the disciples called “his attention to its buildings.” In the next verse, Jesus tells them about “these things” that “not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.” (vs. 2) In verse 3 the disciples ask, when will “this” happen? And thirteen verses later Jesus explains that the desolation will be accomplished by “the abomination that causes desolation.” (vs. 15) Where, then, in this compact discussion, did Jesus switch from speaking about the temple he

and his disciples were looking at, to bring up what would happen to a different temple in the distant future? Nowhere! The reasonable conclusion that any reader would normally reach is that the same temple forms the subject of the discussion throughout these seventeen verses. It is the same temple that is left “desolate” and faces “desolation.”

Matthew’s “abomination” = Luke’s “armies”

The differences between Matthew’s coverage and Luke’s reporting on this sermon sheds light on what Jesus said and helps us understand what he meant. Writing initially for a Jewish audience familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, Matthew included Jesus’ words quoting the prophet Daniel. Luke, on the other hand, captured words that would be more understandable to his Greek-speaking audience. In Luke’s parallel account we read that Jesus said,

“When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”

—Luke 21:20-21 NIV

What did Jesus say would be the signal for his first-century followers and others in Judea to flee to the mountains? That signal was “armies” surrounding the city according to Luke’s account, and “the abomination that causes desolation” according to Matthew’s account. So, “the abomination that causes desolation” must be the Roman forces that desolated the temple and the city. Notice how they appear in the parallel accounts (KJV):

MATTHEW

MARK

LUKE

<p>24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) 24:16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:</p> <p>24:17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 24:18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.</p>	<p>13:14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:</p> <p>13:15 And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:</p> <p>13:16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.</p>	<p>21:20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21:21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.</p> <p>[17:31 "In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.]</p>
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<p>24:19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!</p> <p>24:20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:</p> <p>24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.</p>	<p>13:17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!</p> <p>13:18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.</p> <p>13:19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.</p>	<p>21:22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.</p> <p>21:23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.</p> <p>21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.</p>
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For century after century Bible readers knew that the two references were the same, and understood that “the abomination that causes desolation” had something to do with the armies of Imperial Rome that desolated the city of Jerusalem, together with its temple, in 70 A.D.

How did the Romans go beyond merely causing “desolation”? Why did they also deserve being labeled as an “abomination”? At the time of the Protestant Reformation Martin Luther wrote, “But the abomination of which Daniel writes is that the Emperor Cajus, as history tells, had put his image in the temple at Jerusalem as an idol, for the people to worship, after everything there had been destroyed.” (Martin Luther's “Sermon for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity; Matthew 24:15-28” from his *Church Postil*, first published in 1525)

John Wesley (1703-1791), father of the Methodist churches, wrote

“When ye see the abomination of desolation—Daniel’s term is, The abomination that maketh desolate, Dan. xi, 31; that is, the standards of the desolating legions, on which they bear the abominable images of their idols: Standing in the holy place—Not only the temple and the mountain on which it stood, but the whole city of Jerusalem, and several furlongs of land round about it, were accounted holy; particularly the mount on which our Lord now sat, and on which the Roman [sic] afterward planted their ensigns.” (John Wesley's *Notes on the Bible*, Matt. 24:15)

So, the Roman forces were an abomination by virtue of the idolatrous images they carried with them, and they caused desolation by desolating Jerusalem and its temple. This understanding of Jesus' words prevailed in Protestant churches for hundreds of years, until the late 1800s and early 1900s when the writings of John Nelson Darby popularized the idea of a future seven-year tribulation, and transplanted these events from the context of the Roman destruction of the Temple to a rebuilt third temple sometime in the future.

Matthew's "great tribulation" = Luke's "wrath upon this people"

What Matthew calls "great tribulation" Luke calls "great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people." It is clearly a time of suffering for the Jews, "this people," rather than an end-times post-rapture tribulation on the entire world, as presented in the Left Behind series. In his *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke* Calvin draws the same conclusion from the parallel between Matthew's account and Luke's:

21 For there will then be great tribulation. Luke says also, that there will be days of vengeance, and of wrath on that people, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. For since the people, through obstinate malice, had then broken the covenant of God, it was proper that alarming changes should take place, by which the earth itself and the air would be shaken. True, indeed, the most destructive plague inflicted on the Jews was, that the light of heavenly doctrine was extinguished among them

Calvin applies the *great tribulation* to the sufferings that came upon the Jewish people, beginning in the first century, after their rejection of the Messiah.

Note that the "great tribulation" in Matthew is "affliction" in Mark's gospel, and Luke describes it as the Jews falling "by the edge of the sword" and being "led away captive into all nations," and Jerusalem being "trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." So, the "great tribulation" Jesus spoke of must refer to the centuries-long affliction of the Jewish people—from the destruction of Jerusalem until Israel was restored in 1948 and Jerusalem was taken back from Gentile control during the Six Day War of 1967.

As mentioned earlier, there is some confusion, though, because the disciples added to their question about the Temple's destruction, "and what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:3 KJV) Although Jesus knew, of course, that these three events—the Temple's destruction, his second coming, and the end of the

world—would not be simultaneous, he went on to answer their three questions together.

Commentators offer many opinions on how the various elements of Matthew Chapter 24 should be divided and grouped together. But such forensic reconstruction is not needed, if we follow Luther's advice. We need only compare Luke's account to gain a better understanding of what Jesus' words meant in Matthew's account.

“the powers of the heavens shall be shaken”

What about Jesus' declaration that there would be strange signs in the heavens above?

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.”

—Matthew 24:29 KJV

The stars cannot literally fall from heaven, since the stars are mammoth heavenly bodies immensely larger than the earth. The earth could literally fall onto the surface of a star, sooner than stars could actually fall to the earth. The very size relationship between earth and stars mandates that the language Jesus uses here must be figurative. Then his words fit perfectly the view that the “tribulation” here refers to the centuries-long suffering of the Jews beginning with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, climaxing in the Holocaust, and ending with the re-establishment of the state of Israel. It was shortly after the re-establishment of Israel in 1948 that the heavens lost their power as men began to rocket into outer space. The heavenly bodies figuratively fell from the sky, as they came within mankind's reach through manned space flight. Luke reports that Jesus said,

“. . . there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars . . . for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”

—Luke 21:25-26 KJV

While the Jews were returning to the Promised Land after their centuries-long tribulation, the scientists who had worked on Adolf Hitler's V-1 and V-2 rockets began working for the victorious allied powers. Soon test pilots flew experimental jets above earth's atmosphere for the first time in human history. Soviet Russia put its Sputnik satellite into orbit in 1957, followed shortly by the first manned space flights.

The Jews re-took Jerusalem from Gentile hands in 1967, and immediately after that in 1969 a series of six Apollo space flights began

bringing men to the moon. Humans circled the moon, taking pictures of its hidden far side, and landed there to plant an American flag on this heavenly body. It was as if the heavens had lost their power; they were no longer unreachable, but had now fallen beneath human feet. There were signs in the sun, moon and stars that had never before been seen.

Be Ready!

Jesus went on to say,

“But as the days of Noah were, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. . . . Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”

—Matthew 24:37-42 KJV

Ever since Jesus gave this admonition, Christians have been watching for his coming. He said it would be like the days of Noah. God’s favored people were saved in the Ark, and the disobedient were destroyed by the flood—at the same time. The Lord said his coming would be like that. Will you be one of those who survive?

“Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

— Matthew 24:44 KJV

Have you read Jesus’ words in their entirety, in the Bible itself? Reading my discussion above—or reading what other writers have to say about Jesus’ message—can never be as beneficial as reading what Jesus himself actually said. You will be blessed if you put this book down for a while and pick up the Bible to read it prayerfully. Ask God for insight and understanding so that you can obey Jesus’ teaching. He will answer such a prayer, and will give you the help you need. Jesus’ sermons and parables will help you understand what is coming, and will help you prepare to survive.

Yes, the dates 1948 (when the state of Israel was restored) and 1967 (when Jews took control of Jerusalem again after nearly two thousand years of Gentile control) are significant milestones in history and in the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, but there is no biblical basis for anyone to claim that “this generation” refers to the generation of 1878 or 1914 or 1948 or 1967 or any other contemporary generation. Nor is there any biblical basis for claiming that we must wait for a future seven-year Tribulation to see the “abomination of desolation” spoken of by Daniel

the prophet and Jesus the Messiah.

The Bible prophecies that have already been fulfilled—as understood when the historicists’ methods are applied today—give ample reason to believe that the remaining prophecies will soon be fulfilled as well. Jesus is coming again. Are you ready?

Pogroms, Anti-Semitism and the Wandering Jew

Much of the Bible—most of the Old Testament—is devoted to history and prophecies concerning the Jews. Nearly all commentators recognize the prophecies that foretold the destruction of the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the Babylonian captivity, the return from exile, and the coming of the Messiah. And commentators generally agree that the Messiah, Jesus, foretold the subsequent destruction of the Jerusalem temple, and the carrying off of the Jews into another exile by the Roman Legions. But, is that the end of the story for the Jewish people? Did the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its temple close the book for them? Does the fulfillment of prophecy upon the Christian congregation (which started with a nucleus of Jews) now preclude any further fulfillment of prophecy upon the Jews?

Or, has prophecy also been fulfilled on the millions of unbelieving Jews over the centuries since Christ?

Yes. Applying historicist techniques today through neohistoricism will demonstrate that Bible prophecy has been fulfilled upon the Jewish people over the centuries and into our modern day.

Deuteronomy 28:64-67

The 28th chapter of Deuteronomy lists many blessings and curses—blessings that would come upon the Jews as a nation if they obeyed God's commandments, and curses that would come upon them if they disobeyed. And the curses included that they would be uprooted from the Promised Land and scattered worldwide, condemned to wander from country to country in fear and terror (verses 64-67):

You will be plucked from off of the land where you go in to possess it. Jehovah will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth. There you will serve other gods, which you have not known, you nor your fathers, even wood and stone.

Among these nations you will find no ease, and there will be no rest for the sole of your foot; but Jehovah will give you there a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and pining of soul. Your life will hang in doubt before you. You will be afraid night and day, and will have no assurance of your life. In the morning you will

say, "I wish it were evening!" and at evening you will say, "I wish it were morning!" for the fear of your heart which you will fear, and for the sights which your eyes will see.

Commenting on Deut 28:64, John Calvin said

64. *And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people.* At the end of the preceding verse, he had threatened them with banishment, which was far more painful to the people of Israel than to other nations. Inasmuch as affection for our country is natural to all, it is disagreeable to be away from it; but the condition of the Israelitish people was peculiar, for to them the inheritance of Canaan was promised them by God, and they could not be expelled from it without being renounced by their heavenly Father.

But he now proceeds a second and third step further; for he adds to banishment a miserable scattering, and to scattering, trembling and wanderings full of disquietude. For, if they had been expelled all together into any one corner of the world, their banishment would have been more tolerable from their very association with each other. Their calamity is, therefore, augmented when the storm of God's wrath scatters them hither and thither like chaff, so that they should be dispersed, and dwell in widely different countries. Another kind of servitude, which I have elsewhere noticed, is incidentally added, i e., that He would enslave them not only to men, but to idols also.

The third step is their want of rest, for there was to be no fixed abode for them in their captivity; and this is far the most wretched state of all, to serve tyrannical conquerors as captives, and to have no certain master. Still it was a most just reward of the people's ingratitude, that they should nowhere find a fixed resting-place, because they had rejected the rest offered them by God, as we read in Isaiah (28:12.)

He, however, extends the evil, bitter as it was in itself, still further, for they were not only to be compelled to wander in confusion, and immediately to pass onwards, but, wheresoever they should come, inward perturbation of mind was to follow them as their inseparable companion. Now, it is more sad to be agitated within with secret fear, than to be oppressed by external violence; for believers, although they too may be unsettled and tossed by many troublesome waves, still repose with tranquil minds on God; whilst the wicked, however they may desire to lull themselves in security, are nevertheless always without true peace; and if, for a while, they sink into lethargy, are still soon compelled to arouse themselves by God whether they will or not. Surely as the repose of a well-regulated mind is a signal mark of God's favor, so a constant and irremediable fear, such as is here referred to, is one of His terrible punishments.

Calvin described in detail how the prophecy of Deuteronomy was fulfilled upon the scattered Jews. That scattering, wandering, trembling and fear continued well past Calvin's time in the 1500s, until the nation of Israel was finally restored in the Promised Land in 1948.

Historicist Jonathan Edwards wrote in *A History of the Work of Redemption* (page 445) that the Jews "have continued in their dispersions through the world for now above 1600 years."

Historicist Matthew Henry in his *Commentary* on Deuteronomy chapter 28 applied that passage to both "the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians" and "the last siege by the Romans" referring to the latter as "this last destruction now for above 1600 years." After noting that "in the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, as appears by the account Josephus gives of it, above two millions fell by the sword at several places," and after that, "They should have no rest, no rest of body: *The sole of thy foot shall not have rest* (v. 65), but be continually upon the remove, either in hope of gain or fear of persecution; all wandering Jews."

Historicist Albert Barnes in his *Notes on the Bible* (1834) spoke of how Jews through the centuries since the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, hoped for an end of their exile. In his comments on Isaiah chapter 52, Barnes wrote that some Jewish scholars attempted to predict the year when their exile would end. They "fixed the time of the end of their misfortunes to a.d. 1492, others to 1598, others to 1600, others yet later." He added that Jews see Isaiah 52 as speaking of "their nation suffering in their present exile." But eventually, Barnes noted, the Jews stopped trying to figure when their sufferings would end, and cursed "any who shall pretend to calculate the time."

They may have stopped trying to calculate the time, but the Jews never lost hope. For centuries their annual Passover Seder feast recitation always ended with the words, "le-shanah ha-ba'ah bi-Yerushalayim," meaning "Next year in Jerusalem."

Daniel 12:1

According to Daniel 12:1, "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (KJV) Jesus paraphrases this passage in Matthew 24:21-22 and Mark 13:19-20 when he speaks of "great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

(Matt. 23:21 KJV) Does this refer to the second half of a coming seven year post-Rapture tribulation, as the popular notion holds today?

No. The angel told Daniel it was a time of trouble for “thy people,” the Jews. And Jesus’ words also show it to be the trouble that would come upon that people, the Jews, after their rejection of the Messiah. This is the way Reformer John Calvin understood it. Commenting on the parallel passages in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, Calvin wrote:

“21 For there will then be great tribulation. Luke says also, that there will be days of vengeance, and of wrath on that people, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. For since the people, through obstinate malice, had then broken the covenant of God, it was proper that alarming changes should take place, by which the earth itself and the air would be shaken. True, indeed, the most destructive plague inflicted on the Jews was, that the light of heavenly doctrine was extinguished among them, and that they were rejected by God; but they were compelled—as the great hardness of their hearts made it necessary that they should be compelled—to feel the evil of their rejection by sharp and severe chastisements.

. . . And therefore Christ says that, unless God put a period to those calamities, the Jews will utterly perish, so that not a single individual will be left; but that God will remember his gracious covenant, and will spare *his elect*,

. . . But a question arises, how was it on *account of the elect* that God set a limit to these calamities, so as not utterly to destroy the Jews, when many of those who were saved were reprobate and desperate? The reply is easy. A part of the nation was preserved, that out of them God might bring his *elect*, who were mixed with them, like the seed after the chaff has been blown off.” (Calvin’s *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*)

So, Calvin understood Daniel’s “time of trouble” to refer to the calamities the Jews suffered, beginning shortly after they rejected the Messiah in the first century.

Writing in 1888 historicist Henry Grattan Guinness, D.D., F.R.A.S. said this about Daniel’s prophecies in his book *Light for the Last Days – A Study in Chronological Prophecy* :

Eastern rather than western events are foretold in detail, but all in their relation to the Jewish people and their sanctuary, the Holy Land and city and temple of Jerusalem. The people of God contemplated are mainly the Jews, in their dispersion and in their restoration; and the eastern empire of Rome and the Moslem power replace in these visions the Papal power, which figures so largely in the “times of the Gentiles.”

—found online in the Guinness Archive maintained by Pastor Joe Haynes at <http://historicism.com/Guinness/Light/light12.htm>

Guinness commented further in the same chapter:

Careful students of Scripture, who have reflected at all on these topics, must have observed that in the book of Revelation there is comparatively little about the Jews and their restoration, that subject having been fully treated in the Old Testament.

The Saracenic invasion and the Turkish overthrow are indeed predicted in Revelation, for the fifth and sixth, trumpets are universally recognised as prefiguring the sore "woes" which were inflicted on the apostate Christian Church of the East by these desolating powers.

But the Mohammedan conquests are there viewed in connexion with the Christian Churches of the East, and not in connexion with Syria and the Jews. Yet they stand in a most important relation to Israel also, and in this connexion they are presented in Daniel viii.

It is as the desolater of Jerusalem, and the ruler of Judæa for twelve centuries, that this Moslem power principally affects Israel; it occupies the Holy Land and treads down Jerusalem, and has done so ever since AD. 637, when the Caliph Omar first brought the country under subjection to Mohammedan despotism.

Now just as the Papacy could not be developed while the emperors were ruling at Rome, so the Jews cannot be restored while the Turks are masters in Jerusalem

So, Guinness saw Bible prophecy foretelling that the Islamic world power would dominate the Middle East for centuries, blocking the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem and the Promised Land.

Matthew 24:21

In Matthew chapter 24 when Jesus told his disciples that the temple they had just visited in Jerusalem would be destroyed, they asked, "When will these things be? And what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:3 KJV) As part of his answer, Jesus paraphrased Daniel 12:1. He said, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (KJV) (Matt. 24:21) Did Jesus mean that the "great tribulation" would begin two thousand years later, after the Rapture of Christians at the end of the world?

No, the context in Matthew's Gospel certainly seems to indicate that the term "great tribulation" describes the Jewish people's suffering that would begin with the Roman attack in 66 A.D.:

Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

(Matthew 24:16-22 KJV)

Yes, fleeing as refugees, without time to take any of their possessions with them, would certainly qualify as ‘great tribulation’ for the Jews.

Mark’s Gospel quotes essentially the same words from Jesus’ sermon as Matthew does, but Luke’s Gospel presents additional words.

Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

(Luke 21:21-24 KJV)

What Matthew calls “great tribulation” Luke calls “great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people”—a time of suffering for the Jews, “this people.” In his *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke* quoted elsewhere in this book, Calvin draws the same conclusion from the parallel between Matthew’s account and Luke’s:

“21 For there will then be great tribulation. Luke says also, that there will be days of vengeance, and of wrath on that people, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. For since the people, through obstinate malice, had then broken the covenant of God, it was proper that alarming changes should take place, by which the earth itself and the air would be shaken. True, indeed, the most destructive plague inflicted on the Jews was, that the light of heavenly doctrine was extinguished among them

Calvin applies the *great tribulation* to the sufferings that came upon the Jewish people, beginning in the first century, after their rejection of the Messiah. (See also the discussion in the previous chapter of this book.)

Besides making it clear that it is a tribulation on the Jewish people, Luke's account also sheds light on its duration. Matthew mentioned merely that it would be "shortened," actually the Greek word KOLOBOO, which Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* indicates means "cut off, amputate...curtail." So it is shortened in the sense of being abruptly halted, rather than in the sense of being a short period as opposed to a long period. But Luke includes the details that the Jews would be "led away captive into all the nations" and that Jerusalem would remain in Gentile hands until "the times of the Gentiles" are fulfilled. The Jews remained scattered among all the nations until their return to the Promised Land, which culminated in the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948, and they regained control over Jerusalem during the Six-Day War in 1967.

Writing in the late 1800s, historicist Albert Barnes could not have known of these more recent events, but he wrote this on the subject:

"Verse 21. *There shall be great tribulation.* The word tribulation means *calamity, or suffering.* Lu 21:24 has specified in what this tribulation should consist. 'They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.' That is, until the time allotted for the Gentiles to do it shall be fully accomplished; or as long as God is pleased to suffer them to do it." (*Notes on the New Testament, Matthew 24:21*)

If the great tribulation on the Jews can be seen as spanning the entire time period of their foreign dispersion—from the destruction of Jerusalem until the founding of modern Israel—then it must have climaxed in the Holocaust of 1941-1945. With some six million Jews killed in the gas chambers and death camps of Nazi-controlled Europe, their stated purpose being the 'Final Solution of the Jewish problem' by exterminating the race, this tribulation would surely fit Jesus' description: unless those days were cut short, no flesh would have been saved. The Jews would have been wiped out, had it not been cut short or stopped.

Ezekiel 37:1-12

Ezekiel 37:1-12 says:

Jehovah's hand was on me, and he brought me out in Jehovah's Spirit, and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. . . . Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord Jehovah: "Behold, I will open your

graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.”

According to historicist Charles Haddon Spurgeon, speaking in 1864, the meaning of Ezekiel chapter 37 is,

first, that there shall be a political restoration of the Jews to their own land and to their own nationality. And then, secondly, there is in the text and in the context a most plain declaration that there shall be a spiritual restoration— in fact a conversion—of the tribes of Israel.
. . . .

We look forward, then, for these two things. I am not going to theorize upon which of them will come first — whether they shall be restored first, and converted afterwards — or converted first and then restored. They are to be restored and they are to be converted, too.

(Charles Haddon Spurgeon *The Restoration And Conversion Of The Jews*. on Ezekiel 37.1-10, preached June 16th, 1864.) This sermon is also quoted at greater length and discussed in another chapter of this book.

Chosen People

The Bible calls the Jews God’s ‘chosen’ people at Daniel 11:15. (See also Deuteronomy 7:6 and 14:2; Psalm 33:12; Isaiah 43:20.) But the Jewish people come in for more criticism in the Bible than any other nationality. This criticism and condemnation spans much of Scripture, from the Old Testament’s second book, Exodus, to the Gospels and letters in the New Testament.

According to Exodus they rebelled against God immediately after they had received the Ten Commandments, and so when Moses went up into Mt. Sinai to talk with God, God told Moses,

“Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them . . . I have seen these people . . . and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them.’ . . . Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.”

—Exodus 32:7-14 NIV

Jesus spoke similarly when he mourned over the people of Jerusalem who had rejected the messages of the earlier prophets and who were about to reject him as the Messiah:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.”

Later the Apostle Paul, himself a Jew, faced violent opposition from his fellow Jews when trying to preach the Gospel message to non-Jews in the cities of Greece and Asia Minor, and so he referred to his own people as

“the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit.”

—1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 NIV

So, there is no basis for anyone to claim the Bible to be biased or slanted in favor of the Jews. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament feature more criticism of the Jews than of any other group of people.

So, in what way, then, are the Jews God’s ‘chosen people’?

The answer is found in the Bible, and, although the story begins thousands of years ago, it is essential to understanding what is happening today in the Middle East and its significance for the whole world.

When the first human pair, Adam and Eve, were expelled from the Garden of Eden, they went on to fulfill God’s mandate to them to ‘be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.’ (Genesis 1:28) Their offspring spread abroad and populated the planet, but, for the most part, they too followed the sinful course of their parents, and the earth was full of violence and immorality. The Creator returned to his creation to correct the mess they were making of the earth and to correct the course that these creatures endowed with free will had chosen for themselves. He announced that he would wipe the earth clean and start over again. He commissioned a righteous man named Noah to make this announcement and to provide the means for a new start for the world’s repopulation via his offspring.

Noah spent perhaps a hundred and twenty years building, with the aid of his three sons, a floating box or ‘ark’ that would preserve the lives of his family, his wife and sons and their wives. Then God sent the global deluge that wiped out the rest of mankind and cleansed the earth. After many months of floating over the flooded planet, Noah and his family finally disembarked when the flood waters had drained off the land. God caused geological processes to lower the ocean floors and raise the mountains and redistribute the water, and “the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat” in eastern Turkey. (Genesis 8:4 Jerusalem Bible)

As generations passed, the offspring of Noah increased in numbers and grew to a sizeable population. But, instead of spreading out to fill the earth as God intended, they remained concentrated in “the land of Shinar” not far from where the ark had settled after the flood. They set about building a city there. “Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.’” (Genesis 11:2, 4 RSV)

They were able to do this, in part, because all mankind, descended from Noah and his sons, naturally spoke the same language. So, God intervened creatively by giving the people different languages, thus preventing them from completing their Tower of Babel, and forcing them to spread out and fill the earth, since they could not understand each other’s speech.

As the different language groups moved apart and settled in widely scattered areas, the families of mankind all had opportunity to carry with them the knowledge passed on by their ancestors concerning God’s dealings with mankind. But most of them chose not to preserve this knowledge. Instead, they began making up fables and even making up gods for themselves, and crafting idols to worship instead of worshipping the Creator. As the Apostle Paul explained it to Roman Christians thousands of years later:

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.”

—Romans 1:18-23 NIV

However, not everyone chose to forget about the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Some continued to worship the true God. In the line of descent from Noah’s son Shem there was eventually born a man named Abram. God spoke to Abram, and he listened obediently, even though God’s instructions were to leave his relatives behind and move his own household to a foreign land he had never seen before.

God told Abram,

“Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.”

—Genesis 17:5-7 KJV)

Abraham was to be a father of “many nations,” not just of the Jews. Through his wife Sarah, Abraham begat Isaac, the father of Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel. But, through Sarah’s Egyptian maid Hagar (a practice considered acceptable in that culture), Abraham fathered Ishmael, and Ishmael became the progenitor of many of the peoples inhabiting the Middle East:

“This is the account of Abraham’s son Ishmael, whom Sarah’s maidservant, Hagar the Egyptian, bore to Abraham. These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers according to their settlements and camps. Altogether, Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people. His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt, as you go toward Asshur. And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers.”

—Genesis 25:12-18 NIV

This “hostility” has continued into our day, in the form of Arab opposition to the Jews and the state of Israel.

Later in life, after the death of his wife Sarah, Abraham took another wife, who bore him additional sons, the progenitors of other Arab tribes:

“Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; the descendants of Dedan were the Asshurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. The sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah.”

—Genesis 25:1-4 NIV

These, too, settled areas and towns of the Middle East that came to bear their names.

Abraham’s son Isaac became father to twin sons: Jacob and Esau.

Esau’s offspring composed several clans who came to be called Edomites and who inhabited land south of Judea and the Dead Sea:

“These were the chiefs descended from Esau, by name, according to their clans and regions: Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, Kenaz, Teman,

Mibzar, Magdiel and Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom, according to their settlements in the land they occupied. This was Esau the father of the Edomites.”

—Genesis 36:40-43 NIV

Meanwhile, “Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.” (Genesis 37:1 NIV) He fathered twelve sons by his two wives and two concubines. These sons, in turn, became the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel. But, first, due to a famine in the land of Canaan the whole family went to live in Egypt, where vast amounts of food had been put into storage ahead of time by Jacob’s son Joseph who had been appointed prime minister of Egypt. (The whole story is fascinating and is found in the Bible book of Genesis.)

While living in Egypt for hundreds of years, Jacob’s descendents grew into twelve populous tribes, so populous that the king of Egypt began to fear them and put them into slavery to keep them under control. (Exodus 1:9-11) God spoke to an Israelite named Moses and gave him the assignment of leading the people of Israel up out of Egypt. He also told Moses to tell them that they were his chosen people:

“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

—Deuteronomy 7:6-8 NIV

From that point on, there has been jealousy and rivalry and war among these close relatives, the Arabs and the Israelites. It is a jealousy that goes beyond normal sibling rivalry. It revolves around choices God made and the promises he made to Israel as his chosen people.

Psychologists have written books about ‘irregular people’ and ‘toxic parents’ who favor one child over another unreasonably. Is that the sort of parent God was in choosing Jacob’s offspring rather than Esau’s?

No, God had sound reasons for his special dealings with the nation of Israel. And he engineered things so that the Jews did not, ultimately, have an unfair advantage over the rest of mankind. Their being ‘chosen’ resulted in many blessings, but also in many tribulations. What other nationality has been persecuted from one country to another, culminating in a holocaust in which six million were killed? When faced with such

persecution, the lead character in the play *Fiddler on the Roof* finds it so painful that he asks God to ‘choose someone else next time.’

But why did God ‘choose’ one people out of all mankind? Primarily, because the Messiah would need to be born in a community that would be able to receive him appropriately. By the time the Christ child was scheduled to be born, the rest of mankind had forgotten about the Creator. The Jews would have forgotten, too, and would have been worshipping idols with the rest of the human race, if God had not intervened and made them his Chosen People.

When Moses was still on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments from God, the people of Israel had his brother Aaron make them a golden calf and they bowed down and worshiped it. They turned to idolatry just as quickly as all the other nations. But God intervened and forced them to destroy that idol. The history of Israel shows that he intervened many, many times in the same way, because the people of Israel had the same sinful tendencies as the other nations to abandon true worship and to fall into idolatry.

The Chosen People were given the Ten Commandments, as well as more than six hundred laws of God, to force them to preserve true worship of the one living and true God, and to preserve some semblance of moral and ethical purity. God could have chosen any nationality to provide this appropriate framework to receive the Messiah. But, he had to choose somebody. So, why not the Jews?

Besides providing a society practicing true worship, in which the Messiah could make an appearance, God also wanted a Chosen People to preserve the sacred Scriptures. A pagan society would not have valued the holy writings, and they would have been lost. So, one nation on the earth had to be kept somewhat on the straight and narrow, to act as custodians of the Bible.

“The Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God,” according to the Apostle Paul. (Romans 3:2 New Living Translation) “The Jews are the people to whom God’s message was entrusted.” (Romans 3:2 Jerusalem Bible) Even the Islamic holy book the Koran says that the Jews “were required to preserve the Book of ALLAH” and that “they were guardians over it.” (5:45)

So, the Jews were ‘chosen’ to do a job that needed to be done. Any nation could have been chosen, and if another nation had been instead of the Jews—say, the Irish, for example—then people would have asked, “Why the Irish?” in the same way that they now ask, “Why the Jews?”

Ultimately, though, the Jews were not given a permanent advantage over other nations, because God is not the sort of parent who plays favorites:

“There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.”

—Romans 2:9-11 NIV

The Jews were the people ‘chosen’ to preserve true worship until the arrival of the Messiah, and the people ‘chosen’ to preserve the Sacred Scriptures with their inspired history and prophecy. But, God did this with the aim of saving other people who would later be ‘chosen’ from all nations. Because of the things that God accomplished in this way, personal salvation is now available to both Jews and non-Jews on the same basis:

“Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.”

—Romans 3:29-30 NIV

In fact, to avoid giving the Jews an unfair advantage over other nationalities, when it came to receiving blessings through the Messiah, God placed an obstacle in their path: “Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in,” or “One section of Israel has become blind, but this will last only until the whole pagan world has entered.” (Romans 11:25 KJV and Jerusalem Bible)

The Jews, too, would end up being blessed. But, in the meantime, they would have to suffer more than many other peoples. For example, they would undergo centuries of slavery: “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land [that is] not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.” (Gen 15:13 KJV) And, if they failed in their responsibilities to keep the strict laws God gave them, “the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth.” (Deut. 28:15, 64 NASB)

The Jews were ‘chosen’ to do a job that needed to be done, but it was a servant’s job, because its aim was to bless the rest of mankind. The end result would be, as God told Abraham, “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” (Gen 22:18 KJV)

Daniel's Beasts and the Beasts of Revelation

In popular culture ‘the beast of Revelation’ is a notorious villain who would frighten even viewers of top-grossing horror movies. The *Left Behind* novels portray ‘the beast’ as a sinister character named Nicolae Carpathia, who also happens to be ‘the Antichrist’ that John spoke of in his letters and the ‘man of sin’ Paul referred to at 2 Thessalonians 2:3. But what does the Bible really say about ‘the beast of Revelation’? Actually, Revelation speaks about a number of beasts—not just one. And they are signs or symbols of governments or organizations, not some individual man or monster.

The Apostle John, who wrote the Revelation or Apocalypse back in the first century, knew that his contemporary readers were already familiar with the much earlier Bible book of Daniel, which spoke of the same sorts of symbolic beasts. And, of course, it was the same God who sent angels and visions to both Daniel and John, and who inspired their writing. So, the beasts of Daniel are key to understanding the beasts of Revelation.

In his seventh chapter Daniel describes four separate beasts

“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.

“Daniel said: ‘In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.

“The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it.

“And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, “Get up and eat your fill of flesh!”

“After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.

“After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it

crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.”

—Daniel 7:1-7 NIV

Daniel saw in vision a beast “like a lion” with wings, “a second beast, which looked like a bear,” “another beast, one that looked like a leopard” and “a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening, and very powerful” with “ten horns.” (Dan. 7:2-6 NIV) Naming the very same animals, John saw “a beast” with

“ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion.”

—Revelation 13:1-2 NIV

An angel gave Daniel “the interpretation of these things,” namely that “The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth.” (Dan. 7:16-17 NIV) John likewise described the composite beast he saw as having governmental “power” and a “throne and great authority.” (Rev. 13:2 NIV)

While Daniel’s four beasts were four separate successive kingdoms or empires that ruled over much of the earth, the composite beast of Revelation chapter 13 “was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.” (Rev. 13:7 NIV)

(The reader is encouraged to open the Bible itself and read first-hand what it says about these symbolic beasts and the governments they represent.)

Bible commentators have long agreed that Daniel’s four beasts represent a series of ancient empires. Reformer John Calvin was familiar with the works of other scholars and declared in his *Commentaries on the Book of Daniel*, volume 2,

It is clear that the four monarchies are here depicted. But it is not agreed upon among all writers which monarchy is the last, and which the third. With regard to the first, all agree in understanding the vision of the Chaldean Empire, which was joined with the Assyrian, as we saw before. For Nineveh was absorbed by the Chaldeans and Babylonians.

Respected Bible commentator Albert Barnes took a similar position in his *Notes*. Commenting on the beast of Revelation 13:1, he referred back to Daniel’s vision and wrote

Thus in Daniel (vii. 2-7) the *lion* is introduced as the symbol of the Babylonian power; the bear, as the symbol of

the Medo-Persian; the leopard, as the symbol of the Macedonian; and a nondescript animal, fierce, cruel, and mighty, with two horns, as the symbol of the Roman.

So, while there were differences in the details, most traditional writers agreed Daniel was referring to the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman empires—all of which dominated the world scene that included Israel.

The Apostle John's later vision rolls the four beasts into one. Daniel's beasts have a total of seven heads and ten horns, while John sees a single beast with seven heads and ten horns.

"The first was like a lion" (Dan. 7:4)	1 head	0 horns
"a second, like a bear" (Dan. 7:5)	1 head	0 horns
"another, like a leopard" (Dan. 7:6)	4 heads	0 horns
"a fourth beast, dreadful" (Dan. 7:7)	1 head	10 horns
<hr/>		
Totals for the beasts of Daniel ch. 7	7 heads	10 horns

compare

The beast of Revelation ch. 13:1	7 heads	10 horns
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While each of the four beasts Daniel saw stood for a successive empire, the composite beast John saw incorporated into one body the whole series of biblical ruling powers down through history. John's beast carried all seven heads and all ten horns on one body.

For centuries the beast of Revelation 13:1 has been identified with human governments. Historicist commentator Matthew Henry (1662-1714) indicated in his *Concise Commentary on the Bible*, that he saw the seven-headed beast as encompassing all the Gentile world powers from the Babylonian empire through the Roman empire—those that oppressed the Jewish church or congregation prior to Christ, as well as those that persecuted Christians:

"It appears to mean that worldly, oppressing dominion, which for many ages, even from the times of the Babylonish captivity, had been hostile to the church. The first beast then began to oppress and persecute the righteous for righteousness' sake, but they suffered most under the fourth beast of Daniel, (the Roman empire,) which has afflicted the saints with many cruel persecutions. The source of its power was the dragon. It was set up by the devil, and supported by him. . . . The world admired its

power, policy and success. They paid honour and subjection to the devil and his instruments. It exercised infernal power and policy, requiring men to render that honour to creatures which belongs to God alone.”

The Apostle John described the seven-headed beast like this:

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?”

—Revelation 13:1-4 KJV

This composite beast, empowered by the dragon to rule the world, is a fitting picture of the governments Satan bragged about when he took Jesus up onto a mountain top and “showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this authority will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine.” (Luke 4:5-7 KJV)

Jesus rejected Satan’s offer, but did not dispute the devil’s role in world rulership. In fact, he regularly referred to the wicked one as “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11 NKJV) Satan empowered the Gentile world powers that Daniel saw as a series of beasts, including the Roman Empire that ruled the world during Jesus’ earthly ministry. And Gentile powers continue to rule the world today. The composite beast John saw has been ruling the world for a long time.

The World Power with the Deadly Head Wound

Which one of its seven heads had a deadly wound that was healed? One candidate might be the Roman Empire, which could be described as dying yet coming to life again centuries later. Rome fell to the barbarians in the fifth century. But the Roman Empire rose again when Charlemagne was crowned Emperor in the year 800 A.D. The Holy Roman Empire (German: *Heiliges Römisches Reich*), with emperors crowned by the Roman pope for hundreds of years, also came to be called the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (*Heiliges Römisches*

Reich Deutscher Nation). Its borders expanded and contracted over the centuries as conflicts were won and lost and as political alliances were forged. It was this “Reich” or Empire that Adolf Hitler referred to when dubbing his Nazi government the *Third Reich* and seeking to reclaim lost territory.

The popular commentary by Jamieson, Fausset & Brown says

The seven heads are the seven world monarchies, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, the Germanic empire, under the last of which we live

But, naming the Germanic empire as the seventh head would be a departure from the pattern of the prior six, each of which ruled over God’s people (as did Egypt when it held the Israelites as slaves) and/or the Promised Land (as did Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome).

As the Roman Empire fell into decline, the Islamic Empire arose and took the Promised Land into its possession, capturing Jerusalem in the year 637, just five years after Mohammed died. So, the seven heads of the ‘beast’ might better be listed as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and Islam, or the Islamic Empire.

Islam is not simply a religion but also a world power. From the beginning Mohammed not only gathered followers, but also took over territory and ruled it. The Islamic caliphate captured Jerusalem in the year 637, just five years after Mohammed’s death. The Islamic empire subjugated Christian lands across the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Spain and parts of Eastern Europe.

As the seventh head of the ‘beast’ the Islamic empire appeared to have been “wounded to death” when, after World War I, the victorious allies carved up the territory of the Islamic Ottoman Empire into several smaller nations. But the seventh head never really died. As noted elsewhere in this book, it helped motivate its German Third Reich ally to kill six million Jews in the Holocaust, and today Islamic Jihad is striking terror into hearts around the world.

So, the Islamic Empire should also be considered as a candidate for the head that received a deadly wound but revived.

Another “beast”—with Two Horns

After speaking of this seven-headed beast with ten horns, which appears to represent human government down through the ages, John also spoke of a second beast in Revelation chapter thirteen:

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke like a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them who dwell on it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.”

—Revelation 13:11-14 KJV

Commenting on this beast from the earth, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) wrote, “This also designates the church of Rome. Fire coming down from heaven, seems to have reference to their excommunications, which were dreaded like fire from heaven.” (*A History of the Work of Redemption*) Even medieval kings quaked in fear at the threat of being excommunicated by the pope.

Matthew Henry's Commentary says, “Those who think the first beast signifies Rome pagan by this second beast would understand Rome papal, which promotes idolatry and tyranny, but in a more soft and lamb-like manner: those that understand the first beast of the secular power of the papacy take the second to intend its spiritual and ecclesiastical powers, which act under the disguise of religion and charity to the souls of men.”

Martin Luther took the first position Matthew Henry mentioned, declaring as follows: “Here, then, are the two Beasts. The one is the Empire. The other, with the two horns, is the Papacy.” (Luther’s *Second Preface to the Revelation of St. John* in *Works* VI:484, translated by Dr. F. N. Lee)

While Bible commentators over the centuries have attempted to identify this second beast, they always had to resort to metaphor to do so—interpreting the ‘fire coming down from heaven’ in some symbolic way, not literally. Why? Because no human government had ever been able to make fire come down from heaven to the earth in the sight of men, or as one modern translation renders it, make “fire come down from heaven to earth while people are watching.” (NCV)

But some modern writers have noted that man’s governments today are literally able to ‘make fire come down from heaven’ by waging war with airplanes, rockets and missiles. Which world power first dropped nuclear bombs from the sky? Which power is well known for calling down flaming napalm upon targets in Vietnam?

The Anglo world power, led by its two horns, Britain and America, changed the world by promoting the ideals of democracy and freedom. So, compared to other empires of the past, it looks ‘like a lamb.’ It

claims to promote peace and freedom, like a peaceful lamb. But the British-American conglomerate also speaks 'like a dragon'—deceptively. These factors alone would make it a possible candidate for being the two-horned beast. (A search of the web will turn up many commentators who identify the United States of America with the beast from the earth.) But even more important is the English-speaking combo's role in the creation of "the image of the beast."

The "image" of the Seven-Headed "beast"

Revelation goes on to say of the two-horned beast,

"And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed."

—Revelation 13:14-15 KJV

Some modern writers see the world body—the League of Nations and its successor organization the United Nations—as a fulfillment of the 'image' of the seven-headed beast. Since the U.N. did not come into existence until some four hundred years after the Reformation, the Reformers could hardly be expected to know about it. But did God foresee it and inspire John to write about it?

The seven-headed, ten-horned beast of Revelation 13:1, that has parts resembling a leopard, a bear and a lion, is a composite of the separate beasts Daniel described. Daniel explained that his individual beasts represented a succession of kingdoms. (Dan. 7:17, 23) So, could the "image" of that composite "beast" be some sort of miniature organizational replica of the Gentile world powers—like the United Nations?

Before the twentieth century it would have been difficult to imagine how the nations could make an "image" of the world's governments—much less cause such an image to come to "life" and to "speak." But today's United Nations organization certainly is a mirror image of the kingdoms of this world, a miniature replica of the planet's political structure. The successors of the kingdoms Daniel wrote about—Babylon (Iraq), Persia (Iran), Greece and Rome (Italy)—are all represented, as well as the rest of the nations of this world. And this organizational image of the world's governments has taken on a life of its own, so that it "speaks" through official Resolutions and causes those

resolutions to be enforced, ultimately through military action when necessary. Those who fail to bow to its authority may indeed be killed.

It is a matter of history that the Anglo-American power took the lead in advocating creation of the League of Nations and its successor the United Nations—a miniature image of the world's governments.

The U.N., a miniature image of the world political system, actually lives and speaks.

The beasts of Daniel and the beasts of Revelation will ultimately be destroyed by the power of God. While humans may be convinced that no one can 'do battle with the beast'—they say 'you can't fight city hall'—the beastly human governments and their international organization the United Nations will all be destroyed by the heavenly armies of God's Kingdom in the coming battle of Armageddon. (Compare Revelation 16:13-16 and Revelation 19:17-21.)

After describing the succession of world powers in Daniel chapter 2, the prophecy concludes:

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.
– Daniel 2:44 KJV

The return of Christ will see the destruction of all of man's human governments, finally replaced by the eternal rule of the Kingdom of God.

The Puzzling ‘Little Horn’ of Daniel Chapter 7

Much mystery has always surrounded the ‘little horn’ introduced in Daniel 7:8 as coming up among the ten horns of the fourth beast—the nations that emerged after the Roman Empire fell apart:

I considered the [ten] horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one

That same chapter of Daniel says further of the ‘little horn’ that

“He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High; and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time.”

—Daniel 7:25

Or, as the New Century Version renders it:

“This king will speak against the Most High God, and he will hurt and kill God's holy people. He will try to change times and laws that have already been set. The holy people that belong to God will be in that king's power for three and one-half years.”

—Daniel 7:25 NCV

The classical historicists all had quite a bit to say about this ‘little horn,’ but they said different things. They could not agree on which nation or entity the prophecy was speaking of through this symbolic language. Why couldn't the classical historicists agree on the identity of this ‘little horn’?

Its identity is important, since it appears again in the next chapter of Daniel as growing out later from one of the four offshoots of the Greek Empire:

four notable horns toward the four winds of the sky. Out of one of them came out a little horn, which grew exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the glorious land.

—Daniel 8:8-9

In writing his “Preface on Daniel” Martin Luther identified the ‘little horn’ of Daniel 7 as the being same as the ‘little horn’ of Daniel 8. Luther wrote:

"Behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man - and a mouth speaking great things' [Dan. 7:20].

These eyes are for 'understanding dark sentences' . . . The mouth, for blaspheming Christ, constitutes the 'fierce countenance' [of Dan. 8:23]."

It starts out "little" but soon becomes a much bigger 'horn' (or world power) "whose look was more imposing than its fellows" (Daniel 7:20) and a power that "grew exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the glorious land" (Daniel 8:9), i.e., Africa, the Middle East and the Promised Land.

Not only does the 'little horn' appear in two chapters of Daniel, but it also appears in the New Testament, in the book of Revelation, under another name. Revelation does not use the expression 'little horn,' but it does use the same language as Daniel when describing the 'little horn' and what it does. So, its identity is even *more* important.

Notice these similarities in Daniel and Revelation:

A Mouth Speaking Great Things

"a mouth speaking great things."—Dan. 7:8

"a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies."—Rev. 13:5

Speaking Against God

"shall speak great words against the most High"—Dan. 7:25

"opened his mouth for blasphemy against God"—Rev. 13:6

War Against the Saints

"made war with the saints, and prevailed against them"—Dan. 7:21

"he shall destroy the mighty ones and the holy people"—Dan. 8:24

"to make war with the saints, and to overcome them"—Rev. 13:7

Cast Some of the Stars to the Ground

"some of the army [of the sky] and of the stars it cast down to the ground"—Dan. 8:10

"drew one third of the stars of the sky, and threw them to the earth"—Rev. 12:4

For a Time, and Times, and Half a Time (3-1/2 years)

"they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time"—Dan. 7:25

“nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent”—Rev. 12:14

“Authority to make war for forty-two months was given to him”—Rev. 13:5

So, who is this important ‘little horn,’ and why couldn’t the classical historicists agree on his identity?

Prophecy is often best understood in hindsight. Jesus told the disciples, “I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them.” (John 16:4) Prophecy is not always given so that we will know the future, but sometimes to show us that God knows the future—and thus to strengthen our faith in him.

A prime example would be the prophecies about the suffering, death and resurrection of the Messiah: that he would cry out on the cross, “My God, my God . . .” (Ps. 22:1); that his hands and feet would be pierced (Ps. 22:16); that his killers would cast lots for his clothing (Ps. 22:18); and so on. These prophecies were not correctly understood until after the events took place, no matter how deeply biblical scholars attempted to peer into them beforehand.

Daniel 7:25 is a similar case in point. Historicists were generally agreed on how to understand the nations Daniel described as ‘beasts’ or ‘animals’ leading up to it, but differed widely on the identity of the ‘little horn’ that would do the things described in that passage. Here are the verses that introduce it in Daniel chapter 7:

2 Daniel spoke and said, “I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the sky broke out on the great sea. **3** Four great animals came up from the sea, different one from another.

4 “The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings: I saw until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand on two feet as a man; and a man’s heart was given to it.

5 “Behold, another animal, a second, like a bear; and it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth: and they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much flesh.’

6 After this I saw, and behold, another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the animal had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

7 “After this I saw in the night visions, and, behold, a fourth animal, awesome and powerful, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet: and it was different from all the animals that were before it; and it had ten horns.

8 I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots:

and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

Historicists generally agreed that the four animals or beasts in Daniel's vision represented a succession of world powers that ruled over the Promised Land—that the winged lion represented Babylon, the bear Medo-Persia, the winged leopard Greece, and the fourth iron-toothed beast Rome. They also agreed that the ten horns represented ten nations that were formed from the remnants of Rome when its empire collapsed.

Disagreement over the 'little horn'

But the 'little horn' of Daniel 7:8 puzzled them—even though Daniel 7:24-25 went on to explain that this horn or kingdom would arise after the other ten, and would be different from them:

24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be different from the former, and he shall put down three kings.

25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High; and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time.

The identity of this 'little horn' that was such an enemy of God's people provoked disagreement. In the early 1500s, Calvin in his *Commentary on Daniel* Lecture Thirty Seventh, acknowledged that there were different interpretations put forward by scholars:

. . . the Pope, and others the Turk . . . Julius Caesar and the other Caesars who succeeded him . . .

Historicist scholars still held a variety of opinions two centuries later in the 1700s when Matthew Henry wrote this in his *Commentary*:

Whether those visions look as far forward as the end of time, or whether they were to have a speedy accomplishment, is hard to say, nor are the most judicious interpreters agreed concerning it. . . . Now the question is, Who is this enemy, whose rise, reign, and ruin, are foretold? Interpreters are not agreed. Some will have . . . Antiochus, and show the accomplishment of all this in the history of the Maccabees; so Junius, Piscator, Polanus, Broughton, and many others: but others will have . . . Julius Caesar, and the succeeding emperors (says Calvin), the antichrist, the papal kingdom (says Mr. Joseph Mede) . . . Others . . . the Turkish empire; so Luther, Vatablus, and others.

After citing these four opposing views about the 'little horn' held by respected commentators, Matthew Henry admitted that he himself could not decide in favor of one viewpoint against the others.

Why so much uncertainty? Perhaps, because the actual events foretold in Daniel 7:25 had not yet taken place. As noted above, prophecy can be very difficult to understand before the foretold events take place.

If that is the case, then since another quarter millennium has passed, might we now be in a better position to identify those events?

Luther Saw “Mohammad or the Turk” as the ‘little horn’

Before examining those events, it will be helpful to look more closely at Luther’s interpretation. Along with some other historicists Martin Luther saw the ‘little horn’ of Daniel 7:25 as “the Turk”—the Islamic empire.

Carol A. Newsom, Professor of Old Testament at Emory’s Candler School of Theology, writes in her commentary on Daniel that “the ninth-century Iberian Mozarab scholar Paulus Alvarus argued that Muhammad was the eleventh horn of the fourth beast in Dan 7:8, as he had uprooted the Franks, Greeks, and Goths . . . After the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to Muslim Turkish armies, Western Christians outside of Iberia, as well, began to identify the little horn with the Turkish invaders; Luther had argued that the antichrist was the pope, but in later writings and sermons he clarified that one should also interpret Muhammad to be the little horn in Dan 7:8.”

Luther wrote:

In the seventh chapter [of Daniel], begin the visions and prophecies of the future kingdoms . . . The four kingdoms . . . in the four beasts.

. . . his attention centres on the fourth beast, the Roman Empire . . .

Daniel here . . . portrays this Roman Empire in such a way that it should first be broken up into ten kingdoms. These are the ten ‘horns’: Syria, Egypt, Asia [Minor], Greece, [North] Africa, Spain, Gaul, Italy, Germany, England . . .

He [Daniel] also indicates that one small horn shall knock off three among the top ten horns—meaning Mohammad or the Turk . . .

(from Luther’s *Preface* to Daniel in the 1960 American edition of his *Works*, 35:299-300, as quoted by Rev. Prof. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee in his article “Luther on Islam and the Papacy.”)

Luther went on to add:

This same little horn will fight the saints and blaspheme Christ—something that we are all experiencing and seeing before our very eyes . . .

The Turk has had great victories against the Christians, yet denies Christ while elevating his Mohammed . . .

So, Luther here identified the Islamic empire as the little horn of Daniel 7:8 that in Daniel 7:25 opposes “God’s holy people” and has them in his “power for three and one-half years.”

Other Reformers and historicists also joined with Luther in attaching great prophetic significance to the Islamic empire. These include John Calvin, Sir Isaac Newton and Jonathan Edwards.

Calvin on Islam and the Papacy

Calvin saw the Pope and “Mahomet” as “the two horns of the Antichrist.” He declared,

Lyke as Mahomet saith ty his Alcoran is ye souveraine wisdom, so saith the Pope of his owne decrees: For they be the two hornes of Antichrist.

(The Sermons of M. John Calvin upon the Fifth Booke of Moses called Deuteronomie, translated by Arthur Golding, first published in London, 1583, from a facsimile reprint by Banner of Truth Trust, 1987.)

Or, to put that archaic English into modern speech,

Just as Mohammed says that his Koran is the sovereign wisdom, so says the Pope of his own decrees: For they are the two horns of Antichrist.

Calvin also wrote

Paul, however, does not speak of one individual, but of a kingdom, that was to be taken possession of by Satan, that he might set up a seat of abomination in the midst of God’s temple—which we see accomplished in Popery. The revolt, it is true, has spread more widely, for Mahomet, as he was an apostate, turned away the Turks, his followers, from Christ. *(Calvin’s Commentary on Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians)*

Isaac Newton on the Islamic Empire of the Turks

Discussing Daniel 11:36-45, Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) saw that passage as fulfilled in the Islamic conquest—the lands ruled by the Muslim Turks. He commented to the effect that

these nations compose the Empire of the Turks, and therefore this Empire is here to be understood by the King of the North. *(Newton’s The Prophecies of Daniel and The Apocalypse, p. 189)*

Jonathan Edwards on the Islamic Empire

Colonial American Congregationalist theologian and missionary Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), who served also as president of Princeton University, expressed the historicist view that prevailed in the Church for hundreds of years that the Islamic sweep over the remnant of the eastern Roman Empire was foretold in Scripture. He summed it up this way:

The Mahometan kingdom is another of mighty power and vast extent, set up by Satan against the kingdom of Christ. ...

And then the Turks, who were originally different from the Saracens, became followers of Mahomet, and conquered all the Eastern empire. They began their empire about the year of Christ twelve hundred and ninety-six; began to invade Europe in the year thirteen hundred; took Constantinople, and so became masters of all the Eastern empire, in the year fourteen hundred and fifty-three.

And thus all the cities and countries where stood those famous churches of which we read in the New Testament, as Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, &c. now became subject to the Turks. These are supposed to be prophesied of by the horsemen in the 9th chapter of Revelation, beginning with the 15th verse.

(Quoted from Jonathan Edwards' classic, *A History of the Work of Redemption*)

Apply Historicist Methods to Modern Events

Following the lead of Martin Luther, John Calvin, Sir Isaac Newton and Jonathan Edwards, can we find events showing that the Islamic empire actually fulfilled the prophecies about Daniel's 'little horn' centuries after their writing?

How can we find out?

Luther and the other historicists followed two paths to identify events that fulfilled prophecy:

(1) They looked at major events, and then examined the Scriptures to see if they were foretold by the prophets.

(2) They studied the prophecies, and looked for major events that fulfilled the things that were foretold.

In this process, of course, they would consider only relevant events—events related to Bible lands or Bible peoples. The rise and fall of kingdoms that occupied the Promised Land, or that took Jews or Christians captive, would be considered. But historicists would have no

reason to examine the rise and fall of the Aztec and Inca empires of the Americas, the dynasties that ruled China, or events in Timbuktu.

So, if the great historicist writers and preachers of the Reformation through the 1800s could not come to agreement as to the identity of Daniel's 'little horn' that waged war against God's people and held them in his power for three and a half years, what events of more recent history might fit that description?

And how can Martin Luther's insight identifying the 'little horn' as "the Turk" or the Islamic empire help us discover those events? Modern historicists have built on what the Reformers wrote about Islam, to gain insight into more recent events.

Islam in Daniel 8 and Revelation 9—Pastor Joe Haynes

Canadian Pastor Joe Haynes, wrote this in his fascinating April 2014 article "An Historicist Exposition of Daniel 8" (page 7) found on his web site at <http://historicism.com/Haynes/Daniel8Exposition.pdf>

From that point forward, from the collapse of the Christian Levant, the building of Omar's AlAqsa Mosque on Temple Mount, the expansion of the Muslim Arab Empire and the later rise of the Muslim Ottoman Empire, these Islamic powers, more than any other candidate in history, accurately and comprehensively fulfilled the predictions of these verses, and particularly these words of verse 12, "it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper." Revelation 9 pictures the rise of Islam as a great smoke rising from an Abyss, the symbolism showing that the Islamic religion clouds out the light of truth and confuses the people it oppresses so that God's truth is lost to spiritual blindness.

Revelation 9 also symbolically predicts the military expansion born out of Islam's rise and spread, as well as the conquests of Muslim armies which would besiege and invade the cities and lands of the then "Roman Empire" ruling from Constantinople in the Byzantine Era—it grew from its birthplace in Mecca, in the Arabian Peninsula, to extend its domains to the south (dominating the whole Arabian Peninsula by 632AD), to the east (as far as Persia) and to the north and west, around the Mediterranean from Tripoli in the west, around the coast to Jerusalem, and north to the edge of the Black Sea and the borders of the Byzantine heartland by 661AD (c.f. Dan 8:9). By the year 750AD, the empire of the Umayyad Caliphate stretched as far west as Spain and as far east as India.

It is worth noting that this detail of the prophecy in verse 9 is precisely accurate when seen as fulfilled by Islam's expansion: "to the south, to the east, and toward

the glorious land” (ESV). This not only describes the directions of Islam’s early expansion, but also the order of its expansion, first led by Mohammed, and then by the caliphs after him. After securing the region of Mecca and Medina, Islam next spread south along the whole west coast of Arabia, then east, to secure the southeast “toe of the boot” of the Arabian Peninsula, then northeast and northwest toward modernday Iraq and Israel respectively

So, modern commentators who treasure the writings of the classical historicists and Reformers have agreed with Luther’s identification of Daniel’s ‘little horn’ as the Islamic Empire.

The Holocaust’s Death Camps Operated for 3-1/2 Years

During the Second World War, the people Daniel had in mind when he spoke of “the saints” or “holy” people—Daniel’s own people, the Jews—were being held captive and were being systematically killed in death camps for three and a half years, from December 1941 through May 1945.

Old Testament writers used the term “saints” (Hebrew *kodesh* = ‘holy’ or ‘set apart’) to refer to the Jews. At Mount Sinai, according to Moses, God gave his law to the “saints.” (Deut. 33:2) King David called true-worshipping Jews of his day “the saints who are on the earth.” (Ps. 16:2 NKJV)

In this case the prophet Daniel was given visions of “what will happen to your people in the days to come” (Dan. 10:14 *Jerusalem Bible*), including “a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then” from which “your people . . . will be delivered.” (Dan 12:1 NIV) So, when Daniel used the term “saints,” he had in mind God’s ‘holy people’—Daniel’s own people, the Jews.

The first camp intended specifically to exterminate Jews rather than simply confine them, was the one at Chelmno, Poland, which began operations on December 8, 1941. The camp at Dachau, which was originally created to house political prisoners, but was later transformed into a death camp, was liberated on April 29, 1945, and the last camp at Mauthausen on May 5, 1945. So, the systematic mass killing of Jews in death camps finally ended—three and a half years after it began. Could that fit the prophecy of Daniel 7:25 which says this?:

“This king will speak against the Most High God, and he will hurt and kill God’s holy people. He will try to change times and laws that have already been set. The holy people that belong to God will be in that king’s power for three and one-half years.”

—Daniel 7:25 NCV

The time frame of three and a half years fits the prophecy. And the victims of the Holocaust fit the prophecy—Daniel’s “saints” or “holy people,” the Jews. But what did “the Turk” or Islamic empire have to do with the Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler that systematically exterminated Jews for three and a half years?

The Nazi-Islamist Alliance Documented

Surprisingly, the Islamic empire was heavily involved with Nazi Germany and its treatment of the Jews, as documented recently by secular historians Barry Rubin and Wolfgang G. Schwanzitz in their book *Nazis, Islamists, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* published in 2014 by the prestigious Yale University Press.

In order to understand this surprising connection between Islam and the Third Reich, we need to look first at the historical background.

After Mohammed’s death in 632 A.D., his successors took on the title “Caliph” and extended his conquests. The “Caliphate” or Islamic state under their rule eventually subjugated not only the Middle East and Turkey, but also all of North Africa, much of Western Europe (Spain, Portugal, and parts of France and Italy), much of Eastern Europe (parts or all of Greece, Macedonia, Armenia, Romania, Hungary, Austria, Bulgaria, Russia, Ukraine, Albania, Bosnia, Serbia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan), and extended east to Persia (Iran) and northern India.

History shows that this Islamic empire which Martin Luther called “the Turk” survived into modern times under the Turkish Empire, better known as the Ottoman Empire. Although largely driven out of Europe before the beginning of World War I, the Islamic Empire of the Ottoman Turks still held most the Middle East when its leader Sultan Mehmed V formed an alliance in 1914 with Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and Kaiser Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary, as a major player in the Central Powers—the losing side in the First World War.

Westerners—Americans and Western Europeans—tend to think of World War I as a contest between Germany and Britain, with the Ottoman Turks just a footnote, if mentioned at all. But, from the standpoint of Bible prophecy, the Islamic empire that occupied the Promised Land was the most significant player.

After defeating the Central Powers in World War I, the victorious Allies broke up the German, Austrian and Turkish empires into many smaller states, some of them occupied by the British and French under League of Nations mandates. Abdülmecid II, the last Ottoman caliph,

held his position nominally for a couple of years after the partitioning, but in 1924, the position of caliph was abolished. The Islamic empire that so many Bible scholars (like Luther, Calvin, Sir Isaac Newton and Jonathan Edwards) saw as fulfilling prophecy was then held together only by activists and religious authorities—no longer as a politically unified nation.

This ‘head’ of the ‘beast’ seemed to be “wounded to death” (Rev. 13:3), as noted elsewhere in this book.

Islamic Empire ‘Wounded to Death’ but Still Alive and Active

Few people are aware of Islam’s role between the two World Wars and during World War II. But the 2014 book *Nazis, Islamists and the Making of the Modern Middle East* by Barry Rubin and Wolfgang G. Schwanitz (Yale University Press) documents it in detail. The publisher’s advertisement promoting the book says this:

During the 1930s and 1940s, a unique and lasting political alliance was forged among Third Reich leaders, Arab nationalists, and Muslim religious authorities.

. . . In this groundbreaking book, esteemed Middle East scholars Barry Rubin and Wolfgang G. Schwanitz uncover for the first time the complete story of this dangerous alliance and explore its continuing impact on Arab politics in the twenty-first century.

. . . the full scope of Palestinian leader Amin al-Husaini’s support of Hitler’s genocidal plans against European and Middle Eastern Jews. In addition, they expose the extent of Germany’s long-term promotion of Islamism and jihad.

Drawing on unprecedented research in European, American, and Middle East archives, many recently opened and never before written about . . .

(yalebooks.com/yupbooks/book.asp?isbn=9780300140903)

First, Rubin and Schwanitz document a long-lasting relationship between Germany and the Islamic power centers, beginning in the late 1800s. This relationship continued after their defeat in the First World War. Young nationalists from the Middle East went to Berlin to study or as their home in exile.

Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler is widely quoted on the Internet as saying, “Germany [and] the Reich have been friends of Islam for the past two centuries, owing not to expediency but to friendly conviction. We have the same goals.”

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relations_between_Nazi_Germany_and_the_Arab_world#cite_note-64)

The Third Reich's Minister of Armaments and War Production Albert Speer reports that Adolf Hitler said

"You see, it's been our misfortune to have the wrong religion. Why didn't we have the religion of the Japanese, who regard sacrifice for the Fatherland as the highest good? The Mohammedan religion too would have been much more compatible to us than Christianity. Why did it have to be Christianity with its meekness and flabbiness?"

(Speer's Memoirs titled *Inside the Third Reich*, page 96)

But, as is well documented, the link between Islam and the Third Reich went far beyond friendship and compatibility.

Islam's Role in the Holocaust

Historians are aware of Islam's role in the Holocaust, but under pressure to be 'politically correct,' few dare mention it. Benzion Netanyahu was Professor of History at Cornell University. His son, Benjamin Netanyahu serving as Prime Minister of Israel said

attacks on the Jewish community in 1920, 1921, 1929, were instigated by a call of the Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al-Husseini, who was later sought for war crimes in the Nuremberg trials because he had a central role in fomenting the final solution.

He flew to Berlin. Hitler didn't want to exterminate the Jews at the time, he wanted to expel the Jews. And Haj Amin al-Husseini went to Hitler and said, 'If you expel them, they'll all come here.' 'So what should I do with them?' he asked. He said, 'Burn them.' And he was sought in, during the Nuremberg trials for prosecution.

(from the official transcript issued by the Israeli Prime Minister's office, online at <http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Speeches/Pages/speechcongress201015.a.spx>)

Netanyahu was savagely denounced in the press for saying this, but do the historical facts back up his claim?

At the war crimes trial of Holocaust implementer Adolf Eichmann, his aid Dieter Wisliceny testified,

The Mufti is one of the originators of the systematic destruction of European Jewry by the Germans, and he has become a permanent colleague, partner and advisor to Eichmann.

(Rubin and Schwanitz, page 299)

Former mayor of London Ken Livingstone declared on BBC Radio London that “When Hitler won his election in 1932 his policy then was that Jews should be moved to Israel.” (www.BBC.com/news/uk-politics-36160135) And that policy continued through October 1941.

Although Adolf Hitler had written earlier in his *Mein Kampf* manifesto about his murderous hatred of the Jews, when he actually came to power in Germany he found a profitable way to get rid of them—a way that would avoid genocide and thus not offend the international community or the consciences of his own people. In 1933 Hitler made a well-documented deal with Zionists to allow Jews to leave the country (in exchange for money and property) and travel as immigrants to British-controlled Palestine. Foreign groups also paid ransom for many.

Under that “Haavara” agreement, for example, in 1935 the German ocean liner *Hohenstein* was renamed *Tel Aviv* and steamed out of the port of Bremerhaven with Jewish passengers bound for Palestine—with a swastika flag flying from the mast and Nazi Captain Leidig at the helm.

Even when the British administration ruling Palestine bowed to pressure from the Mufti’s associates and began to limit Jewish immigration, Hitler continued to allow Jews to leave German territory in exchange for money, regardless of their destination. During May 1939 alone, several passenger vessels steamed out of German harbors carrying Jewish asylum seekers. The *Orduna* had 120 Austrian, Czech and German Jews on board; the *Flandre* 104; the *Orinoco* 200; and the ocean liner *St. Louis* carried more than 900 Jewish passengers.

According to the Third Reich’s official “Wannsee Protocol” document, which was used as evidence at the Nuremberg trials, “537,000 Jews were sent out of the country” by October 1941, for whom “foreign Jews donated a total of around 9,500,000 dollars”—roughly \$160,000,000.00 in today’s money. So, it was profitable for Hitler’s regime.

But that program did not please the Islamists.

The Yale University Press book *Nazis, Islamists and the Making of the Modern Middle East* documents in detail how Hitler changed his dealings with the Jews to please the Islamists.

The leadership role for world Islam was claimed after World War I by the Islamic Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Mohammed Amin al-Husaini, who founded and served as president of the World Islamic Congress.

He came from a Jerusalem family that traced its origins to a grandson of Muhammad, and he served in the Ottoman Turks’ army in World War

I. In 1937 he issued an “Appeal to All Muslims of the World” urging them to rid their lands of Jews. This appeal was translated into German in 1938.

Due to his role in the Arab revolt against British rule in Palestine, Mohammed Amin al-Husaini fled Palestine in 1937 and eventually took refuge in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, where he made Arabic-language radio broadcasts and helped the Nazis recruit Eastern European Muslims for the Waffen-SS. He was given a monetary allowance and comfortable accommodations as an honored guest of the Nazi regime.

This served to revive the German-Islamist alliance forged decades earlier when

Enver Pasha, Ottoman war minister during World War I . . . unleashed the German-Ottoman jihadization of Islam with a 1914 call for Afro-Asian jihad in the colonies of Great Britain, Russia, and France.

(Rubin and Schwanitz, page 35)

The same secular source documents the German role in stirring up Islamic jihad, going back to the First World War:

While von Oppenheim organized his team and wrote a master plan for launching jihad, the three experts assembled a program entitled ‘Germany and Islam.’

Their mission was to inform the German elite and prepare the general public for an unprecedented—in Becker’s phrase—and frightening undertaking: a European Christian-manufactured jihad against other Christian nations. Becker dealt with German policy toward Islam in General; Gothe, with Turkey; and Mittwoch, with the doctrine of Jihad.

(Rubin and Schwanitz, page 34)

The seeds of Islamic jihad that Hitler (and his predecessors) helped plant across Asia, the Middle East and North Africa through Husaini’s popaganda have been germinating and growing ever since.

Decades of European colonial rule—even centuries in some places—had forced Islam to keep its head down, and produced a ‘moderate’ Islam akin to some nominally ‘Christian’ liberal churches—a liberal Islam without political power or military muscle, and without the will to fulfill Mohammed’s vision. But the jihadi propaganda that Germany funded helped remind some Muslims of Mohammed’s original version of Islam that conquered much of the world. Fueled by the formation of a Jewish state in 1948, that jihadi version of Islam has continued to grow, resulting

in the worldwide Islamic terror that we see today. Adolf Hitler helped to awaken that sleeping giant.

A Formal Alliance between Adolf Hitler and the Islamist Leader Promised to End Jewish Emigration

While still in Palestine, Mohammed Amin al-Husaini directed his efforts toward stopping all Jewish immigration, and toward violent overthrow of British rule. Shortly after Adolf Hitler's rise to power in 1933, al-Husaini reportedly asked the German Consul-General Heinrich Wolff not to send Jews to Palestine. Beginning with a 1937 meeting with Adolf Eichmann, the Islamic Grand Mufti and his representatives had access to top Nazi leaders. The Muslim leader's constant request to them was to stop Jews from leaving Europe, so they would not end up settling in Palestine.

Hitler finally granted that request.

According to Rubin and Schwanitz, "In February 1941 Hitler had received al-Husaini's proposal" for a formal alliance with the Nazi cause, "of which one condition—paragraph seven—was that Germany stop Jewish emigration from Europe." Then, "Hitler promised al-Husaini on March 11 to do so," and "Hitler ordered SS leader Reinhard Heydrich on July 31, 1941 to prepare an 'overall solution for the Jewish question in Europe.'" (Rubin and Schwanitz, p. 161)

After those months of preparation, the Islamic leader met personally with Adolf Hitler on November 28, 1941, for over an hour and a half. Following the meeting Hitler ordered Heydrich to convoke a conference "within ten days to prepare 'the final solution of the Jewish question.'" (Rubin and Schwanitz, p. 161)

That Wannsee Conference was actually held in a Berlin suburb on January 20, 1942, after the mass-killing of Jews was well under way

to ensure the cooperation of administrative leaders of various government departments in the implementation of the final solution to the Jewish question, whereby most of the Jews of German-occupied Europe would be deported to Poland and murdered.

Conference attendees included representatives from several government ministries, including state secretaries from the Foreign Office, the justice, interior, and state ministries, and representatives from the *Schutzstaffel* (SS). In the course of the meeting, Heydrich outlined how European Jews would be rounded up from west to east and sent to extermination camps in the General Government (the occupied part of Poland), where they would be murdered.

(Quoted from the the Wikipedia article at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wannsee_Conference)

Why would Adolf Hitler agree to end the lucrative practice of collecting millions of dollars in ransom money for European Jews? Why would he suddenly replace that successful money-making program with an expensive operation to transport millions of Jews to death camps?

Rubin and Schwanitz explain that the policy change came in response to years of relentless prodding from radical Islamists who wanted to stop Jews from returning to Palestine—and who offered something in return. Hitler wanted what they had to offer.

In February 1941, Mohammed al-Husseini submitted to the Nazi government a draft declaration of German-Arab cooperation. Later that year he submitted it also to Germany's Axis partner, Italy, and met in Rome with Benito Mussolini. Then he went on to Berlin where he met with high German officials, including Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, and eventually with Adolf Hitler himself.

What did each side want from the formal alliance between the Nazis and the Islamists?

The Nazis wanted two things:

(1) Islamic soldiers from Eastern Europe and the Balkans—areas formerly part of the Islamic empire—recruited to fight in the armies of the Third Reich, and

(2) the fomenting of rebellion in the British and French territories in the Middle East, Asia and North Africa, in the form of Islamic jihad, to distract British and French forces from the conflict in Europe.

The Islamists wanted three things:

(1) free use of German broadcasting facilities and printing presses to produce Islamic jihad propaganda,

(2) material support in the form of money and weapons, and

(3) an end to Jewish emigration from Europe—since those Jews might end up in Palestine.

Both sides got what they wanted, except that the Islamic jihadi rebellion in the British and French-occupied lands failed to reach the scale or intensity Hitler had hoped for during his lifetime.

The official Nazi minutes recording the “Reich Chancellory, Berlin November 28, 1941 meeting of German Chancellor Adolf Hitler and Grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini in the Presence of the Reich Foreign

Minister and Minister Grobba” can be found widely published online. They include mention of

the Mufti's work of secretly organizing the Arabs against the moment when they could strike. . . . the assurance that the Arabs would in strict discipline patiently wait for the right moment and only strike upon an order from Berlin.

The official minutes also include Hitler's promise:

The Fuhrer replied that Germany's fundamental attitude on these questions, as the Mufti himself had already stated, was clear. Germany stood for uncompromising war against the Jews. That naturally included active opposition to the Jewish national home in Palestine . . .

Germany was resolved, step by step, to ask one European nation after the other to solve its Jewish problem, and at the proper time to direct a similar appeal to non-European nations as well.

It should be noted, of course, that the official minutes of the Hitler-Mufti meeting would have been ‘cleaned up’ prior to publication by the Nazi regime to remove explicit references to mass-killing—just as was done with the notes Adolf Eichmann took at the Wannsee Conference, which survive as the widely-published “Wannsee Protocol.” In regard to the latter, Eichmann testified at his trial that his SS superior Heydrich instructed him to remove explicit language before circulating copies. The trial transcript says Eichmann explained, “How shall I put it—certain over-plain talk and jargon expressions had to be rendered into office language by me.”

From a biblical prophecy standpoint, the most interesting part of this Nazi-Islamist alliance is the Islamic demand for an end to Jewish emigration from Europe.

Hitler was determined to remove the Jews from Europe. And the Islamists were determined to eliminate the existing Jews from Palestine, and to guarantee that further immigration stopped. They feared that an increasing Jewish population would eventually lead to a Jewish state, carved out of land that Islamic leaders had controlled for more than a thousand years.

Killing Jews Systematically for a Time, Times and Half a Time

The first death camp prepared specifically as a place of execution, rather than for simply holding prisoners, began its killing operations on December 8, 1941 at Chelmno, Poland, in response to years of requests from Islamist leaders. Rubin and Schwanitz document in great detail in

their book the meetings between World Islamic Congress president Mohammed Amin al-Husaini and the German architects of the Holocaust, his collaboration with Adolf Eichmann, and his tour of the death camps.

Here is a timeline summarizing the events discussed above:

1933-1941: Jews pay ransom, emigrate with Nazi approval
1933-1941: Islamists object to Jews going to Palestine
Feb. 1941: Hitler receives al-Husaini's formal proposal
Mar. 1941: Hitler agrees to stop Jewish emigration
Jul. 1941: Hitler orders 'overall solution' for Jews
Nov. 1941: Hitler meets with al-Husaini, confirming plan
Dec. 1941: Extermination camps begin systematic killing

The Bible book of Esther documents an attempt during the reign of the Persian Empire to wipe out the Jewish people. Persian Prime Minister Haman the Agagite planned out that attempted Holocaust. But the plan was defeated when the king's Jewish wife Esther put her life on the line, and the king elevated her uncle Mordecai to replace Haman as Prime Minister. Would the Bible devote an entire book to that aborted Holocaust, yet not mention at all a later repeat that actually claimed the lives of some six million Jews?

The camp at Chelmno, Poland—the first concentration camp built exclusively to kill Jews—was established in November, 1941, and mass murder began there on December 8, 1941. The last death camp, Mauthausen, was liberated three and a half years later in May, 1945. (Concentration camps set up to house Jews existed before this, but death camps set up specifically to carry out genocide were operational for just three and a half years.)

Centuries earlier the prophet Daniel had foretold that an exceptionally cruel foreign ruler would hurt and kill the Jewish people over a period of three and a half years. Did the Bible foretell the Holocaust?

Daniel lived around twenty-five centuries ago, but he received a series of visions and messages from angels sent by God to tell him about what would happen to his people, the Jews, in the distant future:

“Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.”

—Daniel 10:14 NIV

He was told to

“seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.”

—Daniel 8:26 NIV

God’s messengers told Daniel there would be “a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then” from which “your people . . . will be delivered.” (Daniel 12:1 NIV)

“When the end comes near for those kingdoms, a bold and cruel king who tells lies will come. This will happen when many people have turned against God. This king will be very powerful, but his power will not come from himself. He will cause terrible destruction and will be successful in everything he does. He will destroy powerful people and even God’s holy people. This king will succeed by using lies and force. He will think that he is very important. He will destroy many people without warning . . .”

—Daniel 8:23-26 NCV

Does that description fit the Nazi-Islamist alliance that attempted to exterminate the prophet Daniel’s people, to keep them from returning to the Promised Land?

In a related passage the angelic messenger God sent to Daniel told him,

“This king will speak against the Most High God, and he will hurt and kill God’s holy people. He will try to change times and laws that have already been set. The holy people that belong to God will be in that king’s power for three and one-half years.”

—Daniel 7:25 NCV

The Jews to “receive the power to rule” after the 3-1/2 years

The angel also indicated that shortly after those three and a half years, the Jewish people would have their own nation restored—they would receive power to rule themselves again. The cruel ruler who was killing the Jews would be

“making war against God’s holy people and was defeating them until God, who has been alive forever, came. He judged in favor of the holy people who belong to the Most High God; then the time came for them to receive the power to rule.”

—Daniel 7:21-22 NCV

Daniel does not speak of them first as a “nation,” but rather as a “people”—which would fit the circumstances of the Jews at the time of the Holocaust. In fact, it was shortly after the Holocaust that the nation of Israel was restored in 1948, and the holy people of the prophet Daniel were able to rule over the Promised Land for the first time in nearly two thousand years.

Was this what the prophet had been told would happen?

Demonic enemies of God tried to block their restoration to the Promised Land by annihilating the Jewish people. That attempt was implemented through what the Nazis called the “Final Solution” and what we today call the Holocaust—after repeated requests from Islamic religious and political leaders. God, who sees the future, appears to have foretold this significant event through his inspired human prophets, and had those prophecies recorded in Scripture.

“Then another king will arise, more brutal than the other ten, and will destroy three of them. He will defy the Most High God, and wear down the saints [the Jews] with persecution, and try to change all laws, morals, and customs. God's people will be helpless in his hands for three and a half years.”

—Daniel 7:24-25 LB

The Nazi-Islamist alliance fits this description, and its extermination camps operated for three and a half years.

Revelation Chapter 12

The New Testament book of Revelation seems to include a parallel of Daniel's Old Testament prophecy. In view of all that has been discussed above, consider this possible interpretation [in brackets] of Revelation, chapter 12 (KJV), which also speaks of three and a half years:

¹And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman [= Israel - Isa. 54:1,5,6; Jer. 3:14; 31:31,32] clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars [= the twelve tribes - Rev. 7:4-8]:

²And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

³And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon [= Satan the devil - Rev. 12:9], having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. ⁴ And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

⁵ And she brought forth a man child [= Christ, the Messiah - Rom. 9:3-5], who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. [After his death and resurrection, the Messiah ascended into heaven - Dan. 7:13]

⁶ And the woman fled into the wilderness [The people of Israel were dispersed among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other, including the Americas—land that was an unknown ‘wilderness’ to Bible writers. - Deut. 28:64], where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. [To preserve the Jewish people from complete annihilation during the Holocaust. 1260 days = 3 ½ years]

⁷ And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, ⁸ And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was cast out, that

old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. [Since this was invisible to human eyes, the timing would be uncertain, but perhaps after Messiah's resurrection and before the Tribulation on Israel that began in 70 A.D.]

¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. ¹² Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

¹³ And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman [= Israel] which brought forth the man child. [The dragon Satan had the Roman Empire subdue a Jewish rebellion, killing more than a million Jews, and scattering the rest throughout the Empire.]

⁴ And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time [= 3 1/2 years], from the face of the serpent. [The scattering of the Jews served to preserve Israel from complete annihilation then and during the Tribulation's climax later in the 3 1/2 year Holocaust.]

⁵ And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood [= the evil Nazi/Islamist alliance; compare Isa. 57:20] after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. ¹⁶ And the earth helped the woman, [Britain/America came to the rescue of the Jewish people] and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood [= defeated the Jew-hating Nazi-Islamist alliance and stopped the Holocaust] which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

¹⁷ And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. [= persecution of Christians that has intensified worldwide.]

Does the interpretation in the brackets above truly show a parallel between the Revelation and Daniel's prophecy? Readers must judge for themselves, until the day when God makes all these things clear to everyone.

During the 1800s and early 1900s advocates of "substitution theology" applied many of the prophecies about "Israel" to the Church instead of to the Jews. So, when the Holocaust and the subsequent restoration of the state of Israel occurred, many Christians missed the significance of these events as fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

But, if Daniel and the Revelation indeed foretold these events of recent history, then the remaining prophecies are well on track toward fulfillment—and all who are alive today do well to pay attention.

The City of Jerusalem

in History and in Prophecy

The great historicists who wrote and preached from the 1300s through the 1800s generally had little or nothing to say about the city of Jerusalem in terms of future fulfillment of prophecy. And how could we expect anything different? Except for a brief time during the Crusades, the city had been irrelevant to world affairs—for well over a thousand years.

But it figured prominently throughout Bible times. The Creator's choice of this particular city was announced at the time of King David, who took the city out of the hands of its long-time inhabitants, the pagan Jebusites. The Almighty referred to it as, "Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there." (1Ki. 11:36 KJV) God specified, "I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel." (2 Chron. 6:6 KJV) It was there that God had King David place the holy tabernacle with its Ark of the Covenant. And there is where God told David he would have his temple built.

Jerusalem before the Jews

But that was not the beginning of Jerusalem as a center of true worship. The city's name means "foundation of peace" or "possession of peace," with the second part of the name—"salem"—derived from the same source as the Hebrew "shalom" and the Arabic "salam" or "salaam," both meaning "peace." The first mention of Jerusalem's existence is found in the book of Genesis, where it is referred to as "Salem."

Abraham was living as an alien in the land God promised to him, when a marauding band led by the kings of several Canaanite cities swept down and took captive Abraham's nephew Lot. Abraham allied himself with the kings of some other nearby cities and, with a small military force, he defeated the hostile kings and rescued his nephew. At this point there appeared on the scene a man named Melchizedek who is identified as "king of Salem." He was also called "priest of the most high God," and he apparently led Abraham in a celebratory worship service, at the end of which Abraham tithed a tenth of the spoils of war to this priest. "And

Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.” (Gen 14:18 KJV)

Besides the account in Genesis, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament tells the same story: “For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace.” (Hebrews 7:1-2 KJV)

There is no doubt that Salem and Jerusalem are one and the same, because the Psalmist refers to the holy city by its ancient name: “In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion.” (Psalm 76:2 KJV) So, under the priesthood of Melchizedek, Jerusalem was already a holy city and a center of true worship—at least as far back as the time of Abraham.

Canaanite Jerusalem

The next time we read about the city, it was inhabited by the Canaanite people called Jebusites. This was at the time of the Israeli invasion of the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses’ successor Joshua. He had instructions from God to wipe out the corrupt inhabitants of the land and to empty their cities for settlement by the Jews, recently freed from Egyptian slavery. However, Joshua and his successors failed to carry out these instructions completely, and one of the cities they left inhabited by its pagan Canaanite population was the city of Jerusalem.

“As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.” (Joshua 15:63 KJV) “Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire. . . . And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.” (Judges 1:8, 21 KJV) The Jebusites continued to live there alongside the Israelites throughout the centuries of the Judges until the time of King David.

Chosen by God as the Site of His Temple

Through his prophet, God told David that he wanted his temple, which was then merely a portable tent or tabernacle, to reside in Jerusalem. The chief obstacle was the Jebusite fortress on a hill named

Zion in the midst of the city. David defeated the Jebusites, and captured their “stronghold of Zion,” which came to be known from then on as “the city of David.” (2 Samuel 5:7 Jewish Publication Society) He had been ruling Israel from the town of Hebron, but now he moved into the city and made it his capital. “In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.” (2 Samuel 5:5 KJV) Some time later he also brought the Ark of the Covenant into the city, so that the tabernacle of worship resided in Jerusalem as well.

Later, David gave to his son Solomon the architectural plans for a more permanent temple of God to be built there in Jerusalem: “Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things.” (1 Chron. 28:11-12 NIV) Some time after David’s death, Solomon built that temple.

So, Jerusalem became the permanent center for Jewish worship of the one true God.

The Temple Mount was a separate hill, close by Mount Zion, but came to be called by the same name. In fact, the term Zion came to be applied poetically to the Holy City as a whole.

Jews Introduce Worship of Other ‘Gods’

“Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years.” (1 Kings 11:42 NIV) However, as he grew older, Solomon began catering to the desires of his many foreign wives to worship the gods of their native lands. He had married “many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, ‘You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.’” (1 Kings 11:1-2 NIV)

Solomon’s unfaithfulness went so far that “He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. . . . On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.” (1 Kings 11:5-8

NIV) As a result, God announced that he would rip most of the kingdom away from Solomon and his royal descendants.

Consequences

Jeroboam son of Nebat of the Israelite tribe of Ephraim began a rebellion against Solomon and, after the king died and his son Rehoboam began to rule in his place, Jeroboam succeeded in getting most of the twelve tribes to break away and make him king over them. So, while Solomon's son Rehoboam and his successors continued to rule over the tribe of Judah in Jerusalem, Jeroboam and his successors ruled over a northern kingdom of Israel from the city of Samaria.

The two kingdoms warred against each other much of the time, Jews fighting Jews in bitter rivalry. The Bible books of 1 Kings and 2 Kings relate the parallel histories of the two Jewish realms.

Eventually the empire of Assyria invaded the northern kingdom, and carried off its Jewish population as captives. But kings in the lineage of David continued to rule in Jerusalem over the tiny kingdom of Judah.

However, the Jews in the southern kingdom followed the pattern of the northern kingdom and repeatedly broke God's covenant. There were "things used to worship Baal, Asherah, and the stars" in the temple at Jerusalem, and "men that the kings of Judah had appointed to offer sacrifices to Baal and to the sun, moon, and stars," as well as a "sacred pole for Asherah" in the temple, and "male prostitutes lived next to the temple" to carry out the homosexual acts that were part of such pagan worship rites. (2 Kings 23.4-7 Contemporary English Version)

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God listed his complaints against the people of Jerusalem and Judah.

They were worshipping false gods and practicing sexual immorality:

"The LORD said, 'Tell me why I should forgive you. Your children have left me and have made promises to idols that are not gods at all. I gave your children everything they needed, but they still were like an unfaithful wife to me. They spent much time in houses of prostitutes. They are like well-fed horses filled with sexual desire; each one wants another man's wife. Shouldn't I punish the people of Judah for doing these things?' says the LORD. 'Shouldn't I give a nation such as this the punishment it deserves?'"

—Jeremiah 5:7-9 NCV

They were committing adultery, misusing power, and acting as if God Almighty did not exist:

"The land of Judah is full of people who are guilty of adultery. . . The people are evil and use their power in the wrong way. 'Both the prophets and the priests live

as if there were no God. I have found them doing evil things even in my own Temple,' says the LORD.”

—Jeremiah 23:10-11 NCV

They were exploiting the poor and proudly flaunting their sexuality:

“Your houses are full of what you took from the poor. What gives you the right to crush my people and grind the faces of the poor into the dirt?’ The LORD God All-Powerful says this. The LORD says, ‘The women of Jerusalem are proud. They walk around with their heads held high, and they flirt with their eyes. They take quick, short steps, making noise with their ankle bracelets.’”

—Isaiah 3:14-16 NCV

God is not one to be mocked. As he had said he would a long time earlier in the law of Moses, God punished the Jews for such unfaithfulness. He used the Babylonian empire to carry out his sentence against Israel. First Judah was occupied and subjugated by emperor Nebuchadnezzar. Then, when king Zedekiah rebelled against the Babylonians, they burned Jerusalem and carried off its population as captives.

Exile, Then Return to Jerusalem

The Hebrew prophet Daniel prophesied in the royal palace of the Babylonian monarch. Later, when the Medo-Persian empire defeated Babylon, he prophesied under Cyrus the king of Persia and Darius the Mede. Finally, after a seventy year period of captivity foretold by the prophet Jeremiah, the Jews were allowed to return and rebuild Jerusalem with the blessing and financial support of the new world power.

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that Jehovah’s word by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘Jehovah, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he has commanded me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. Whoever is left, in any place where he lives, let the men of his place help him with silver, with gold, with goods, and with animals, besides the freewill offering for God’s house which is in Jerusalem.’”

—Ezra 1:1-4

Later Persian rulers Darius and Artaxerxes also issued instructions for the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple. Artaxerxes offered his help as a personal favor to a Jewish member of his royal court, Nehemiah his cup bearer. (Ezra 6:1-13; Nehemiah chapters 1 & 2)

This restoration of the Jews to the Promised Land at the end of their Babylonian captivity gives us some insight into how God would eventually restore the Jewish people in modern times as we approach the period characterized in the Bible as the final days of this world. Observers may not have recognized it as the hand of God when Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes issued their royal decrees. Instead, it may have appeared to be political maneuvering on the part of the world powers of the day. But, the Bible makes it clear that these things took place as the hand of God moved behind the scenes to bring about the outcome that he had foretold through his prophets.

People today say that the modern events involving Israel—like Britain’s Balfour Declaration calling for a Jewish state and United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 calling for the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state—are merely political events without God’s intervention. But they would probably have said the same thing if they lived 2500 years ago and saw Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes issue their decrees. However, it was God who caused the ancient seventy year captivity of the Jewish people to end precisely when he predicted that it would. And this holds great lessons for us today. Although our eyes behold only the visible maneuverings of Israeli political parties and Palestinian factions, the influence of American presidents and United Nations Secretaries General, and the climate of world opinion, behind it all the hand of God is moving again to bring about the outcome foretold in the Bible.

The Greeks and Then the Romans

But, keeping that most important lesson in mind, let’s return to the story of Jerusalem. The Medo-Persian empire dominated the Middle East until it fell before the armies of Alexander the Great. After Alexander’s death, his empire broke into four parts. Eventually the Roman empire came to control the territory that had formerly made up the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Thus it was that Jerusalem was occupied by Roman soldiers at the time of Christ.

Jesus preached there, and he was put on trial there before Roman governor Pontius Pilate and before the Jewish Sanhedrin court. He was executed outside the city.

Shortly before his death Jesus visited the temple in Jerusalem with some of his disciples, and they pointed out to him the impressive buildings. He replied, “Do you see all these things? I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown

down.” So, they asked him privately, “Tell us when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:2-3 NIV) The disciples actually asked Jesus a three-part question: about the destruction of the temple, about his coming, and about the end of the world, or the end of the age. In his response Jesus added to his prediction of the destruction of the temple these words about the city itself: “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” (Luke 21:24 NIV)

A few decades after Jesus’ crucifixion, Jewish zealots rebelled against the Roman empire. They set Jerusalem free from Roman occupation. However, Roman armies returned and laid siege to the city. Again, there were political and military maneuverings, but the outcome was as Jesus had said: the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem, tore down the temple, and left not so much as one stone upon another stone.

After this the Romans carried off the remaining Jews captive and scattered them throughout the Roman empire. This was in fulfillment of the words God gave Moses to record: “But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God . . . the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth.” (Deut. 28:15, 64 NASB)

Islamic Control over Jerusalem

The Romans re-took and destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The Roman empire continued to control Jerusalem and its environs until the empire itself began to fall apart. Then the eastern Roman or Byzantine empire ruled from Constantinople. Then Mohammed founded a new religion. The Islamic holy war of conquest began and spread across the Middle East and North Africa. Jerusalem fell to the Muslims in the year 637 A.D., five years after Mohammed’s death.

Events moved slowly in those days, but the Islamic occupation of Jerusalem eventually brought a reaction from the nations that called themselves Christian. Armies of Crusaders reached Jerusalem and took the city in 1099 A.D. But it was difficult for Europeans to control land in the Middle East during the dark ages, and Crusader influence lasted a scant hundred and fifty years or so.

Islamic Egyptian influence then prevailed over the city for the most part until the early 1500s, when the Islamic empire of the Ottoman Turks took control.

At the time of the Protestant Reformation, Islamic armies were threatening Vienna, Austria, and all of Europe. Winning back Jerusalem from the Muslims would have seemed impossible. As for the Crusades that had been mounted a few centuries earlier with the professed goal of liberating Jerusalem, Martin Luther saw them as connected to papal schemes to raise money under false pretenses. Supposed relics commanded high prices. Crusaders were promised an indulgence for their sins—immediate salvation rather than time in Purgatory—if they died in the fight. Giving money to support the Crusades also earned an indulgence, and that eventually grew into the practice of simply selling indulgences, which so provoked Luther's indignation.

When the Reformers spoke about Jerusalem at all, it was either in reference to the ancient city's destruction by the Romans, or to the heavenly "Jerusalem above" (Galatians 4:26), the hope of Christians.

Around four hundred years after the Protestant Reformation began, British forces under General Allenby marched into the Old City of Jerusalem, in 1917. The League of Nations legitimized British occupation through an official Mandate.

Historicist Guinness Saw What Was Coming

Did modern historicists anticipate any of this?

Writing in 1888 historicist Henry Grattan Guinness, D.D., F.R.A.S. said this about Daniel's prophecies in his book *Light for the Last Days – A Study in Chronological Prophecy* (found online at <http://historicism.com/Guinness/Light/light12.htm>):

We have seen reason at a previous stage of our examination of these prophetic periods, to anticipate that the very proximate year 1889 will see Jerusalem liberated from Moslem tyranny. This sanctuary cycle points us on to two other future dates, 1893 and 1906. What events are these years likely to bring? We do not venture even to suggest, but may remark that the overthrow of Ottoman rule in Syria, whenever it occurs, may, or may not, mark the close of "the times of the Gentiles."

It is quite possible, and perhaps we may say probable, that when the Turks first cease to exercise direct control in Palestine, the country will be placed under a protectorate, either a joint protectorate of the western nations, or possibly, as less difficult to work, under the protectorate of one or two of them, or even of England only, as it already has a sort of protectorate in these regions through the Anglo-Turkish convention about Cyprus. In that case Turkish rule would be succeeded by another Gentile power; Jerusalem would still be under Gentile

rule, showing that the "times of the Gentiles" were still running their course. Such rule might be brief, and autonomy might, after a few years, be granted to the people of the land under a Jewish governor, and so it might continue to the end of the age.

So, Guinness came close to predicting the year when the Islamic Ottoman Turks would surrender Jerusalem. He was just a few years off. And he accurately predicted that a "protectorate of the western nations . . . or even of England only" would succeed the Turks in ruling over Jerusalem—which indeed happened when Britain was granted a League of Nations Mandate to rule the Promised Land.

Following the Allied conquest of the city at the end of 1917, Britain ruled Jerusalem and all of the land of Israel under a Mandate issued by the League of Nations, predecessor of the United Nations. This did not appear, at that time, to be hostile to Jewish interests concerning the city. Prior to that, Jerusalem had been in the hands of the Ottoman Turks—Muslims who had no intention of establishing Jewish sovereignty. But the British government had, by its Balfour Declaration of 1917, announced that "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object." So, the League's grant of a Mandate for Britain to rule the area appeared to be a pro-Jewish move. But it also established a precedent for international determination of Jerusalem's fate by a world body.

The Balfour Declaration spelled out Britain's intention to restore a Jewish state in the region. But, when Britain dragged its feet and years passed, Jewish radicals began using force to persuade the British to leave.

UN Resolution 181 and the Jewish State

In 1947, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 called for a division of the land between Jews and Arabs, between two new states of Israel and Jordan, with Jerusalem under U.N. control and administration. Finally, in 1948 as British forces withdrew and the State of Israel was proclaimed, the surrounding Arab nations attacked. Their aim was to destroy Israel and to drive the Jews into the sea. That war ended in 1949 with an agreement dividing Jerusalem between Israel and Jordan.

A few years later, during the Six-Day War, Jewish control over Jerusalem was expanded on June 7, 1967, when the Old City was captured. Then, in 1980, Israel annexed East Jerusalem and declared the united city of Jerusalem to be its capital.

But many nations oppose that move, and U.N. resolutions call for Israel to relinquish control of all or part of the city.

And this brings us to the present situation, with Jerusalem now a problem for the whole world, and with the nations of the world working together to impose a solution. “Jerusalem will be a heavy stone burdening the world,” as the ancient Hebrew prophet Zechariah said, and, “All the nations of the earth unite in an attempt” to impose their solution. (Zech. 12:3 The Living Bible)

We today have the advantage of seeing all of these more recent events—events the traditional historicists could hardly have imagined: a First World War ripping Jerusalem and the Middle East away from the Islamic Ottoman Turks, a Holocaust killing six million Jews, a Second World War producing a United Nations organization committed to restoring a Jewish homeland, and a militarily mighty Jewish state recapturing the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967. Those events would have astounded Wycliffe, Tyndale and Calvin as much as a robotic lunar landing that same year, and men landing on the moon two years later.

Historicism and the Years 1948 and 1967

So, if the early historicists had lived to see the modern restored Jewish state with Jerusalem as its capital, would they have revised their commentaries?

No doubt! And modern-day historicists have done just that. For example, Pastor Joe Haynes wrote the following on page 17 of his fascinating April 2014 article “An Historicist Exposition of Daniel 8” found on his web site at historicism.com/Haynes/Daniel8Exposition.pdf

The whole “times of the Gentiles”, 2520 regular, solar years, from “the first month” (around April) in 573BC, comes to approximately April, 1948AD. Israel declared independence on May 14, 1948. This is a remarkable correlation isn’t it? But it gets even more interesting: the halfway point of that period is also an important date in connection with the subject of Daniel 8. 573BC plus 1260 years, comes to 688AD, when Abd alMalik began building the Dome of the Rock on Temple Mount. Exactly 1260 years later, a Jewish government and state was reborn in “the glorious land” (Dan 8:9). And by the end of the 2300 years, just 20 years later, the State of Israel regained sovereign rule over Temple Mount.

Pastor Joe’s article, with his detailed chronological calculations and other background material, is well worth reading. How amazing to see the ancient prophecies point to the years 1948 when the nation of Israel

was reborn, and 1967 when the Old City of Jerusalem, with its Temple Mount, passed from Gentile to Jewish control!

Zechariah: International Concern over Jerusalem

Five hundred years ago, when Islam held all of the Middle East and North Africa in its grip, as well as Spain, Portugal and much of Eastern Europe, it would have been nearly impossible for Bible readers to imagine a situation where “Jerusalem will be a heavy stone burdening the world . . . all the nations of the earth unite in an attempt . . .”—Zechariah 12:3 LB

But we live in a world today where Jerusalem has become a burden or problem for the whole world, the center of instability in the Middle East. Islamic terrorists cite the plight of the Palestinians or endangerment of the Al Aqsa Mosque as motivation for their actions. Advocates of jihad call for Muslims world wide to march on Jerusalem.

The United Nations organization has passed more resolutions on Jerusalem than on any other city in the world. There are Security Council and General Assembly resolutions calling for the state of Israel to abandon its claim to Jerusalem as its eternal capital, and to withdraw from at least part of the city. Other U.N. resolutions call for all of Jerusalem to be an international city under direct United Nations control. There are strong political currents in the international community for these resolutions to be enforced. And those U.N. resolutions form a legal basis for the international community to take concerted military action that is described this way in one modern Bible translation: “. . . all the nations on earth will come together to attack Jerusalem.”—Zechariah 12:3 NCV

Could that lead to this prophetic scenario foretold in the Apocalypse?: “They . . . go out to all the rulers of the world to gather them for battle . . . all the rulers and their armies to a place with the Hebrew name [Armageddon]” [a location in Israel].—Revelation 16:14-16 NLT

Could world concern over the status of Jerusalem eventually lead up to this scenario foretold in the Old Testament?: “‘At that time, when I restore the prosperity of Judah and Jerusalem,’ says the LORD, ‘I will gather the armies of the world into the valley of Jehoshaphat’” [a location in Israel].—Joel 3:1-2 NLT

The United Nations still holds the official position that Jerusalem should not be part of the state of Israel or under its control—even though Israel views Jerusalem as its capital.

Anyone interested can read all of the Security Council resolutions concerning Jerusalem by browsing to the United Nations website at www.un.org or this link valid as of this writing: <http://unispal.un.org/>. The resulting page states that there are “over 30,000 text documents” in the collection on Israel and Palestine, so it is necessary to look under the “Resolutions” heading and then click the “General Assembly” or “Security Council” link. Then click “By Subject” and scroll down to the “Jerusalem” link. Some of the most interesting resolutions on Jerusalem are quoted at length in my book *United Nations vs Israel—and the End of the World*, which can be read for free online at UNvsIL.com.

A Final Show-Down at the UN?

These resolutions show that the world organization has not forgotten about its 1947 resolution calling for internationalization of Jerusalem under a governor appointed by the U.N. Most people may have forgotten, but the leaders of the world’s nations remember.

For example, toward the end of the year 2000 the U.N. General Assembly passed Resolution 57/111 on Jerusalem, in which it specifically references “resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, in particular its provisions regarding the City of Jerusalem,” and states, “the international community, through the United Nations, has a legitimate interest in the question of the City of Jerusalem” and that “any actions taken by Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Holy City of Jerusalem are illegal and therefore null and void and have no validity whatsoever.”

It is these resolutions that the world community may eventually seek to enforce through a military confrontation between Israel and all the nations of the world. British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said, “the West has been guilty of double standards—on the one hand saying the UN Security Council resolutions on Iraq must be implemented, on the other hand, sometimes appearing rather quixotic over the implementation of resolutions about Israel and Palestine.” (From a March 26, 2003 *Jerusalem Post* article titled, “Foreign Ministry slams British PM’s linkage of Iraq, Intifada,” by Douglas Davis) The U.N. resolutions on Iraq were enforced militarily, so why not the resolutions on Jerusalem?

It is hard to imagine United Nations forces assembling in the region outside Israel and then marching into the country. In half a dozen wars Israel was able to push back the combined armies of all its Arab neighbors. In the 1967 war the Arab armies managed to push ahead

twenty miles inside Israel, but then Israel stopped them and pushed them back. Would U.N. forces meet with greater success than the Arabs? Even from a purely secular and strategic standpoint, without giving thought to divine intervention, the task would give pause to any general or military commander.

Moreover, today it is generally known or widely believed that Israel possesses nuclear weapons, although the Jews have never publicly declared themselves a nuclear power. With atomic weapons on both sides, the United States and the Soviet Union faced off for decades without either side daring to stage an all-out attack. A would-be attacker of Israel faces a similar deterrent.

So, how could a situation arise that would actually fulfill prophecy by bringing the forces of the United Nations into conflict with Israel over Jerusalem?

We will have to wait to see what happens, of course. But, dramatic changes and reversals have occurred before in global politics. And suicidal military ventures are not unknown in human history.

Yet, it is more common for military powers to back themselves into a corner, where they find themselves forced to act. For example, it would not be difficult to conceive of United Nations peacekeeping forces being invited into Jerusalem's border areas in relatively small numbers as part of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. They might be welcomed by both sides under certain conditions, perhaps as unarmed monitors to report on compliance with agreements, or as lightly armed border guards to secure agreed-upon boundaries. Then, once they were in place, it would not be difficult to imagine the situation deteriorating some time later, and the government of Israel taking a position contrary to what the United Nations felt obligated to enforce. A confrontation between Israeli troops and reinforced U.N. forces could escalate unexpectedly.

Actually, United Nations forces have already been invited into the area; not into Jerusalem, but into the border area of southern Lebanon. Israel welcomed them after its withdrawal in the year 2000 from Lebanese land that had been occupied as an Israeli "security zone" for more than two decades. In July, 2000, the U.N. deployed its first peacekeeping units along the "line of withdrawal," also known as the "blue line," between Israel and Lebanon. Referred to as the United Nations Interim Force, battalions of nearly two hundred soldiers in blue helmets took up positions—armed men and women from Ireland, Ghana, Finland, Fiji,

Nepal and India. So, a similar deployment around Jerusalem is not unthinkable.

In fact, numerous proposals have been made, calling for interposing U.N. peacekeepers between the Israelis and the Palestinians, either ahead of a peace agreement or as a means of implementing such an agreement. So far, Israel has refused to allow entry to such international forces, and the United States has blocked efforts in the U.N. Security Council to move in that direction. But that could easily change.

Ezekiel's Prophecy: a Coalition Attack on a Restored Israel

Around 2500 years ago the prophet Ezekiel spoke of a time in the distant future when the Jews would return to the land of Israel after being scattered among many nations for a long time. Israel would be restored, and then a broad coalition of many nations would attack:

“The LORD spoke his word to me, saying, ‘Human, look toward Gog of the land of Magog, the chief ruler of the nations of Meshech and Tubal. Prophesy against him and say, “The LORD God says this: I am against you, Gog, chief ruler of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around and put hooks in your jaws. And I will bring you out with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all of whom will be dressed in beautiful uniforms. They will be a large army . . . Persia, Cush, and Put will be with them . . . There will also be Gomer with all its troops and the nation of Togarmah from the far north with all its troops—many nations . . .

““After a long time you will be called for service. After those years you will come into a land that has been rebuilt from war. The people in the land will have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which were empty for a long time. These people were brought out from the nations . . .

““You, all your troops, and the many nations with you . . . Now that my people Israel are living in safety, you will know about it. You will come with many people from your place in the far north. You will have a large group with you, a mighty army . . .””

—Ezekiel 38:1-15 NCV

Some commentators in centuries past have viewed this passage as foretelling events surrounding Antiochus IV Epiphanes who ruled the Seleucid Empire from 175 BC until his death in 164 BC., and who occupied the land of Israel and tried to force the Jews to give up their laws and customs. Many modern commentators interpret the passage as foretelling a future attack against Israel by Russia and a broad coalition of nations under Russia's leadership seven years before the battle of Armageddon.

Jewish Diaspora Scattered Worldwide for Centuries

The classical historicists would have had difficulty applying these verses to future events, since the Jews had already been wandering in their scattered condition for centuries, far from the Promised Land. But

some historicists did consider the many possible meanings of Gog, Magog and their allies. In the early 1700s Matthew Henry wrote this in his commentary:

The critical expositors have enough to do here to enquire out Gog and Magog. We cannot pretend either to add to their observations or to determine their controversies. Gog seems to be the king and Magog the kingdom; so that Gog and Magog are like Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Some think they find them afar off, in Scythia, Tartary, and Russia. Others think they find them nearer the land of Israel, in Syria, and Asia the Less [i.e., Asia Minor].

Another multi-volume commentary by Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset and David Brown was originally published in 1871, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon endorsed it with these words:

It is to some extent a compilation and condensation of other men's thoughts, but it is sufficiently original to claim a place in every minister's library: indeed it contains so great a variety of information that if a man had no other exposition he would find himself at no great loss if he possessed this and used it diligently.

In that commentary Fausset wrote about Ezekiel 38. He suggested that the acts of ancient Greek Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes provided an initial fulfillment, which merely prefigured much later events still future: "the final desolations to be caused by Antichrist in Israel, previous to His overthrow by the Lord Himself, coming to reign."

So, Fausset saw the final fulfillment as occurring at a time yet future, after "the much longer period of Judea's present desolation." And he suggested that the nations Ezekiel named may refer to Russia, the Crimea (which has changed hands between Ukraine and Russia), and even Moscow and Tobolsk:

the chief prince--rather, "prince of *Rosh*," or "*Rhos*" [*Septuagint*]. The Scythian Tauri in the Crimea were so called. The Araxes also was called "*Rhos*." The modern Russians may have hence assumed their name, as Moscow and Tobolsk from Meshech and Tubal . . .

Russia and the Islamic Nations' Wars against Israel

Throughout the years of the Cold War it was the Soviet Union (primarily Russia) that took the lead in attacking Israel in the United Nations, along with the Muslim Arab states. Huge majorities passed countless General Assembly resolutions condemning the Jewish state. Why didn't the U.N. take military action against Israel on the scale of the U.N.-decreed Korean conflict? America's veto in the Security Council precluded such an attack.

However, the nations surrounding the restored modern state of Israel—its immediate neighbors—did join together and attack more than once over the years.

In 1948, after Israel declared its independence, it was invaded by the combined armies of Egypt, Syria, Transjordan (later Jordan), Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Local Palestinian Arab forces also fought the Jews. In 1967 the forces of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq massed on Israel's borders in obvious preparation for a massive attack, but Israel struck first preemptively in what came to be called the Six Day War. In the War of Attrition (1969-70) Israel's neighbors precipitated frequent clashes along the borders and the 1967 cease-fire lines, with additional guerilla action inside Israel itself. In the Yom Kippur War (or Ramadan War from the Islamic perspective) of 1973, the forces of Egypt, Syria and Iraq again attacked the Jewish state.

Although initially backing Israel during the 1948 war and the truce that followed, the early 1950s saw the Soviet Union switch to supporting the Arab states. Russia played a major role in the later multi-national attacks against Israel.

The Russians reportedly supplied much of the sophisticated military equipment used by the Arab side in the 1967 Six Day War. In the 1969-1970 War of Attrition, the Soviet Union participated actively in Egypt's air defense by providing military hardware and thousands of "advisors." According to information supplied by the Israel Defense Forces and published in the Jewish Virtual Library, Russians actually piloted Mig fighter planes, operated the sophisticated radar installations, and launched surface-to-air missiles against Israeli planes. The IAF reported shooting down five Russian pilots (according to documents at http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/69iaf.html).

The Nations Ezekiel Named as Attacking Israel

But the popular identification of Magog and Meshech with Russia and Moscow is the subject of much speculation and debate. Actually, Persia is the only nation in Ezekiel's list that we can identify with certainty; it is the age-old name of the country we call Iran today. Genesis, chapter 10, lists Cush and Put as grandsons of Noah through his son Ham, and Magog, Gomer, Meshech and Tubal as grandsons of Noah through his son Japheth—plus Togarmah as a great-grandson—noting concerning their descendants that "All the families grew and became different nations, each nation with its own land and its own language." (Genesis

10:5 NCV) Commentaries locate these nations across portions of Europe, Asia and Africa.

Ezekiel said these nations would unite to attack a restored state of Israel in the distant future, a land “whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate.” (38:8 NIV) This description could certainly fit the modern state of Israel, populated by Jews who returned to the Promised Land from Europe and the Americas, as well as from Russia.

The attackers would include Iran (Persia) and “many” other nations. The Apostle John’s Apocalypse uses similar language to refer to *all* the nations—“the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog.” (Revelation 20:8) So, Ezekiel’s list of nations could likewise represent the entire world community of nations.

There is also a similarity of language between Ezekiel 39 and Revelation 19, which may imply that Ezekiel was writing concerning the same final war discussed in the nineteenth chapter of Revelation. In both passages all the birds are invited to eat the flesh of the world’s rulers and their armies, after the nations are defeated by God’s forces.

“... Speak to every kind of bird and wild animal: “Come together, come! Come together from all around to my sacrifice, a great sacrifice which I will prepare for you on the mountains of Israel. Eat flesh and drink blood! You are to eat the flesh of the mighty and drink the blood of the rulers of the earth . . . At my table you are to eat until you are full of horses and riders, mighty men and all kinds of soldiers,” says the LORD God. “I will show my glory among the nations. All the nations will see my power when I punish them.””

—Ezekiel 39:17-21 NCV

“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he called with a loud voice to all the birds flying in the sky: ‘Come and gather together for the great feast of God so that you can eat the bodies of kings, generals, mighty people, horses and their riders, and the bodies of all people—free, slave, small, and great.’ Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth. Their armies were gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army.”

—Revelation 19:17-19 NCV

The Apostle John, who wrote the Revelation under divine inspiration, was familiar with Ezekiel’s earlier writings, so his use of similar language would not be a mere accident. Did he mean to imply that he was writing of the same conflict that Ezekiel foretold?

Was Gog’s attack in Ezekiel a portrayal of Russia waging war against Israel by proxy through all of its Arab neighbors? Could it be that Ezekiel’s prophecy was fulfilled in Russia’s mobilizing the United

Nations—all the nations of the world—to condemn Israel? Russia and its Arab allies were behind countless General Assembly resolutions and Security Council resolutions condemning the actions of the Jewish state. Or did the prophet write of a future full-scale military attack on Israel by Russia and a limited group of allies? Or was Ezekiel speaking of a move against Israel by all the nations of the world, a final attack that triggers God's wrath at Armageddon?

Time will tell. Bible readers will be in a better position to identify the correct interpretation as the fulfillment of end times prophecy continues to play out.

Natural Disasters in the Days Leading up to Christ's Return

Besides the restoration of the Jewish state in the Promised Land, and besides Jerusalem becoming a problem for the whole world, what else does the Bible say about the time period leading up to the end?

Environmental Disasters and Climate Change

It would be a time when environmental disasters would plague mankind. The prophecies mention earthquakes in one place after another:

“ . . . earthquakes in various places.”

—Matthew 24:7 NCV

There would be destructive ocean waves like those caused recently by severe coastal storms and devastating tsunamis:

“ . . . distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves . . . ”

—Luke 21:25 RSV

Historicists in centuries past generally looked for symbolic meanings in the natural disasters described in the book of Revelation: scorching heat, smoke from an abyss, locusts, deforestation, depletion of fish stocks in the seas, and so on. But, could there also be some more literal fulfillments of Revelation's prophetic language? If so, then perhaps Revelation describes the climate-change-driven extreme weather and other natural disasters afflicting the modern world, as the time approaches for Christ to return. Consider, then, the following possible fulfillments:

Mankind would be plagued by climate change with extreme weather events:

“ . . . and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat. . . ”

—Revelation 16:8-9 NIV

Like the volcanic eruptions that have interfered with air traffic in recent years, smoke rising up from beneath the earth would plague mankind:

“When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace.”

—Revelation 9:2

The prophecies foretell drastic deforestation worldwide:

“ . . . one third of the trees were burned up . . . ”

—Revelation 8:7

And the planet’s sea life would be threatened, with fish stocks greatly reduced, much as we see happening in the world today:

“ . . . a third of the living creatures in the sea died . . . ”

—Revelation 8:8-9

Does God Send Natural Disasters?

When some prominent preacher declares an earthquake or a devastating storm to be a punishment sent by God, the news media heap ridicule on such a thought—especially when the preacher names the sinful lifestyle of the city or nation hit by disaster.

Since “God is love,” he doesn’t do such things—Or does he?

Even those who don’t read the Bible should be familiar with the story of the Jewish people’s exodus from Egypt—it has been the topic of epic motion pictures as well as animated features—and the plagues that God sent on Egypt before Pharaoh finally let Moses’ people go. Some of those plagues, sent by God, consisted of destructive pests (frogs, gnats, flies, locusts). Some consisted of diseases afflicting farm animals and diseases afflicting humans. And one of the most devastating plagues was a severe hail storm:

“When Moses raised his walking stick toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the earth.

“So he caused hail to fall upon the land of Egypt. There was hail, and lightning flashed as it hailed—the worst hailstorm in Egypt since it had become a nation. The hail destroyed all the people and animals that were in the fields in all the land of Egypt. It also destroyed everything that grew in the fields and broke all the trees in the fields.”

—Exodus 9:23-25 NCV

After they were freed from their slavery in Egypt, God told the people through Moses that they would be blessed if they obeyed his laws, but that they would be punished with disasters if they disobeyed:

“But if you do not obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands and laws I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and stay . . . The LORD will punish you with disease, fever, swelling, heat, lack of rain, plant diseases, and mildew until you die. . . .”

“You will plant much seed in your field, but your harvest will be small, because locusts will eat the crop. You will plant vineyards and work hard in them, but you will not pick the grapes or drink the wine, because the worms will eat them.”

—Deuteronomy 28:15-22, 38-39 NCV

Over the centuries that followed, the Jewish people actually did rebel against God many times, and he disciplined them many times by sending troubles upon them, including wars, famines and natural disasters. God told his prophet Jeremiah

“I will send war, hunger, and disease against them.”

—Jeremiah 24:10 NCV

The drought and other disasters that ruined the Israelites’ crops were sent for the purpose of bringing them to repentance—causing them to change their hearts and minds, and turning them back to God, as he told them through his prophet Amos:

“I held back the rain from you three months before harvest time. . . . People weak from thirst went from town to town for water, but they could not get enough to drink. Still you did not come back to me,’ says the LORD.

“I made your crops die from disease and mildew. When your gardens and your vineyards got larger, locusts ate your fig and olive trees. But still you did not come back to me,’ says the LORD.

“I sent disasters against you, as I did to Egypt.”

—Amos 4:7-10 NCV

The prophet Jeremiah elaborates on the sins of the people that prompted God to send disasters upon them:

“The land of Judah is full of people who are guilty of adultery. Because of this, the LORD cursed the land. It has become a very sad place, and the pastures have dried up. The people are evil and use their power in the wrong way. ‘Both the prophets and the priests live as if there were no God. I have found them doing evil things even in my own Temple,’ says the LORD. ‘So they will be in danger. They will be forced into darkness where they will be defeated. I will bring disaster on them in the year I punish them,’ says the LORD.”

—Jeremiah 23:10-12 NCV

Jesus Is Just Like His Heavenly Father

There is a popular notion today that it was only the God of the Old Testament who sent plagues and disasters, and that in the New Testament somehow a kind and gentle Jesus took the place of that harsh and mean Old Testament God. But that notion is popular only among people who don’t actually read the New Testament. If they read it, they would realize that Jesus is just like his heavenly Father. Jesus said, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9 NCV) And

Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus is “the exact representation” of God the Father. (NIV)

When he healed a sick man who had been unable to walk, Jesus also told him to stop sinning, or something worse may happen to him:

“Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.’”

—John 5:14 NIV

When the resurrected and risen Christ sent a message to the Christian church in the ancient city of Thyatira he gave them a stern warning of the punishment he would send on church members who behave immorally:

“I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.”

—Revelation 2:20-23 NIV

That was Jesus speaking—the same Jesus who taught love and forgiveness. The Apostle Paul spoke of “the kindness and sternness of God” (Romans 11:22 NIV)—kindness to those who accept the forgiveness of their sins and learn from God’s mercy to leave sin behind and walk in God’s ways, but sternness to those who disregard God’s mercy and persist in wrongdoing.

So the revelation of God through Jesus Christ is consistent with the revelation of God in the Old Testament. He is a loving heavenly Father, but also an old-fashioned strict Father who corrects and disciplines people with the aim of bringing them to repentance. And he is a God who will ultimately punish with severity wrongdoers who reject his mercy.

God Does Not Change

The popular ‘Jesus’ who loves and accepts everyone and everything, without a call to repentance, is not the real Jesus—the Jesus of the Bible. People who read the Bible from cover to cover find it to be consistent from cover to cover, because God does not change. In the book of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament in most Bibles, God tells the prophet, “I am the LORD, and I do not change.” (Malachi 3:6 NLT) And in the New Testament we are told, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8 NIV)

Jesus warned that there would be natural disasters in the days leading up to his return in power:

“. . . distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. . . . And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

—Luke 21:25-28

When speaking of the days leading up to his second coming, Jesus also spoke of “famines and earthquakes in various places.” (Matthew 24:7 NIV)

Foretold by God, or Sent by God?

But, would these always be naturally occurring events, or would God actually send some of the disasters in the final days of this world?

The best answer is found in the New Testament’s last book, the Apocalypse or Revelation. It speaks plainly of God sending plagues or disasters upon this rebellious world:

“There were seven angels bringing seven disasters. These are the last disasters, because after them, God’s anger is finished.”

—Revelation 15:1 NCV

These “last disasters” God would send through his angels would include “great heat” from the sun, which could be a reference to climate change and global warming:

“The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and he was given power to burn the people with fire. They were burned by the great heat, and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these disasters. But the people refused to change their hearts and lives and give glory to God.”

—Revelation 16:8-9 NCV

The disasters during the end times would also affect sea life, reminiscent of recent reports of depleted fishing stocks and endangered species in the marine environment:

“The second angel sounded his trumpet, and . . . A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died.”

—Revelation 8:8-9 NIV

The Purpose Behind Such End-Times Disasters

These end times disasters serve as warning signs, for the purpose of alerting people to the approaching end, and to call them to repent and return to God.

But God knew ahead of time that many would refuse to listen:

“The other people who were not killed by these terrible disasters still did not change their hearts . . . and turn away from murder or evil magic, from their sexual sins or stealing.”

—Revelation 9:20-21 NCV

Luther & Calvin’s View of the Papacy and Islam—‘Politically Correct’?

‘Thou shalt not offend anyone,’ seems to be the eleventh commandment taught in many churches today. Even if it is not a spoken command, it is taught by the example of Sunday morning sermons that are carefully crafted not to offend anyone sitting in the church or anyone watching and listening to the sermon online.

The secular society we are immersed in has elevated such ‘political correctness’ to the status of a sacred cow. And that commandment to keep from offending anyone has spilled over into many if not most churches.

Even after *The Boston Globe* and the movie “Spotlight” documented that tolerating and covering-up pedophilia was systemic in the Vatican hierarchy, Christians fear being labeled anti-Catholic bigots if they say too much. And even when Islam spawns repeated acts of terrorism and public beheadings in one place after another, Christians fear being labeled islamophobic bigots if they say too much.

Jesus’ Sermons Caused Offense.

The Apostle Paul’s Preaching Was Offensive

First century Christianity was not like what we see in many churches today. It did not seek to be ‘politically correct.’

Jesus’ ministry caused offense.

When Jesus condemned the man-made doctrines of the Pharisees and named their sins out loud in public, “Then the disciples came, and said to him, ‘Do you know that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying?’” (Matthew 15:12)

Similarly, the Apostle Paul spoke of “the offense of the cross,” or as the New Living Translation says, “If I were no longer preaching salvation through the cross of Christ, no one would be offended.” (Galatians 5:11)

The Offensive Message of the Protestant Reformation

Still, even Bible believing Christians are often shocked when they read what the Reformers said about Islam and the papacy.

Father of the Reformation, Martin Luther, said that

the Antichrist is at once the Pope and the Turk [Islam], because a human being is made up of body and soul. The spirit of Antichrist is the Pope—the flesh of Antichrist is the Turk. For the former devastates the Church spiritually—the latter, bodily.

(Luther's *Tischreden*, Weimer ed., 3, No. 3055)

Francis Nigel Lee, Professor of Systematic Theology and Caldwell-Morrow Lecturer in Church History at the Queensland Presbyterian Theological College explained in his widely-published article “Luther on Islam and the Papacy,” that

“Rev. Dr. Luther believed, then, that the ‘two regimes, that of the Pope and that of the Turk, are no doubt the true Antichrist’—in the broader sense of that word. . . .
-Luther's Works, Weimer ed., 52, 549.”

And this view was widely held by Bible believers for hundreds of years, until it was replaced by the more ‘politically correct’ teachings of modern preterists and dispensationalists. Preterists see the villains in the prophecies as rulers who died nearly two thousand years ago, while dispensationalists point to future villains during a coming seven-year tribulation. No one is offended when they speak ill of those villains who aren't alive today. But historicists must exercise care today when naming the villains Luther and Calvin named—Islam and the papacy.

Today's ‘Political Correctness’ Enforced by Law

Critics of Islam and the papacy face public condemnation and sometimes even prosecution. A case in point is the trial of Evangelical pastor James McConnell, who gave a sermon at the Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle in north Belfast in May 2014, in which he allegedly called Islam “satanic” and “heathen.” The sermon was subsequently aired online, resulting in public prosecution on charges of “improper use of a public electronic communications network and causing a grossly offensive message to be sent by means of a public electronic communications network,” according to a BBC news report. The 78-year-old pastor faced as much as six months in prison, but was found not guilty in court after a process that took nearly two years. Still, he was widely condemned in the court of public opinion, and speech similar to his sermon has brought legal prosecution in other lands as well.

As human governments grow more insistent on their demands for ‘politically correct’ speech, forbidding by law new ‘crimes’ such as ‘islamophobia’ and ‘homophobia,’ Christians do well to keep in mind the

faithful ones in past centuries who boldly proclaimed Bible truth despite threats of imprisonment or death—examples such as Jeremiah, John the Baptist, William Tyndale, Jan Hus, Luther, Calvin and, of course, our Lord Jesus himself.

“Promised Land”—Still Promised?

Did God intend for the Jews to lose the Promised Land forever, when Roman Legions destroyed God’s Temple and most of Jerusalem, killed a million Jews, and eventually sold the rest into slavery throughout the Empire? Or, did the Bible foretell their return to the Promised Land?

Historicist Thomas Goodwin (1600-1679), who served as chaplain to England’s Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell, saw the return of the Jews to “their own land” prefigured in Revelation 16:12, which says, “And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.” (KJV) Goodwin wrote:

the sixth vial breaks the power of the Turk in the east, so making way for the Jews, (whom he means to bring into the fellowship of his kingdom in their own land,) there called 'the kings of the east.'

(*An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* by Thomas Goodwin, online at <http://digitalpuritan.net/thomas-goodwin/>)

Noted preacher and historicist Charles Haddon Spurgeon understood Scripture to promise that “there shall be a political restoration of the Jews to their own land and to their own nationality,” according to a sermon he preached in London in 1864. But before looking more closely at what Spurgeon and other commentators had to say, let’s look at history and the Scriptures.

Even in the vocabulary of unchurched people the expression “Promised Land” is synonymous with the land of Israel. Where did this expression come from?

Before God confused the languages and scattered the people at the tower of Babel, the world’s human population was concentrated in the plain of Shinar near the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. After that, when the nations were scattered about to the four corners of the globe, those who spoke Hebrew still resided close to Shinar. But a small family group began to migrate southward.

“Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.”

Ur is the same town in modern Iraq where, on April 15, 2003, representatives of various Iraqi exile groups met under the auspices of the victorious United States military to begin talks aimed at forming a new government for Iraq. The ruins of Haran (also spelled Harran) are located in modern-day Turkey.

A Promise Made to Abraham

Abram, whom God renamed Abraham, was in his seventies and still living in Haran when God spoke to him and told him to leave the land of his relatives and to go to a new land that he would give him:

“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.”

—Genesis 12:1 KJV

So, together with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot and several dozen servants, Abram set out toward the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

God led Abraham to the land of Canaan, land that today is covered by the nations of Israel and Jordan. Canaan was named after the forefather of its inhabitants, a grandson of Noah. “And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth. . . . And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan.” (Gen 9:18; 10:6 KJV)

The land was sparsely populated, so even the Canaanites felt that there was plenty of room for nomadic Abram and his nephew Lot. They had no way of knowing that God planned to transfer ownership of the land eventually to Abram’s offspring.

“And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.”

—Genesis 12:6-7 KJV

After a while, the two patriarchs Abraham and Lot found it difficult to share pasture land, because their shepherds kept getting into arguments with each other. Abram and Lot discussed the situation and decided to separate. Abram told Lot to choose which pastures he wanted: the land to the north or the land to the south. Lot chose the land of ‘the District,’ the area around Sodom and Gomorrah. So, Abram headed in the opposite direction.

God appeared to Abram again and repeated the promise:

“And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.”

—Genesis 13:14-15 KJV

A Promise Repeated to Isaac, and Then to Jacob

Abraham’s son Isaac and his grandson Jacob were born there, and God later appeared to Isaac and to Jacob and repeated to them the same promise regarding the land:

“God said to him, ‘Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.’ So he named him Israel. And God said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body. The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.’”

—Genesis 35:10-12 NIV

Jacob raised twelve sons there but did not own the land. He merely dwelt in it as a visitor, an alien. When his older sons became jealous of the second-youngest son Joseph, they sold him into slavery to a caravan of travelers who, in turn, took him to Egypt and sold him there. In Egypt Joseph ended up in prison, but, through God’s miraculous intervention (It’s a long story worth reading in the Bible), Pharaoh eventually put Joseph in charge so that Joseph was, in effect, the prime minister of Egypt.

Several years later there was a food shortage in the land where Jacob dwelt with his remaining sons, so he sent them to Egypt looking for food, and there they became re-united with Joseph. Joseph invited his father Jacob and his brothers to move to Egypt to live so that they would have food during the famine.

Israel’s Offspring Freed from Egyptian Slavery

The offspring of Jacob, now named Israel, grew in great numbers in Egypt. They were so fertile and multiplied so fast that the Egyptians became afraid of their numbers and enslaved them to keep them under control. Finally God sent Moses to lead the Israelites up out of Egypt.

After sending in a dozen spies to report on what they found in the promised land of Canaan, most of the people lacked faith that God would give them victory over the Canaanites. They did not want to proceed. So, God had Moses lead them on a long, circuitous route

through the wilderness for forty years, until that unfaithful generation had died off.

Moses Got to See the Promised Land

At the end of the forty years Moses was a hundred and twenty years old. God had him lead the Jews to the edge of the Promised Land, and then took him up to the top of a high mountain and showed him the land. Genesis 34:4 says (NIV):

“Then the LORD said to him, ‘This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it.’”

Moses died there, but only after appointing his deputy Joshua to lead the people in the conquest of Canaan.

“After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ aide: ‘Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.

“Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west.

“No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.”

—Joshua 1:1-6 NIV

God Condemned the Canaanites to Death

The land they were to conquer was a fruitful and productive land, but it was filled with inhabitants. The Canaanites were numerous and powerful. But they were a corrupt people who practiced child sacrifice and gross sexual immorality. God had passed judgment on them and had decided to execute them. And he appointed the people of Israel as his executioners.

Through Moses, God had told the Jews, “you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices.” Then he described those Canaanite practices as including “sexual relations with your mother . . . sexual relations with your sister,” and even “sexual relations with an animal.” He warned them against child sacrifice and the practice of homosexuality: “Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed. . . . Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.” And then God explained that this was the

way the people of Canaan had been living: “Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.” God would apply the same standard to the Jews; if they took up living like the Canaanites, they would meet the Canaanites’ fate: “And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.” (Lev. 18:3-28 NIV)

So he instructed Joshua to enter the land of Canaan and lay siege to its cities, and to completely exterminate the people of the land. He was not to leave anyone alive. All were to be killed: men, women and children.

If a leader today were to conceive such a plan, it would be called genocide. But, as the Creator of mankind, God is the rightful judge. As the giver of life, he has the divine prerogative to set the limits of life and death, both for individuals and for whole nations. He is both just and justified in such actions. So, when the armies of Israel marched into the land of Canaan and laid waste to its cities, this was not genocide. It was a judgment from God.

Besides exterminating the people, they were also to wipe out the artifacts of Canaanite worship, because it was a twisted form of false religion glorifying sexuality and perversion. Sacred poles were huge phallic symbols. Idols displayed grossly enlarged sex organs. “Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces,” God commanded. (Deut. 23:24 NIV)

Keeping the Land Was Conditional on Israel’s Obedience

Thus, God gave Israel the Promised Land, but keeping it was conditional on their obedience.

How did they fare? Biblical history reveals that Israel failed to carry out God’s instructions. They compromised and allowed some of the Canaanites to remain alive, and they failed to exterminate their perverted religion. This failure to follow divine instructions completely would come back to haunt future generations. Men and women of Israel would be led astray to worship the Canaanite gods. Idolatry would keep rearing its head among the Israelites.

Just as the Canaanites lost the land, Israel too would lose the Promised Land for failure to keep God’s covenant. He had told them through Moses that this is what would happen if they failed to keep their

agreement with him. They would be removed from the land and be scattered throughout the earth. “But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God . . . the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth.” (Deut. 28:15, 64 NASB) And this is what eventually happened.

But, that did not mean they would lose the land permanently. God promised them that he would much later return them to the promised land:

“. . . then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee . . . from thence will he fetch thee: And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it.”

—Deuteronomy 30:3-5 KJV

“. . . the LORD will . . . assemble the dispersed of Israel, and gather together the scattered of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

—Isaiah 11:11-12 The Holy Scriptures, Jewish Publication Society of America

So the land of Israel was promised to the offspring of Jacob not just once, but also it was promised that the land would return to their possession at the time of the end. And this is the promise that began to be fulfilled when the state of Israel was re-established in 1948.

The Promised Land and the Messiah

But this was only the beginning of prophetic fulfillment regarding the Promised Land, because God promised that this land would belong to those people and their descendants forever under the rule of his Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Besides being a people assigned to preserve a written record of human history going back to the creation, and besides being a people kept separate to preserve the true worship of the true God, the Jews were also chosen to preserve the line of descent leading to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

And their presence as a functioning Jewish state in the Promised Land at ‘the time of the end’ is essential for the fulfillment of the remaining prophecies concerning Christ’s return. This is no coincidence. Rather, the God who predicted these events has the power to make sure that they will be fulfilled exactly as he said they would be.

One of the prophecies about the return of the Jews to the Promised Land can be found in the opening verses of Ezekiel chapter 37. God

shows the prophet a valley full of dry human bones. After a dramatic vision of an earthquake and a wind storm bringing the bones together, putting flesh and skin on them, and bringing them to life again, God tells Ezekiel, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.’ Therefore prophesy, and tell them, ‘Thus says the Lord Jehovah: ‘Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.’”” (Ezek. 37:11-12)

Spurgeon on the Restoration of Israel

As noted briefly earlier, ‘the prince of preachers’ Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached a sermon on this topic at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London on June 16, 1864. He pointed out that many lessons can be drawn from the vision of the bones in Ezekiel chapter 37—including lessons about salvation and about the resurrection—but that we are obligated to consider first and foremost the actual message that God gave to his prophet. And what was that message? Spurgeon said:

“We think that he was speaking only of his own people, his own ‘kinsmen according to the flesh.’ . . . His first and primary intention was to speak of them . . .

“The meaning of our text as opened up by the context is most evidently, if words mean anything, first, that there shall be a political restoration of the Jews to their own land and to their own nationality. And then, secondly, there is in the text and in the context a most plain declaration that there shall be a spiritual restoration—in fact a conversion—of the tribes of Israel.

“I. First, THERE IS TO BE A POLITICAL RESTORATION OF THE JEWS. Israel is now blotted out from the map of nations. Her sons are scattered far and wide. Her daughters mourn beside all the rivers of the earth. Her sacred song is hushed—no king reigns in Jerusalem! She brings forth no governors among her tribes. But she is to be restored! She is to be restored ‘as from the dead.’ When her own sons have given up all hope of her, then is God to appear for her. She is to be reorganized—her scattered bones are to be brought together. There will be a native government again. There will again be the form of a political body. A State shall be incorporated . . .”

So, Spurgeon held that the primary message of Ezekiel 37 is that there is to be “a political restoration of the Jews to their own land” and “A State” of Israel incorporated again. And that is what did occur eighty-four years after Spurgeon delivered this sermon.

Ezekiel 37 is not the only prophecy, of course, that speaks of the Jews' return to the Promised Land. Ezekiel's next chapters—38 and 39—tell of the attack of Gog and Magog in the distant future, “After many days . . . in the latter years,” an attack upon a restored Israel: a “land that is brought back from the sword, that is gathered out of many peoples, on the mountains of Israel, which have been a continual waste; but it is brought out of the peoples, and they shall dwell securely, all of them.” (Ezek. 38:8) God says it will happen

“when I have brought them back from the peoples, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations. They shall know that I am Jehovah their God, in that I caused them to go into captivity among the nations, and have gathered them to their own land.”

—Ezek. 39:27-28

Another prophecy of the restoration of Israel to the Promised Land is found at Isaiah 11:11-12, which says:

“Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

“And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” (NASB)

The restoration of the Jewish people to the Promised Land is an amazing fulfillment of prophecy that should convince even the most skeptical that the Bible is a divinely inspired book of true prophecy. As Jesus foretold during the Roman occupation, “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” (Luke 21:24 KJV) And as Isaiah and other Old Testament writers foretold, they would later be restored to their ancient homeland. This actually happened in 1948, with the re-establishment of the state of Israel, nearly two thousand years after Jesus spoke and some 2500 years after the Hebrew prophets foretold this event. Who could deny God's hand in such a seemingly impossible fulfillment?

Convoluting Explanations by Dispensationalists

Many dispensationalists, however, deny that Isaiah's words above have yet been fulfilled. They expect the fulfillment will occur when the Jews will *again* be scattered worldwide and will *again* be restored to the land of Israel, and they use Isaiah's words above (“the second time”) to justify this teaching. In *The Truth Behind Left Behind* (with Introduction by *Left Behind* author Tim LaHaye) authors Mark Hitchcock and Thomas Ice

postulate “Two End-Time Regatherings” and declare that “during the Tribulation period, the Jewish people will be scattered over the face of the earth for the final time.” To ‘prove’ this they present charts and tables to contrast what they see as “The Present (First) Regathering” and “The Permanent (Second) Regathering” (pages 61-64).

Charts and tables are needed to argue for such a theory, because people left alone to read their Bibles would never come to this conclusion. In fact, the argument is so complex that even its proponents get confused and trip themselves up while presenting it. For example, Hitchcock and Ice declare “MODERN ISRAEL IS A WORK OF GOD” in an all-caps heading on page 58 of their book, and then contradict that statement five pages later in a chart labeling “the present (first) regathering” as “Man’s work (secular)” as opposed to “the permanent (second) regathering” which is “God’s work (spiritual).” (page 63)

Actually, there is no need for such convoluted reasoning to explain why Isaiah would speak above concerning Israel being gathered a “second time.” During the Babylonian captivity in Old Testament times Jews were to be found scattered across that ancient empire, which ruled much of the known world at that time. When the Medo-Persian rulers who conquered Babylon later sent the Jews back to the Promised Land, this was the *first* time they were regathered; the modern return that culminated in restoration of the nation of Israel in 1948 was the *second* time.

Was the 1948 return just “man’s work,” not God’s? Was it a product of political Zionism, rather than God’s intervention? Well, to secular observers in ancient Medo-Persia who witnessed the decrees of king Cyrus and emperor Artaxerxes on behalf of the Jews, the actions of those rulers may have appeared political, but the Scriptures make it clear that God’s hand was in the matter. Similarly today, Jewish Zionism may have been a political movement, but the modern restoration of the state of Israel after two thousand years could only have been accomplished through divine intervention.

Yes, God does “recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people” as Isaiah says. The first time was five hundred years before Christ, and the second time is marked by the modern restoration of Israel in 1948.

Acceptance of Sexual Immorality in Many Churches

Historicists disagree among themselves—and have always done so—on how prophecy has been and will be fulfilled. Unlike preterism which confines itself to events in and around the First Century, and dispensational futurism which expects fulfillment in a coming seven-year Tribulation, historicism looks at the entire span of human history, so it naturally follows that historicists have more events to choose from, and a much wider range of possibilities to consider—leading to different interpretations.

But there are some matters on which every Bible-believing student of prophecy would speak in agreement. And biblical standards of morality would fall into that category.

The risen Christ told the church in Pergamum

“I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to throw a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans likewise. Repent therefore, or else . . .”

—Revelation 2:14-16

When Christ the King tells us to ‘Repent, or else,’ we need to take matters seriously. And what he condemned in the Pergamum church was the teaching of Balaam, which included the idea that sexual immorality isn’t that bad after all. Such teaching is found today in churches that “welcome” sinners without calling them to repent, as well as in churches that silently turn a blind eye to sexual sin in their midst.

In his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, German Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer condemned “the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance” as “cheap grace.” Such “cheap grace” is not the message Jesus preached. Yet it is the version of ‘grace’ found in many modern churches.

In today’s church environment where preachers and teachers vary widely in their interpretation of prophecy and Scripture in general—with some even setting aside Bible passages they view as outdated or

offensive—a lot of responsibility falls on the individual believer. Each of us needs to do what the Apostle Paul commended his audience in Beroea for doing, when they “examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” (Acts 17:11 NIV)

So, we each need to read and re-read the Bible itself, so that we can discern whether a preacher or teacher is sticking to the Word, or twisting Scripture.

We also need to consider the conduct of those who present themselves as Christian leaders. Jesus warned,

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits you will know them. Do you gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree produces good fruit; but the corrupt tree produces evil fruit. A good tree can’t produce evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn’t grow good fruit is cut down, and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”

—Matthew 7:15-20

Jesus added that “many” who claim to be Christians and who preach in Jesus’ name and who even accomplish great things in Jesus’ name—but who live a lifestyle the Bible condemns—will be surprised when Jesus rejects them and turns them away from the kingdom of God:

“Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.’”

—Matthew 7:21-23 RSV

The Apostle Paul made it clear to the members of churches he preached to that they would be misleading themselves if they thought they could continue to practice things God condemns, and still enter the kingdom of God. He wrote,

“. . . don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortioners, will inherit the Kingdom of God.

“Such were some of you, but you were washed. But you were sanctified. But you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God.”

—1 Corinthians 6:9-11

When they turned to Jesus for salvation, those people were cleansed of the sins that would have kept them out of God’s kingdom. But, if they

persisted in those sins, they would have been disqualified. Even though they called on his name, Jesus would tell them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.” (Matt. 7:23 RSV)

The world around us today has changed, but God has not changed. So, even though their church may say it is okay for people to live like that, Jesus does not say it’s okay. He says he will reject them.

But many churches today have given up preaching the real Jesus, the Jesus of the Bible. Instead, they preach a fictitious Jesus—a ‘Jesus’ of popular culture who loves everyone and everything, forgives everyone and everything and doesn’t require anything of anyone. It is just as the Apostle Paul warned:

“...the time will come when people will not listen to the true teaching but will find many more teachers who please them by saying the things they want to hear.”
—2 Timothy 4:3 NCV

People want to hear about this easy-going Jesus of popular culture, not the real Jesus who told a man he healed, “Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” (John 5:14 NIV)

Paul warned that already in his day some churches accepted false teachers preaching another Jesus, a Jesus different from the real Jesus:

“You are very patient with anyone who comes to you and preaches a different Jesus from the one we preached. You are very willing to accept a spirit or gospel that is different from the Spirit and Good News you received from us.”

—2 Corinthians 11:4

This same thing has been happening for centuries, with the result that there are many millions of people today who think they are following Jesus, or who say they are following him, but who are not following the real Jesus at all. Whole churches are misled by pastors and teachers who say it is okay to do the things Jesus said not to do.

“They Are Living in Sin, but They Love the Lord”

And even in churches that recognize what the Bible says about sin, it has become popular to excuse churchgoers or relatives who practice sin. ‘I know they aren’t living right,’ it is said, ‘but they love the Lord.’

Do such practicers of sin really love the Lord? No, not according to what the Lord himself said. Jesus said it repeatedly, to emphasize the point:

“If you love me, keep my commands. . . .

“Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. . . .

“Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. . . .

“Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching.”

—John 14:15-24 NIV

So those who live sinful lives contrary to Jesus’ teachings do not love the Lord—regardless of the words or emotions they may express. Jesus said such people do not love him. If they don’t obey him, they don’t love the Lord.

But the popular view today ignores what Jesus actually taught, and instead asserts that people who live sinful lives are in no danger of punishment if “they love the Lord.” And the ‘Jesus’ of popular culture loves and accepts everything and everyone, not requiring obedience. People who follow this make-believe Jesus may feel happy, but they won’t be happy for long. That is because the real Jesus is alive. He rose from the grave and is active today among his people. And he is coming again.

He is the same risen Christ who sent this message to the Christian church in the city of Thyatira:

“I know what you do. I know about your love, your faith, your service, and your patience. I know that you are doing more now than you did at first.

“But I have this against you: You let that woman Jezebel spread false teachings. . . . by her teaching she leads my people to take part in sexual sins . . . I have given her time to change her heart and turn away from her sin, but she does not want to change. So I will throw her on a bed of suffering. . . . I will also kill her followers. Then all the churches will know that I am the One who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each one of you for what you have done.”

—Revelation 2:19-23 NCV

There are Jezebels like that in many of today’s churches. Those who follow them will someday have to face the real Jesus, and it will not be a pleasant encounter.

Although our efforts to understand the details of Bible prophecy may lead to disagreements and uncertainty, the sort of personal conduct that is unacceptable to God is spelled out clearly in the Bible.

Have we reached the point in time yet when enough events have transpired, so that we can see unmistakably how all the prophecies have been fulfilled, or are about to be fulfilled? Probably not. But God knows how everything will turn out, and one of the main reasons for his giving us the prophecies, was so that we will put faith in him. We need to trust and obey him, because he is the only one who can say, “I make known

the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.” (Isaiah 46:10 NIV)

Jesus said, “I have told you these things, so that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you about them.” (John 16:4) Moses said, “The secret things belong to Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” (Deuteronomy 29:29) So, although there are things we can’t be certain about, and things we may wonder about, our job is to trust and obey.

In due time the outworking of events will make clear which interpretations of prophecy are correct, and which are erroneous. But the overall picture is unmistakably clear: Christ will return as a triumphant King, and will rule forever over those who belong to him. And our coming King will not be pleased to find us practicing the things he condemned so strongly in the churches at Pergamum and Thyatira.

Not Just an Academic Discussion

—Lives Are at Stake

Unbelievers who read the popular *Left Behind* fiction series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins may feel that they can safely ‘wait and see’ before choosing to follow Jesus. If Christ really does return, and they miss the Rapture of the Church to heaven, they can just wait for the second bus.

A 7-Year-Long “Second Chance” after the Rapture?

That second chance after the Rapture is one of the basic teachings of the *Left Behind* novels. According to the story line, a broad coalition of nations led by Russia and Iran stage an all-out attack on Israel (in fulfillment of the prophecies of Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39), that attack is blocked by the invisible hand of divine intervention, and then millions of Christians worldwide are raptured to heaven—followed by a seven-year-long Tribulation, with the final war of Armageddon climaxing the end of the seven years. The church members in the novels who never really believed the Bible and its prophecies find they have a second chance to do so during the Tribulation. So the story goes.

That view of coming events was popularized by the sale of well over 80 million books, videos and other products in the *Left Behind* series.

According to the *Left Behind* books the seven-year Tribulation period will afford seven more years of opportunity to come onto God’s side. Jesus returns at the beginning of the seven years, according to that view, and takes his true followers to heaven with him. Then he returns again at the end of the seven years to execute judgment on the rest of mankind.

The *Left Behind* Story Contradicts Luther, Calvin, Tyndale, Knox, Wesley, Hus, Wycliffe, Jonathan Edwards and Roger Williams

But that is not the traditional view long held by Bible believing Christians down through the centuries. The Scripture passages Tim LaHaye uses to support his view were all understood quite differently by the great Reformation teachers Martin Luther and John Calvin. Others who agreed with Calvin and Luther rather than the authors of *Left Behind* included William Tyndale (English Bible translator), Jonathan Edwards

(Congregationalist missionary in colonial America), Roger Williams (the first Baptist pastor in America), John Knox (early Scottish Presbyterian), John Wesley (Methodist founding father), Jan Hus (martyred by the Inquisition) and John Wycliffe (Bible translator). None of these Bible scholars saw a seven-year post-rapture Tribulation in Scripture.

No ‘Second Chance’ in the Wise and Foolish Virgins Parable

Jesus’ parable of the wise and foolish virgins makes it clear that, when Christ returns to take the Church home to him, there is no ‘second chance’ for those who are not ready:

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived.

The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”

—Matthew 25:1-13 NIV

This parable belies the Left Behind theory that nominal Christians who fail to keep watch will have a second chance to enter the kingdom. Consider the Left Behind novels’ prominent character Bruce Barnes, an unbelieving assistant pastor who finds himself left behind at the Rapture. He is certainly a ‘foolish virgin’ who failed to ‘keep watch,’ and was not ready when the bridegroom arrived and took the rest of his congregation to heaven. But, unlike those in the parable who find the ‘door shut’ because they had not kept watch, Bruce and others like him get a “Second Chance”—the title of the second volume of the Left Behind “Kids” series.

Such a thought is foreign to the understanding Bible readers have had for centuries. In the mid-1500s John Calvin (1509-1564) wrote,

all who shall not be ready at the very moment when they shall be called will be shut out from entering into heaven. (Calvin’s *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*)

The idea of a second chance at Christ's return was unknown to the Reformers. Two hundred years later in the early 1700s commentator Matthew Henry got the same point from Jesus' illustration:

"The state of saints and sinners will then be unalterably fixed, and those that are shut out then, will be shut out forever." (*Matthew Henry's Commentary*, Vol. V, p. 371)

And in the late 1800s British pastor and teacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote,

when once in the last days as Master of the house he shall rise up and shut the door, it will be in vain for mere professors to knock, and cry Lord, Lord open unto us, for that same door which shuts in the wise virgins will shut out the foolish for ever. (*Morning and Evening: Daily Readings*, for the morning of June 5, titled "The Lord shut him in," commenting on Genesis 7:16).

Yes, Bible readers have always understood that the 'foolish virgins' would not get a second chance.

The "Week" of Daniel 9:27

Supporters of the Left Behind teaching find their seven-year-long 'second chance' in Daniel 9:27, which says

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

—Daniel 9: 27 KJV

The *New International Version* renders the same verse this way, with that translation's footnotes shown here in parentheses to provide alternative renderings:

He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' (Or 'week') In the middle of the 'seven' (Or 'week') he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him (Or it). (Or And one who causes desolation will come upon the pinnacle of the abominable temple, until the end that is decreed is poured out on the desolated city) (NIV, Revised Edition of 1983)

So, as you can see from the alternative readings, this is one of the more obscure passages in the Bible. Different translations are possible—as well as different interpretations.

Although the writers of *Left Behind* claim that Daniel 9:27 points to a future seven-year tribulation, the great Bible scholars of the Reformation understood it quite differently. Both Martin Luther and John Calvin

apply the seven years to the time of Christ. The “week” or seven-year period covered Jesus’ three-and-a-half year earthly ministry, followed by the work of the Apostles for three and a half years preaching almost exclusively to God’s covenant people, the Jews. Christ’s sacrificial death at the midpoint of that seven-year “week” caused the animal sacrifices that were offered at Jerusalem’s temple to cease having any value in God’s eyes—“he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.”

A portion of this passage that Luther, Calvin and other Reformers understood as applying to Christ, the *Left Behind* authors now apply to the Antichrist instead—a complete reversal of what Bible readers believed for hundreds of years.

Luther and Calvin both understood the “he” who confirms the covenant to be Jesus Christ himself. The *Left Behind* series, however, teaches that “he” is the Antichrist. What a dramatic reversal!

Luther and Calvin taught that the “week” of Daniel 9:27 consisted of Christ’s three-and-a-half year ministry plus another three-and-a-half years during which the Apostles preached the Gospel to the original Covenant people, the Jews. Martin Luther expressed it this way:

For when Christ sent out the Gospel through the ministry of himself and of the Apostles, it lasted three or three and a half years, that it almost amounts to the calculation of Daniel, namely the 490 years.

Hence he also says, Christ shall take a half a week, in which the daily offerings shall cease; that is, the priesthood and reign of the Jews shall have an end; which all took place in the three and a half years in which Christ preached, and was almost completed in four years after Christ, in which the Gospel prospered the most, especially in Palestine through the Apostles (that when they opened their mouth, the Holy Ghost fell as it were, from heaven, as we see in the Acts of the Apostles), so that a whole week, or seven years, established the covenant, as Daniel says; that is, the Gospel was preached to the Jews, of which we spoke before.

(Martin Luther's "Sermon for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity; Matthew 24:15-28" from his *Church Postil*, first published in 1525)

Calvin spoke similarly, emphasizing that the middle of the last seven-year ‘week’ occurred at the time of Christ’s sacrificial death on the Cross:

“The angel now continues his discourse concerning Christ by saying, *he should confirm the treaty with many for one week. ...the angel says, Christ should confirm the covenant for one week...*” (Lecture Fifty-First)

"In the last Lecture we explained how *Christ confirmed the covenant with many during the last week...*" (Lecture Fifty-Second)

"The Prophet now subjoins, *He will make to cease the sacrifice and offering for half a week.* We ought to refer this to the time of the resurrection. For while Christ passed through the period of his life on earth, he did not put an end to the sacrifices; but after he had offered himself up as a victim, then all the rites of the law came to a close. ...This is the Prophet's intention when he says, *Christ should cause the sacrifices to cease for half a week.* ...Christ really and effectually put an end to the sacrifices of the Law..." (Lecture Fifty-Second, *Commentary on Daniel - Volume 2* by John Calvin)

LaHaye, Jerry Jenkins and others who share their viewpoint believe that the events they portrayed in the *Left Behind* novels actually "will happen someday." They wrote the books, not to entertain readers, but to present "the truth of end times prophecy in fiction form." (*Kingdom Come: The Final Victory*, pages 355-356) However, their presentation departs from the understanding Bible readers have held for centuries and contradicts Christ's teaching.

No 7-Year Gap in Jesus' Parables

Jesus never taught that unbelievers would be 'left behind' for a seven-year-long 'second chance' when he returns. Rather, he said that his coming will be like the days of Noah when eight people entered the safety of the Ark and the wicked world was swept away, and like the days of Lot when that righteous man's family was led to safety while the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were burned up. Jesus' parables—the wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats, the ten talents, the wise and foolish virgins—and his plain teaching make it clear that we must "keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come." (Matt. 24:42 NIV)

His coming will be as it was in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot, when the wicked faced immediate punishment, not a seven-year reprieve. In the parables the foolish virgins were shut out from the feast, the tares were bundled up to be burned, the goats were sent off to destruction, the servant who hid his talent instead of using it lost everything. None of them got a 'second chance'—because the message was that we need to be watching and ready when the Lord returns.

The Rapture, without Any Supposed 7-Year Gap

Does neohistoricism deny the Rapture—that believers will be caught up "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" when Christ returns? (1

Thessalonians 4:17) No, not at all. Neohistoricism affirms the Rapture, just as classic historicism does. But neither historicism nor neohistoricism teaches a seven-year gap between the Rapture and the destruction of the wicked.

That dispensationalist teaching of a seven-year gap departs from the understanding Bible readers have held for centuries and contradicts Christ's teaching.

Unlike the Reformers' commentaries that affirm the message of Jesus' parables, the *Left Behind* novels tell a different story. They show half-hearted occasional churchgoers left behind with a 'second chance'—seven more years to make up their minds about Christ. This teaching is not biblical.

For that reason, the 'left behind' scenario was unknown among Bible-believers down through the centuries. Tyndale, Hus, Wycliffe, Knox, Calvin, Luther, Wesley and Charles Haddon Spurgeon were serious students of the Word of God, but they never encountered in Scripture a two-stage return of Christ that would give unbelievers a seven-year reprieve. The founders of the Baptist, Presbyterian, Calvinist, Congregationalist, Lutheran and Reformed traditions would not recognize the beliefs that millions of their nominal adherents today have learned from the popular novels by LaHaye and Jenkins.

The Traditional Protestant Understanding Not Found in Today's Churches

By the same token today's churchgoers are largely ignorant of the traditional Protestant understanding of end times prophecy—the historicist understanding. Hence they are oblivious to the warnings that all the great preachers of the past gave concerning the apostasy, the man of sin, and the antichrist that arose from the ruins of the Roman Empire—entities that continue to lead much of the world's population away from Christ. These enemies of God are seldom named from pulpits today, but they were clearly identified by the great preachers of the Reformation.

As noted earlier in this book, it was during the late 1800s and early 1900s that the new teachings of John Nelson Darby were quietly adopted by one theology professor and then another, by one seminary and then another, by one church and then another, by one denomination and then another. Darby's "dispensationalist" teachings taught his followers to put off the end times prophecies until a supposed future Tribulation. It

was more ‘politically correct’ to see Islam and the papacy as acceptable alternative viewpoints, and to discard the embarrassing accusations that filled the writings of the Reformation. Now that a few more generations have passed, the teaching of the Reformers has been so completely forgotten that it is foreign to the thinking of most church-goers.

Christ Is Coming Again

If the *Left Behind* scenario is wrong, does that mean the excitement about end times prophecy that the novels stimulated is also wrong? Far from it! Rather, there is every reason to believe that our Redeemer’s coming is imminent.

The history of divine intervention in ages past identifies the types of situations that provoke God to act. The flood of Noah’s day was sent to cleanse a planet that had become full of sexual immorality and violence, much like today’s world. Surely this age of internet pornography, motion picture sex goddesses, and weapons of mass destruction tries the Creator’s patience to its limits.

If God sent fire and brimstone to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, when the homosexual practices of those towns brought an outcry to his ears, how much longer will he put up with the open gay pride movement that is spreading like wildfire today, and the world that gladly embraces it? When the builders of the Tower of Babel abandoned God to create an urban society capable of accomplishing the impossible, He stopped them in their tracks. So, what about today’s predominantly urban world that boasts of human achievement and looks to science to solve all man’s problems? How much farther will God let this world go in crediting blind evolution for the Creator’s handiwork, developing nuclear weapons, manipulating the genome, and performing sex-change operations?

The One who put a stop to Babel, to Sodom and to the pre-Flood world will soon put a stop to today’s antichristian culture—this time through the promised return of his Son.

The failings of *Left Behind* do not in any way negate the scriptural injunctions to “keep watch” and “look forward to the day of God.” (Matt. 25:13; 2 Pet. 3:12 NIV) In fact, without *Left Behind*’s promise of a post-Rapture ‘second chance,’ that biblical warning is to be taken even more seriously.

Captivating Fiction vs Biblical Reality

The seven-year struggle of the *Left Behind* characters against the novels' Antichrist character is a fast-moving narrative, and therefore captivates modern audiences accustomed to such dramatic action on television and at the movies. But, what about the centuries-long struggle of real-world Christians against the dark forces Martin Luther and John Calvin identified as the real Antichrist?

That true story may not be as fast moving, but we should recall that "with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day." (2 Pet. 3:8 NIV) Actually, the real-life history of this struggle is even more captivating than the *Left Behind* novels. Take the time to read about how Jan Hus was burned at the stake for preaching the truth. Read how William Tyndale fled for his life, but was betrayed and then killed for translating the Bible and standing up to the Antichrist. Read about modern-day Muslim men and women who learn the Gospel message and embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, only to be jailed, abused, stoned or beheaded for the crime of converting to Christianity in strict Islamic territories today.

Unfortunately, the *Left Behind* novels have validated many unbelievers' 'wait and see' attitude by assuring them of seven more years to get right with God after Christ returns. While the novelists urge their readers to accept Christ now rather than later, they undermine the urgency by offering their future tribulation as a seven-year safety net. If the penalty for postponing a personal decision about Christ is nothing worse than a seven-year adventure after his return, why worry?

However, if the traditional understanding of the Second Coming turns out to be correct, and Christ raptures the Church at the same time that he metes out swift punishment to the rest of the world, the undecided who relied on *Left Behind's* interpretation may be in for an unpleasant surprise with eternal consequences.

But this is not the place to refute the *Left Behind* teachings point by point. I offer such a refutation in my book *LEFT BEHIND Answered Verse by Verse*, which is available in print, and which can also be read for free online at <http://www.LeftBehindAnswered.com>.

Christians under Attack in Today's World

Christians today are circling the wagons, like an 1800s wagon train under attack in the old 'wild west.' The attackers of biblical Christianity are three in number:

Islam, which has driven Christians out of the Middle East while threatening believers everywhere with death or bodily harm through violent terrorism—and officially threatening the death penalty against its billion members, if any of them turn to Christ;

The papacy, which has undermined the faith of millions by claiming to speak for God with great pomp and ceremony while tolerating and covering up widespread sexual abuse of children;

The secular world, which uses its public education system, its news media and its entertainment industry to indoctrinate children and adults with anti-Christian propaganda, especially by promoting belief in godless evolution and by presenting sexual immorality as normal and good while condemning biblical moral values as old-fashioned, bigoted and evil—and which has now begun to impose the 'right' to abortion, gay marriage and trans-gender behavior through its law-enforcement powers.

The noted Bible scholars quoted in earlier chapters, who lived in the 1300s through the 1800s, obviously did not live to see the events of our modern world. But their historicist approach to Bible prophecy gives us insight into the three-prong attack on Christianity that we witness today.

Particularly interesting is the insight of Bible scholar and early president of Princeton University, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) who wrote in his book *A History of the Work of Redemption* that Islam, the papacy and the secular world ("heathenism") would rise up against the Church as part of the end-times events:

It seems as though in this last great opposition which shall be made against the church to defend the kingdom of Satan, all the forces of Antichrist [the papacy] and Mahometanism and heathenism will be united: all the forces of Satan's visible kingdom through the whole world of mankind.

And therefore it is said, that 'spirits of devils... [shall] go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them together to the battle of that great day of God Almighty' (Rev. 16:14). And these spirits are said to come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet; that is, there shall be the spirit of Popery, and the spirit of Mahometanism, and the spirit of heathenism, all united.

By the beast is meant Antichrist [the papacy]; by the dragon, in this book, is commonly meant the devil, as he reigns over his heathen kingdom; by the false prophet, in this book, is sometimes meant the Pope and his clergy, but here an eye seems to be had to Mahomet, whom his followers call the great prophet of God.

This will be as it were the dying struggles of the old serpent, a battle wherein he will fight as one that is almost desperate.

(pages 375-376)

But Christ and his church shall in this battle obtain a complete and entire victory over their enemies . . .

It is said of the great army that should be gathered together against Christ, 'And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon', and then it is said, 'And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done' (Rev. 16:16-17). Now the business is done for Satan and his adherents. . . .

He now sees his Antichristian [papal], and Mahometan, and heathenish kingdoms through the world all tumbling about his ears. He and his most powerful instruments are taken captive. Now that is in effect done which the church of God had been so long waiting and hoping for, and so earnestly crying to God for, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true!' Now the time is come.

(pages 377-378)

What an insightful comment on what we see taking shape in today's world! And what faith in the coming victory of the Kingdom of God!

But, in the meantime, the spiritual battle rages—in churches, in schools, in homes, in the workplace, in government circles, and wherever Christians face a world that is becoming increasingly hostile to biblical Christianity. Those who faithfully stick to Bible teachings face ostracism, loss of employment, and even criminal penalties.

Terror Attacks and Loss of Faith

—a Wake-Up Call

Today's news headlines are filled with reports of Islamic terror attacks in widespread locations, at the same time that church pews empty out in response to clergy sex abuse scandals, and as more and more Westerners lose the faith of their forefathers. Some take this scenario as evidence against Bible-believing Christianity.

But those who know and understand Bible prophecy realize that the Scriptures foretold such events. And so, they see this scenario as confirmation that the Bible is true.

And they see the events of recent decades, and the news of today, as evidence that the promised return of Christ is drawing near.

Bible prophecies warn of some frightening enemies of God: a 'man of sin' (2 Thess. 2:3) who usurps God's position by sitting in God's place, as if he were God; an 'antichrist' (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7) who departs from the faith and denies Christ; a ruler of fierce countenance (Dan. 8:23) who wages war against God's people; a 'beast' (Rev. 13:1) that blasphemes God and fights against the saints; and so on.

But church-goers today seldom hear about these dangers in Sunday-morning sermons, so they are largely ignorant of them, and unconcerned—hence not on guard against them.

Why?

Because today's churches are careful not to offend anyone, and are determined to preach a positive, up-lifting message. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "the time will come when people will not listen to the true teaching but will find many more teachers who please them by saying the things they want to hear." (2 Timothy 4:3) This applies to the failure to name sins like fornication and homosexuality from the pulpit. And it also applies to failure to speak about world events in the light of Bible prophecy.

And, even when Bible prophecy is discussed in church, it is often from the increasingly popular preterist viewpoint—that the prophecies were

fulfilled during the first century. Preterism says, in effect, ‘Don’t worry about the “man of sin” or the antichrist or the “beast” or the fierce ruler! They all came and went centuries ago.’

Or, from the very popular dispensationalist viewpoint, which says, in effect, ‘Don’t worry about the “man of sin” or the antichrist or the “beast” or the fierce ruler! They won’t come until the Tribulation—after the Rapture—when you will be safely in heaven.’

Only Historicism Warns of the Clear and Present Danger

Only historicism presents the “man of sin,” the antichrist, the “beast” and the fierce ruler as a clear and present danger, a very real danger facing Christians today.

Not that I claim any special authority for my opinions or the interpretations offered in this book; I certainly don’t pretend to know anything more than what the average Bible reader can learn from reading the Scriptures and following current events in the light of world history. And I stand ready to be corrected by the outworking of events, or by those who have greater insight.

But this book, *NeoHistoricism*, attempts to recall the wisdom of the historicists—Luther, Calvin, Hus, Wycliffe, Tyndale, Wesley, Knox, Sir Isaac Newton, Roger Williams, Jonathan Edwards, Matthew Henry, Henry Grattan Guinness, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and others—and to apply their insights to the very real threats facing Christians now in the 21st Century.

Just as Martin Luther wrote of the sexual immorality and corruption in the Vatican and the churches of his day, so we must face the clergy sex abuse and the ‘politically correct’ acceptance of homosexual conduct and heterosexual couples living together outside of marriage that is so common in many churches today.

Just as a number of the historicists named above identified Islam as an enemy of God foretold in Scripture, so we must face the fact that today’s Islamic terror attacks are not a modern fluke of circumstances, but rather a fulfillment of prophecy.

This knowledge will help equip us to face these challenges in the way that the Bible tells us to, and to put our trust—not in religious or political leaders who reassure us they have everything under control—but, rather, in the soon coming King of Kings who inspired the Bible.

About the Author

DAVID A. REED served for a decade as a contributing editor of Dr. Walter Martin's *Christian Research Journal*. He taught in 1997 and 2015 on counter-cult apologetics at the annual School of Theology at Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. His first book on biblical apologetics was published in 1986 by Baker Book House and sold more than ¼-million copies. Since then he has authored twenty books on apologetics and eschatology—translated into several languages. His books include:

Answering Jehovah's Witnesses Subject by Subject (Baker Book House)

Behind the Watchtower Curtain (Crown Publications; reprinted by BookSurge Publishing; also published in Russian and Japanese)

Blood on the Altar (Prometheus Books)

Come, Follow Jesus!—the Real Jesus (CreateSpace)

Doorstep Bible Answering Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses (CreateSpace)

How to Rescue Your Loved One from the Watchtower (Baker Book House; reprinted by CreateSpace)

Index of Watchtower Errors (Baker Book House)

Jehovah-Talk: The Mind-Control Language of Jehovah Witnesses (Baker Book House)

Jehovah's Witness Literature: A Critical Guide to Watchtower Publications (Baker Book House)

Jehovah's Witnesses Answered Verse by Verse (Baker Book House; also published in French, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Faroese and partially in Arabic)

LEFT BEHIND Answered Verse by Verse (Lulu)

Mormonism: Changes, Contradictions, And Errors (Baker Book House)

Mormons Answered Verse by Verse (Baker Book House)

Mormons: How to Witness to Them (Baker Book House)

No Blood! (a novel) (BookSurge Publishing)

Parallel Gospels in Harmony—with Study Guide (Lulu)

The Original Bible for Modern Readers (editor) (CreateSpace)

United Nations vs Israel and the End of the World (CreateSpace)

Worse Than Waco: Jehovah's Witnesses Hide A Tragedy (BookSurge Publishing)