



The Sword & The Plow

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The Dragon, The Beast, and the Binding Angel of Revelation Twenty

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In this article, we discuss the identity of Revelation's dragon, beast, and binding angel of chapter twenty. We will conclude that the latter of these refers to Claudius Caesar in combination with the *jus gladii*, and the *religio licita*, which we also identify with the "restrainer" of II Thessalonians two. The dragon and beast we will conclude refer to Rome and the persecution under Nero Caesar. Along the way, we solve many of Revelation's other riddles.

Problem Stated

Preterism is a school of eschatology (the study of last things), which holds that all Bible prophecy has been fulfilled. The word "Preterism" is from the Latin *praeteritus* - "has gone before" or "has passed." A

form of the word occurs the Latin Bible at Matt. 24:34 where Jesus told the disciples *non preteribit haec generatio donec omnia haec fiant* - "this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled."

Preterists believe that Revelation and all end-time events, including Christ's second coming and the resurrection of the Hadean dead, are best understood in terms of their *contemporary-historical* context. Jesus said he would return within the lives of first disciples (Matt. 16:27, 28; Mk. 8:38; 9:1), before they could evangelize all the cities of Israel (Matt. 10:23), and before the generation of those then living passed away (Matt. 24:34; Mk. 13:30; Lk. 21:32). Hebrews says that it was a "very little while" (Gk. mikron 'oson 'oson) and Christ would come (Heb. 10:37). James said the "coming of the Lord draweth nigh;" it was "at the

door” (James 5:8, 9). Peter said the end was “at hand” (I Pet. 4:7). John said it was the “last hour” (I Jn. 2:18). Revelation attests that the events it describes were “at hand” and would “shortly come to pass” (Rev. 1:2, 3; 22:6, 10, 12).

The testimony of these witnesses (omitting many similar voices from the Old Testament) requires a verdict confirming a *contemporary-historical* context of end-time prophecies. But if the time-texts point to past fulfillment, what is the witness of history? Can Preterists identify events in history that match those portrayed in prophecy? More specifically, what about Rev. 20:1-3 and the thousand-year binding of Satan; to what does this refer and when was it fulfilled? If the *contemporary-historical* view is correct, Preterists should be able to make a convincing case identifying these characters and events.

Imagery of Revelation Twenty

Here is the passage from Revelation twenty:

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived the was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” Rev. 20:1-3, 7-10

The imagery of Revelation twenty is among the most pregnant in all scripture and has given birth to many interpretations. Indeed, the passage is central to whole schools of eschatology, which are named for their approach to its interpretation: “Premillennialists” believe Christ will return *before* the thousand-year binding of the dragon and that Christ will then sit upon David’s throne in Jerusalem, reigning over the earth for a thousand years. Conversely, “Postmillennialists” believe that that Christ’s reign began at his ascension, and that he would/will return *after* the thousand-year binding of Satan.

Recapitulation and the Battles of Revelation Nineteen & Twenty

Premillennialists believe Christ will return before the thousand-year period based on the imagery of Chapter nineteen, which portrays Christ riding a white horse, leading the armies of heaven against the beast, the false prophet, and the kings of the earth (Rev. 19:11-21). Since chapter nineteen precedes chapter twenty, Premillennialists conclude that its events must occur first, and that Christ therefore returns *before* the thousand-year binding of Satan. However, this overlooks the fact that Revelation often portrays events leading to the end, only to retrace its steps and start again from a different perspective. Because of this, the climax or end is portrayed no fewer than *seven* times (Rev. 6:12; 11:15-19; 14:8-20; 16:17-21; 19:11-21; 20:11-15; 21:1). Hence, the battle of Revelation nineteen and the battle of chapter twenty are, in fact, the *same* battle. The battle of Gog and Magog portrayed in Rev. 20:7-10 is merely a *recapitulation* of the battle in Rev. 19:11-21. This is confirmed by the fact that the language of Rev. 19:17-18 is taken from the book of Ezekiel, where the prophet describes the great, end-time battle of Gog and Magog, showing that the battles of both chapters nineteen and twenty have reference to the same thing:

The Battle of Gog & Magog

| Ezek. 39:17-20 | Rev. 19:17, 18 | Rev. 20:8 |
|---|---|---|
| And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. ¹⁹ And ye | And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; ¹⁸ That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. | And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, ⁸ And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. | | | |
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Here we see that the source of John’s imagery is Ezekiel, and that the battle of chapter nineteen is from Ezekiel’s description of the God’s destruction of Gog and Magog. But if chapter nineteen is the battle of Gog and Magog, so is chapter twenty, for it is expressly so called. Since the battle of chapters nineteen and twenty are the *same* battle, and since Christ returns in the *midst* of this battle to save his people from their persecutors, and since this battle follows the thousand-year binding of the dragon, the Premillennial model, which has Christ return before the thousand-years are fulfilled, must be rejected.

Making War against the Saints: Gog & Magog the Great, End-time Persecution

Premillennialists err in another regard: they imagine that the battles portrayed in Revelation describe actual warfare among the nations; that armies will oppose each other in a contest to capture Jerusalem and the world. Preterists agree that armies are in fact portrayed in Revelation vis-à-vis the Roman war against the Jews (Rev. 9; 17:16) and the Roman civil wars, or “year of four emperors” (Rev. 16:10). However, the kingdom of the saints is not an earthly nation; there is no nation on earth consisting exclusively or, even perhaps predominately, of Christians. Thus, any war against the saints can only be directed against the *church and gospel*, and therefore can only have consisted in a *persecution or inquisition*. Therefore, when John says that the beast would “make war” against the saints (Rev. 11:7; 13:7; cf. Dan. 7:21), we understand that this means that the ruling authority undertook open persecution of the church and gospel. This, then, is the essence of the battle of Gog and Magog: *it is the great, end-time persecution against God’s people by the civil and religious powers of the day*. Hence, when John says that Gog and Magog “compassed the camp of the saints and the beloved city” (Rev. 20:9), we should interpret this in terms of war against the church and gospel by open persecution.

But if the battle of Gog and Magog is symbolic for the end-time persecution preceding Christ’s return, what does this tell us about the thousand-year binding of the dragon? Just prior to the end-time persecution, the dragon was in some form or manner bound or restrained. But when loosed, the dragon made war against the saints. Thus, *the essence of the thousand-year binding of the dragon consisted in some external restraint resulting in its inability to persecute and make*

war against the saints. If we then add to this the observation that the dragon persecutes the saints through its *alter ego* (Lat. “other I”) the beast, and that it too was bound in the bottomless pit (Rev. 11:7; 17:8), but was about to emerge to persecute the church anew when John wrote Revelation in A.D. 63-64, we will have come a long way toward solving the chapter’s riddle.

Identity of the Beast

John identifies the beast in two cryptic passages. The first gives the numeric equivalent of his name as six hundred sixty-six :

“Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred three score and six.” Rev. 13:18

Preterists believe this refers to Nero Caesar, whose name in Hebrew characters equals six hundred sixty-six . Preterists take Nero's name, Nero Cæsar, and transliterate the Latin into Hebrew. An "n" is added to conform with the Hebrew spelling and usage of Nero's name, in a manner similar to the Greek adding an "s" (*i.e.*, Jeremias, Jonas, etc.). Other names in scripture where the adding of an "n" may be seen are Abaddon, Apollyon, and Armageddon. Once Hebraicized, the Latin *Nero Caesar* becomes "*nrwn qsr*." Then using the numeric equivalent of the letters, it adds up to 666 as follows:

| | | |
|--------|---|-----------|
| Nun | = | 50 |
| Resh | = | 200 |
| Waw | = | 6 |
| Nun | = | 50 |
| Qoph | = | 100 |
| Samech | = | 60 |
| Resh | = | 200 |
| Total | | <hr/> 666 |

The second identifier is in Revelation seventeen:

“The beast thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.” Rev. 17:8-10

“Was and is not” refers to the mortal wound the beast received to one of its heads, which sent it figuratively down in death to the bottomless pit (Hades Tartarus) (Rev. 13:3, 14). In other words, this has reference to a previous persecution that had terminated suddenly. We believe this was the persecution over Stephen (A.D. 34-38) that followed the ascension of the man-child to heaven (Rev. 12:5, 13). “*Is about to ascend out of the bottomless pit*” signifies that the persecution was about to revive. This is the great, end-time persecution under Nero, symbolized by the battle of Gog and Magog and the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:14-17), which are the same battle. The “woman,” the harlot, drives the beast and persecution, and refers to *international Judaism*, of which *Jerusalem* is the capital and head (see the book of Acts for confirmation that everywhere Paul carried the gospel the Jews tried to get up a persecution). The “seven heads” and “seven mountains” are variously interpreted as either reference to the seven hills of Rome, which was known as the city of seven hills (*urbs septicollis*). Alternatively, and what we deem the better view, the seven mountains, rather than being taken literally for hills, are symbols representing *seven demographic centers* in which the persecution has a head. By this latter interpretation, the persecution in Syria-Palestine originating over Stephen would be the head that was wounded, but was about to revive and break out world-wide. Finally, the seven kings are taken in reference to the seven imperial Caesars who governed the beast and dragon until the time of the end. “Five are fallen”: *Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius*, “one is,” *Nero*, and the other is “not yet come,” but continues only a “short space,” *Galba*, who reigned only seven months.

The association of the beast and antichrist with the emperor Nero is centuries old, and is alluded to by Lactantius (A.D. 260-330), whose commentary on Revelation is among the earliest we possess:

“And while Nero reigned, the Apostle Peter came to Rome, and, through the power of God committed unto him, wrought certain miracles, and, by turning many to the true religion, built up a faithful and steadfast temple unto the Lord. When Nero heard of those things, and observed that not only in Rome, but in every other place, a great multitude revolted daily from the worship of idols, and, condemning their old ways, went over to the new religion, he, an execrable and pernicious tyrant, sprung forward to raze the heavenly temple and destroy the true faith. He it was who first persecuted the servants of God; he crucified Peter, and slew Paul; nor did he escape with impunity; for God looked on the affliction of His people; and therefore the tyrant, bereaved of authority, and precipitated from the height of empire, suddenly disappeared, and even the a

*burial-place of that noxious wild beast was nowhere to be seen.”*¹

Reference to Nero as a “noxious, wild beast” is generally understood to be an allusion to the beast of Revelation; reference to Nero’s attempt to raze the temple of God (the church), to Thessalonians’ “man of sin” taking his seat in the temple of God. This will become important later when we discuss “he who lets” or “the restrainer” who impeded Nero from persecuting the church. Sulpicius Severus (A.D. 360-420) makes similar comments:

*“In the meanwhile Nero, now hateful even to himself from a consciousness of his crimes, disappears from among men, leaving it uncertain whether or not he had laid violent hands upon himself: certainly his body was never found. It was accordingly believed that, even if he did put an end to himself with a sword, his wound was cured, and his life preserved, according to that which was written regarding him,-“And his mortal wound was healed,” -to be sent forth again near the end of the world, in order that he may practice the mystery of iniquity.”*²

Although Sulpicius Severus erroneously concludes that Nero’s life was somehow wondrously preserved or would revive and would appear again at the world’s end (the Nero redivivus myth derived from the beast’s thousand-year internment in Hades Tartarus), he correctly identified Nero with the “beast” and “man of sin” and “mystery of iniquity” (persecution of the church and gospel) (cf. Rev. 13:3; II Thess. 2:7). Finally, Jerome (A.D. 347-420) made similar remarks in his commentary on Daniel:

”But these events were typically prefigured under Antiochus Epiphanes, so that this abominable king who persecuted God’s people foreshadows the Antichrist, who is to persecute the people of Christ. And so there are many of our viewpoint who think that **Domitius Nero was the Antichrist** because of his outstanding savagery and depravity.”³

Identity of the Dragon

¹ Lactantius, *Of the Manner in which the Persecutors Died*, Chpt. II; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VII, p. 302; cf. *Divine Institutes*, VII, xvii; emphasis added.

² Sulpicius Severus, *Sacred History*, II, xxviii-xxix; emphasis added.

³ Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel ad 11:27*

The dragon and its alter ego, the beast, bear a marked resemblance to the fourth beast in Daniel chapter seven. The ten horns on these beasts answer the ten toes on the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and help us identify them with Rome, Leviathan, the world civil power, the political incarnation of human sin and rebellion to God. The seven heads and ten horns describe its political divisions. The heads represent the Imperial Caesars; the ten horns are the senatorial provinces created by Augustus in 27 B.C., which became a permanent feature of the empire thereafter.⁴ Rome fell in A.D. 476. This created considerable trouble for futurists, since the second coming had to occur while Rome was still an active, world power. The solution lay in extending the life of Rome by viewing the toes of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream as the period *following* the breakup of the empire. Beginning in the twelfth century, men began to view the Pope as the antichrist and "little horn" of Daniel seven, and the Roman Catholic Church as the Harlot of Babylon. This lent the visions of Daniel and Revelation new life, extending fulfillment into the Middle Ages and beyond. The Reformers took up this school of interpretation, and it became the dominant interpretative school for several centuries. Called the

⁴ "In 27 B.C. the provinces had been divided into two classes, *Imperial and Senatorial*, 'provinciae Caesaris,' and 'provinciae Senatus' or 'populi.'" *The latter were ten in number, Africa, Asia, Bithynia, Achaea, Illyricum, Macedonia, Crete and Cyrene, Sicily, Sardinia, and Hispania Baetica...The Imperial provinces in 27 B.C. were Gaul, Syria, Cyprus and Cilicia, and Hispania Citerior. The number was increased subsequently by the division of single provinces into two or more, and by the inclusion of all provinces constituted after 27 B.C., e.g. Moesia, Pannonia, and Dalmatia.*" Thomas Marris Taylor, *A Constitutional and Political History of Rome* (Methuen & Co., London, 1889), 464. "Africa, Numidia, Asia, Greece with Epirus, the Dalmatian and Macedonian districts, Crete and the Cyrenaic portion of Libya, Bithynia with Pontus which adjoined it, Sardinia and Baetica were held to belong to the people and the senate; while to Caesar belonged the remainder of Spain,— that is, the district of Tarraco and Lusitania,— and all the Gauls,— that is, Gallia Narbonensis, Gallia Lugdunensis, Aquitania, and Belgica, both the natives themselves and the aliens among them." Dio Cassius, LIII, xii; Loeb ed.

continuous-historical model, this school of interpretation believed that Daniel and Revelation present a continuous account of history from the time of the prophet Daniel until the world's end. However, after centuries of failed date-setting for Christ's return, the Millerites landed the death-blow to this interpretative school in the early 1800's, when tens of thousands were disappointed when Christ failed to return as predicted. Today, no serious scholars embrace this view (the toes of the image would now be two or three times as long as the body of the image itself). However, about the same time the continuous-historical method was being abandoned, Dispensational Premillennialism cropped up. Premillennialists acknowledge that Rome is portrayed in Daniel and Revelation, but because the end-time events were not fulfilled in the way they suppose while Rome was still extant, they are forced to bring a *revived* Roman Empire back on the world stage so the visions can "properly" be fulfilled in the future.

*"The second great sign appearing in heaven is described as a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads. From the similar description given in 13:1 and the parallel reference in Daniel 7:7-8, 24, it is clear that the revived Roman Empire is in view."*⁵

Of course, the idea that there will be a revived Roman Empire in any shape or form is pure fantasy. We mention the continuous-historical method and Dispensationalism only to underscore the universal recognition of the dragon and beast with Rome, and the lengths men have gone to transport these prophecies across the centuries to their own time, overlooking or ignoring their obvious fulfillment in history's past events.

The Thousand Years and Hadean Death

We saw earlier that the dragon and beast were in some form or manner bound and restrained, and that the essence of this restraint was the inability to persecute the saints. Moreover, we saw that this restraint began when the beast received a mortal wound marking the *termination* of an earlier persecution, which sent it down in death to the bottomless pit. But when the wound healed, the beast revived and emerged from the pit to persecute the church anew. We may deduce from this:

⁵ John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (1966, Moody Bible Institute), p. 189; cf. pp. 126, 197.

1) The thousand-years relates to the dragon's and beast's *Hadean death* (the thousand years does not begin earlier or last longer than its figurative death);

2) The binding of the dragon and beast were related to some circumstance or event in history that prevented the enemies of the church and gospel from waging open persecution.

We are principally concerned in this article to address the latter of these, but let us pause briefly to touch upon the former.

The relationship between Hadean death and a thousand years is well rooted in history. The Greeks, Romans, and other ancient peoples believed that the dead sojourned one thousand years in the Hadean realm before returning to earthly life by reincarnation. Plato, in the tenth book of his *Republic*, reports the story of a soldier, thought to be dead, whose body was placed upon a funeral pyre, only to have him revive before being burnt. The soldier told of descending to Hades where he encountered souls who were judged for the deeds done in life, and sentenced, some to a heavenly realm of bliss, others to a lower region of torments. After a thousand years in their respective realms, these souls were then reincarnated into earthly life. This thousand-year pilgrimage in the underworld was a major factor in Plato's ethical instruction about virtuous living:

*"Wherefore my counsel is that we hold fast ever to the heavenly way and follow after justice and virtue always, considering that the soul is immortal and able to endure every sort of good and every sort of evil. Thus shall we live dear to one another and to the gods, both while remaining here and when, like conquerors in the games who go round to gather gifts, we receive our reward. And it shall be well with us both in this life and in the pilgrimage of a thousand years which we have been describing."*⁶

Virgil also makes reference to the thousand-year period of the spirit in Hades in his epic poem "*Aeneid*," the story of the legendary founding of Rome by Aeneas, a Trojan who escapes and survives Troy's famous war with the Greeks. Part of Aeneas' labors before reaching Latium, Italy, was to descend to Hades and there receive a prophecy from his deceased father. According to Virgil, the realm of the underworld was entered by an enormous cavern, whose mouth emitted poisonous vapors from its black throat. The dead were then ferried across a river; some detained in Limbo, others permitted to precede to a fork in the road, one of

which leads to Tartarus, the other to the happy fields of Elysium. Tartarus, also called the Pit, is the place of the damned. Peter uses the term Tartarus in reference to the "angels" (probably the sons of Seth) that sinned and were kept under chains of darkness, reserved unto judgment (II Pet. 2:4; cf. Jude 6; Gen. 6:1-4). Souls that do not go to Tartarus or Elysium, suffer punishments in Purgatory for sins committed during life.⁷ Some are later released to wander about happily in Elysium. Souls in both Elysium and Purgatory must complete a thousand years, after which they are born anew into earthly life. The purpose of the thousand years is to remove all remembrance of one's past earthly existence:

*"Yes, not even when the last flicker of life has left us, does evil, or the ills that the flesh is heir to, quite relinquish our souls; it must be that many a taint grows deeply, mysteriously grained in their being from long contact with the body. Therefore the dead are disciplined in purgatory, and pay the penalty of old evil: some hang, stretched to the blast of vacuum winds; for others, the stain of sin is washed away in a vast whirlpool or cauterized with fire. Each of us finds in the next world his own level: a few of us are later released to wander at will through broad Elysium, the Happy Fields; until, in the fulness of time, the ages have purged that ingrown stain, and nothing is left but pure ethereal sentience and the spirit's essential flame. All these souls, when they have finished their thousand-year cycle, God send for, and they come in crowds to the river Lethe, so, you see, with memory washed out, they may revisit the earth above and begin to wish to be born again."*⁸

(The river Lethe bears the souls to the surface where they are reborn to earthly life.) Thus, we see that Greco-Roman conceptions of Hades involved separate thousand-year periods for each soul, after which they were born into earthly anew. Of course, the scriptures do not teach reincarnation. However, Revelation was written to Greek speaking Gentiles in Asia Minor who would have immediately (and correctly) associated the millennia of Revelation twenty with Hades – The dragon symbolically bound in Tartarus for a "thousand years," whence he is released to persecute anew the

⁷ Justin Martyr, confusing Virgil's account with Plato's, equates Purgatory with Tartarus. See Justin Martyr, 1st Apology, VIII, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I p. 165, where he attributes Virgil's description of Rhadamanthus punishing the wicked to Plato.

⁸ Virgil, *Aeneid*, Bk. VI, 734-769; C. Day Lewis ed (1952, Hogarth Press, London).

⁶ Plato, *Republic*, Bk. X, 315-320; Ben. Jowett ed.

church, the martyrs in Paradise where they lived a “thousand years.” The Greek speaking Christians in Asia Minor faced a time of unparalleled persecution; many would be called upon to pay with their lives for their testimony of Jesus. The familiar figure of the thousand-years doubtless was adapted to ensure they fully comprehended the meaning of the symbolism and its message of assurance as they faced the prospect of martyrdom. They could die secure in the knowledge Christ had prepared for them a place of rest in Hades Paradise pending the general resurrection.⁹ We believe that this is the essence behind Peter’s statement that one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day with the Lord (II Pet. 3:8; cf. Ps. 90:4); viz., God exists in the spiritual realm beyond time and space. In a similar manner, the spirits of the martyrs entered the spiritual realm of the “first resurrection” where earthly time does not exist. The French skeptic Voltaire described this association aptly:

“The belief in this reign of a thousand years was long prevalent among the Christians. This period was also in great credit among the Gentiles. The souls of the Egyptians returned to their bodies at the end of a thousand years; and, according to Virgil, the souls in purgatory were exorcised for the same space of time—et mille per annos.”

Questions about the thousand-year periods aside, let us endeavor to identify the circumstances and events of history that served to restrain the dragon from making war against the church in the period between the persecution over Stephen and the great end-time persecution under the Emperor Nero.

The Jus Gladdii and the Persecution over Stephen

The persecution over Stephen broke out shortly after Jesus’ ascension in A.D. 33, probably the following year in A.D. 34. Based upon Revelation twelve (Rev. 12:6, 14), this persecution lasted three and a half years, or until A.D. 38. There are three events in history that appear to account for its collapse: 1) the removal of Pontius Pilate from office; 2) the removal of Joseph

⁹ Parenthetically, we should note that since the martyrs do not die under the beast until his thousand-year internment is fulfilled, the reign of the martyrs in Hades Paradise obviously is not defined by the dragon being bound. Just the opposite, their deaths assume the dragon has been loosed. Hence, the thousand-year binding of the dragon and the thousand-year reign of the martyrs, though both signifying the sojourn of the soul in Hades, are not the same thousand years. Two one-thousand year periods are contemplated by the text.

Caiaphas from the High Priesthood; and 3) the conversion of St. Paul (Saul).

In addition to *territorial jurisdiction* and the ability to punish crimes within their own borders, the Jews and other ancient peoples also had jurisdiction based upon *citizenship and ethnicity*. It was this that allowed Saul (St. Paul) to travel to foreign countries with letters from the High Priest, empowering him to arrest Jews and bring them back to Jerusalem for trial for alleged violations of Jewish law, viz., for professing faith in Christ (Acts 9:1, 2). However, jurisdiction based upon ethnicity did not allow for arrest and punishment of Gentile believers, nor could the Jews or other nations impose the penalty of death without leave of the Roman governor. Capital punishment and the power of the sword, known in Roman law as the *jus gladdii*, was an incident of sovereignty reposed exclusively in Roman officials. An exception was client kings and tetrarchs like Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, and Herod Agrippa, whose special relationship with the Romans gave them authority to exact the penalty of death (John 18:31; cf. Matt. 14:1-12; Acts 12:1, 2). In all other incidents, the power of death was retained exclusively by the Romans. This means that the persecution over Stephen (Acts 6:9-9:3), in which many Christian Jews suffered death, must have been condoned by Pilate, presumably under the false allegation that followers of the “sect of the Nazarene” were inciting sedition and rebellion (Acts 24:5). In other provinces, however, the dynamics of the situation were entirely different and the Jews were a minority, such that the Roman governors need not yield to pressure from the Jews to punish Christians. Hence, the Jews were unable to raise a persecution outside of Syria (Acts 18:12-17).

Josephus reports that Pilate was removed from office by Vitellius, the president of Syria, who ordered him to answer charges before Caesar for some Samaritans who perished when Pilate suppressed a tumult by a malicious pretender. However, before Pilate reached Rome, Tiberius died (March 16, A.D. 37).¹⁰ At the same time Vitellius removed Pilate from office, he came to Judea and went up to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. Vitellius then returned the Jews power over the custody of the High Priest’s garments, which hitherto had been under Roman control. He also removed Caiaphas from the High Priesthood.¹¹ With the removal of Pilate and Caiaphas, the persecution lost two of its most critical personalities. The following year (A.D. 38), Paul, who was the driving force behind

¹⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.4.1, 2

¹¹ *Ibid*, 18.4.3

the persecution, converted to the faith, ending the first persecution.¹² Luke reports “then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria” (Acts 9:31). Except for a brief time under king Agrippa I, who put to death James the brother of John (Acts 12:1, 2), not until Nero would the Romans permit the Jews to persecute Christians with death.

The Religio Licita, and the Binding Angel of Revelation Twenty

The *religio licita* (“allowed religion”) is a term used to describe the policy of Roman law allowing the various peoples of the empire to keep and observe their own religious customs. Although the emperors sometimes suppressed astrologers and soothsayers who caused disturbances by feigned predictions of alterations in the government, it was the general policy to allow the people of the provinces to maintain their traditional religious observances unless they were disruptive or subversive. Claudius in particular maintained the *Pax Romana* by enforcing the *religio licita*.

With the death of Tiberius, Caius Caligula became emperor. During the reign of Caligula, Flaccus, the Roman governor of Alexandria, had allowed the mob to forcibly install statues of the emperor in Jewish synagogues. This provoked a tumult in the city and both sides sent ambassadors to Caesar. The Jewish embassy was led by Philo Judaeus, the Alexandrian embassy was led by Apion. Apion accused the Jews to Caligula, saying, that whereas all peoples deemed it right to build altars to the emperor and to worship his statue like a god, the Jews alone refused to receive his

statue. Caligula took such outrage at this that he forbade Philo to so much as speak and bade him be gone. More than this, Caligula also sent Petronius to be president of Syria and ordered him install his statue in the Jerusalem temple, even if it meant open war. In Alexandria, Caligula’s rage against the Jews and refusal to hear their ambassadors caused them to lose the protection of law, and the mob was given license to kill and plunder the Jews with impunity, until it came to an open persecution in which they were tortured and crucified in the theater as part of the public festivities in honor of the emperor’s birthday. In Judea, the crisis was averted only by Caligula’s assassination by his fellow Romans.¹³

This was the situation when Claudius came to power. He therefore issued an edict to the Alexandrians and to the rest of the empire, condemning the madness of Caligula and confirming each man the right to worship as to him seemed best, saying,

*“All men should be so subject [to the Romans] as to continue in the observation of their own customs, and not be forced to transgress the ancient rules of their own county religion.”*¹⁴

Nor were the presidents and governors of the provinces slack to enforce Claudius’ edict. Soon after it was issued, the men of Doris were so bold as to forcibly install a statue of Caesar in the Jew’s synagogue there, and Petronius, the governor of Syria, wrote to the magistrates of Doris confirming Claudius’ edict in words, saying,

*“I therefore charge you, that you do not, for the time to come, seek for any occasion of sedition or disturbance, but that everyone be allowed to follow their own religious customs.”*¹⁵

Of particular importance for our purposes, Claudius’ enforcement of the *religio licita* also extended to the protection of *Christians*. In Acts 18:2, we read that Claudius banished all Jews from Rome. The reason is given by Suetonius, who says they were banished because of their incessant tumults and riots instigated about “Chrestus” (e.g., Christ).¹⁶ Claudius reigned from

¹² The date of Paul’s conversion may be obtained thus: Paul states that he went up to Jerusalem three years after his conversion; then, he went again fourteen years later to the Jerusalem Council to settle the question of gentile circumcision (Gal. 2:1; Acts 15:2). Most authorities place this in A.D. 50. He returned two or three years later, while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia (Acts 18:12, 22). From an inscription found at Delphi, we know that Gallio was proconsul in A.D. 52-53. Moreover, mention of Claudius’ expulsion of the Jews from Rome further fixes this date, for Claudius expelled the Jews in the tenth year of his reign, or A.D. 52 (Acts 18:2). Two years later, he went up again and was arrested (Acts 19:10; 20:22; 24:17, 18). Paul remained in custody under Felix for two years (Acts 24:27). We know that Festus replaced Felix in A.D. 59-60. A.D. 59 – 2 – 2 – 14- 3 = A.D. 38. A.D. 34-38 thus allows for the three and a half year persecution portrayed in Revelation twelve.

¹³ Philo Judaeus, *Flaccus*, 6-12; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.8.1, 2

¹⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 19.5.2, 3

¹⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 19.6.3

¹⁶ “Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.”

A.D. 41-54, or through the better part of Paul's missionary effort. All during this period, the Jews resisted the gospel and violently opposed Paul. Yet, for all their efforts, the Jews could not raise a general persecution, Claudius' policy firmly holding them in check.

Returning to the imagery of Revelation, we believe the angel who bound the dragon is best interpreted in reference to Claudius. The angel holds a key and chain to restrain the dragon. Keys are symbols of authority to bind and loose the powers of a kingdom. In Revelation nine, another angel holds the key and looses the locust army, the abomination of desolation, the legions of Rome, for the invasion of Palestine (Rev. 9:1). The angel is king over the army (Rev. 9:11), identifying him as Nero. If an emperor is the angel who holds the key in Revelation nine, it is almost certainly an emperor who holds them in Revelation twenty. Claudius held the keys of the empire, and it is he who restrained the dragon and beast from persecuting the church all the while he occupied the throne. With the death of Claudius, Nero ascended the throne, and would loose the dragon and beast to persecute the church in the great end-time battle.

He who Restrains and the Man of Sin

The imagery of Revelation twenty and the binding angel is mirrored in II Thessalonians two and "he who restrains"; the one helps us interpret and identify the other. Paul opens the second chapter of II Thessalonians two warning his readers, saying,

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that he be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." II Thess. 2:1, 2

This indicates that the gathering of the saints at the coming of Christ entailed a certain dread and danger; otherwise they would not be troubled or shaken. Based on the imagery of Revelation fourteen and several sayings and parables of Christ and John the Baptist, we believe the saints would be gathered at the eschatological harvest by *martyrdom*. For example, John the Baptist said of Christ

"Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner;

Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25.4. Chrestus is a corrupt rendering of the Greek Christos (xristoj). Tacitus gives the correct Latin form, Christus. Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44

but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Matt. 3:12

In ancient times, grain was separated from the chaff by placing it in a specially shaped basket called a "fan;" the grain was then repeatedly tossed in the air and caught again in the fan, the wind carrying the chaff away, where it was then gathered and burned. Since the gathering of the wicked (the chaff) to be burned contemplates physical death, by the same token the gathering of the saints into paradise or heaven (the garner) would entail physical death too (*cf.* Matt. 13:24-50; Rev. 14:9-20). The harvest of the righteous and the wicked would occur in the events of A.D. 66-70, in which the Romans and Jews suffered the ravages of war, famine, and pestilence, and the righteous suffered martyrdom under the beast, when Nero, the "man of sin" and "son of perdition" was revealed (II Thess. 2:3).¹⁷ Before Nero could be revealed as the great end-time persecutor of the saints, the "restrainer" ("he who lets") had to be taken out of the way. This is widely recognized as Claudius Caesar and the restraining power of the *religio licita* and *jus gladii*. Tertullian (A.D. 145-220) was among the earliest to comment that the restraining power of the Roman state is alluded to by Paul in these verses, saying, "What obstacle is there but the Roman state."¹⁸ This is echoed by several patristic writers. Victorinus, in his commentary on the Apocalypse, states:

*"And after many plagues completed in the world, in the end he says that a **beast ascended from the abyss**...that is, of **the Romans**. Moreover that he was in the kingdom of the Romans, and that he was among the Caesars. The Apostle Paul also bears witness, for he says to the Thessalonians: Let **him who now restraineth** restrain, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall appear the **Wicked One**, even he whose coming is after the working of Satan, with signs and lying wonders.' And that they might know that he should come who then was **the prince**, he adds: 'He already endeavours after the secret of mischief' – that is, the mischief which he is about to do he strives to do secretly; but he is not raised up by his own power, nor by that of **his father**, but by command of God."¹⁹*

¹⁷ The angel of Rev. 9:11 is called apolluwn, which should be compared with reference to Nero here as the "son of perdition," Gk. apwleiaj, helping establish their identity.

¹⁸ Tertullian, *Concerning the Resurrection of the Flesh*, XXIV; *cf.* Apology, XXXII.

¹⁹ Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, ad 11:7; Ante-Nicene Fathers, p. 354; emphasis added.

Victorinus here connects the “beast” from the abyss with the Roman empire and the “Wicked One” with the one who was prince when Paul wrote (Nero), and would follow his father (Claudius) to the throne. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) is even more explicit:

*“Some think that these words refer to the Roman Empire, and that the apostle Paul did not wish to write more explicitly, lest he should incur a charge of calumny against the Roman empire, in wishing ill to it when men hoped that it was to be everlasting. So in the words: ‘For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work’ he referred to Nero, whose deeds already seemed to be as those of Antichrist.”*²⁰

The late Canon of Westminster, F.W. Farrar, wrote:

*“St. Paul, when he wrote from Corinth to the Thessalonians, had indeed seen in the fabric of Roman polity, and in Claudius, its reigning representative, the “check” and the “checker” which must be removed before the coming of the Lord.”*²¹

J. Stuart Russell, in his classic work on the Parousia of Christ, states

*“At that time Nero was not yet ‘manifested;’ his true character was not discovered; he had not yet succeeded to the Empire. Claudius, his step-father, lived, and stood in the way of the son of Agrippina. But that hindrance was soon removed. In less than a year, probably, after this epistle was received by the Thessalonians, Claudius was ‘taken out of the way,’ a victim to the deadly practice of the infamous Agrippina; her son also, according to Suetonius, being accessory to the deed.”*²²

Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. is among modern writers reaching the same conclusion:

“Apparently something is presently (ca. A.D. 52) ‘restraining’ the Man of Lawlessness: ‘you know what

²⁰ Augustine, City of God, XX, xix; cf., Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V, xxv-xxviii; Lactanius, Divine Inst. VII, xxv; emphasis added

²¹ F.W. Farrar, The Early Days of Christianity (1891, Columbian Publishing Co, NY), p. 13; cf. The Life and Work of St. Paul, Excursus XIX, (1879, Cassell and Co. ed), p. 726.

²² J. Stuart Russell, The Parousia (1887, London, T. Fisher Unwin; republished 1983, 1999 by Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI), pp. 182, 183.

*is restraining [katechon; present participle], that he may be revealed in his own time’ (2:6). This strongly suggests the preterist understanding of the whole passage. The Thessalonians themselves know what is presently restraining the Man of Lawlessness; in fact the Man of Lawlessness is alive and waiting to be ‘revealed.’ This implies that for the time-being Christians can expect some protection from the Roman government. The Roman laws regarding religio licita are currently in Christianity’s favor, who were considered a sect of Judaism and before the malevolent Nero ascends the throne.”*²³

Beginning with Tiberius, the Jews were under intense imperial disfavor, which continued through the reigns of Caligula and Claudius. As long as Claudius was at the head of Rome, the Jews were prevented to openly persecute the church. However, Claudius was taken out of the way when he was poisoned by his wife, Agrippina, Nero’s mother. This brought Nero to the throne, opening the way for the Jews back into imperial favor; Nero’s wife, Poppaea, was a Jewish proselyte. The antichristian movement (“mystery of iniquity”) that had thus been hidden and repressed under Claudius was loosed and revealed under Nero.

Conclusion

History accords with the Preterist interpretation of end-time events: The dragon, beast, and restraining angel of Revelation twenty are best understood in reference to Rome, the persecution under Nero, and the restraining power of Claudius Caesar and the *jus gladii* and *religio licita*, which restrained the persecuting power of the Jew and empire as long as he continued on the throne.



²³ Kenneth L. Gentry Jr, Perilous Times (1999, CMP), p. 104-106 (emphasis in original).

Questions from our Readers

Q: What is the “body of our humiliation” in Phillipians 3:21? Is this our physical body, and if so, why is it singular?

A: Thanks for writing. The body of our humiliation is translated “our vile body” in the King James Version. You are correct that the “body of our humiliation” is our physical body. This is confirmed by comparing Phil. 3:21 to Phil. 2:6, 7, where Paul says Christ did not esteem his equality with God a thing gotten by robbery – that is, a thing wrongly obtained and therefore surrendered under compulsion – but that his divinity was properly his own, and that he emptied himself voluntarily for our salvation, and took on him the form (Gk. *μορφη*) of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, *humbled* himself, and became obedient unto death. The word “humbled” here is the Greek *εταπεινωσεν*. A form of this word is used to describe the “body of our humiliation” – *σωμα της ταπεινωσεως ημων*. Thus, when Jesus was made in the form of a man, he took on him the body of our humiliation. When Christ ascended to heaven, he received a *glorified* (spiritual) body (flesh and blood cannot enter the spiritual realm above). Phillipians 3:21 says that we, too, will receive a glorified body in the resurrection of life: “Who will change “the body of our humiliation” (our vile body, KJV) that it may be conformed (*συμμορφον*) to the body of his glory (*σωματι της δοξης ουτου*).” In other words, as Jesus took on the form of man to do the work of the cross, so we will take on Christ’s glorified form in the resurrection. The singular is used in the Greek for the same reason we use it in the English (in your question you ask, “is this our physical body”). It is merely a usage of speech. We (each) now have a body of flesh and blood, but in the resurrection we will (each) receive a spiritual body, like those of the angels.

Q: Kurt

It appears that you have chosen to take the Ed Stevens route of dealing with issues when you are unable to give answers for difficult questions.

Whenever the futurists and pre-millennial counter parts couldn’t give an educated factual answer to challenging Bible questions (they were unwilling to believe as true), they would ignore or attack. Ed Stevens called me and all who didn’t believe his reformed theology as perfect, an annihilationist, heretic, and an apostate.

What is really disturbing is that you or no other Preterist brother will or can answer my questions or are able to dispute the notion of the “after life” meaning. So you all just do what the futurists have done to you when they were faced with facts that there wasn’t a future second coming or a rapture.

It’s a sad cycle of the religious traditionalist mind-set that even has pensioned the Preterist movement.

A: I vaguely remember your position is that there is no after-life and that that our time beneath the sun is all we get and then die, with no hope of anything more? Is that correct? If so, I consider it so completely unbiblical that it is not worth responding to. The hope of resurrection is the most important tenant of Christianity; it is a fundamental doctrine of the faith. The gospels and epistles teach Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to the spiritual realm of heaven, where we too will inherit eternal life. To deny the resurrection and promise of eternal life is to reject the Christian faith. If the dead rise not, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. See John 3:16.

Q: Hi Kurt,

What does Matt. 5:19 mean when it says regarding the law “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven”? How does this square with the idea that the law was annulled at the cross, or at any time for that matter?

A: I think this verse has reference to Jews like the Essenes, who were held in great reputation for holy and devout lives, but did not offer sacrifices at the temple, offering their own sacrifices elsewhere themselves, and therefore were excluded from the common court of the temple (Josephus, Ant. 18.1.5). The Essenes would thus be guilty of breaking and teaching men to break the commandments (law of Moses). If Jesus has the Essenes and similar people in mind, he would then be leaving open the possibility of their salvation notwithstanding the “wood, hay, and stubble” of their errors, saying, however, they would be of small reputation in heaven because of them. Paul is clear, that not every error of doctrine is fatal to our salvation (*cf.* I Cor. 3:12-15). Presumably, this is Jesus’ meaning as well. But that the law was annulled at the cross, we have abundant testimony (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14-17).

What Does John Hagee Really Want?

Chuck Baldwin

John Hagee, and many other evangelical preachers, constantly beat the war drums. Without ceasing, they encourage America's political leaders to wage non-stop wars of aggression--especially in the Middle East. They constantly trumpet America's unconstitutional interventions in the Middle East with terms not unlike those used by militant Muslims. Hagee's pro-war fanaticism is so extreme one must wonder how much he is being paid by the Israeli lobby. My guess is it's a bunch.

Much of this Christian war fever is due to a convoluted interpretation of Scripture--especially prophetic Scripture. While I will leave most of this discussion for another day, let me simply say that whatever God plans to do in regard to the reestablishment of the Davidic Kingdom, it has precious little to do with the atheistic, apostate government currently headquartered in Tel Aviv. And Hagee, himself, teaches apostasy when he declares that Jewish people today have a special covenant with God and do not need to come to faith in Jesus Christ in order to be saved, and when he says that Jesus never even claimed to be Christ (Messiah).

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." (John 14:6 KJV) Now, either Jesus or John Hagee told the truth. I'll take the word of Jesus. Plus, Mr. Hagee apparently forgot Simon Peter's confession, which Jesus said was due to a revelation from God the Father, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16 KJV)

So, what is it that Hagee and the rest really want? Perpetual war? Total genocide? A global New World Order with the likes of G.W. Bush or Barack Obama at the helm? What do they really want? Do they really have such an inflated view of themselves that they truly believe that they are going to manipulate what God does or doesn't do regarding the fulfillment of end time events? Is God their servant? Is God Israel's servant? Is God America's servant? Balderdash! God is no man's (or country's) servant.

I wonder what these warmonger-preachers think about all the "blowback" from these illegal and immoral wars of aggression that G.W. Bush (and now Barack Obama) has led us into. Not only are these wars provoking people all over the world against us and doing more to recruit volunteers for militant extremists

in the Middle East than anything Al Qaeda could do on their own, they are having catastrophic results on missionary work.

Now think this through: these warmongering evangelicals beat the war drums; they encourage the young men from their churches to go off and fight these "holy" wars; they work tirelessly to elect pro-war politicians; and they twist Old Testament Scripture to fit these modern crusades. Then, the politicians whom the warmongers helped elect send the US military to invade, bomb, and kill hundreds of thousands of people, the vast majority of whom are innocent people. After which, these same warmonger-preachers get up in their pulpits and cry and weep about how we need to send missionaries to preach the Gospel to the same people they just got done trying to annihilate.

Exactly who is it that the missionaries are supposed to reach? The ones lucky enough to escape death and destruction from US bombers and drone attacks, I guess. And exactly what is the message our missionaries are supposed to deliver? "I'm from America, and I'm here to tell you about the love of God." Oh, that is going to play really well with the loved ones of those family members we just destroyed.

I've had so many missionaries tell me how difficult it is for them to try to minister to people around the world today; and the chief reason is the bully reputation that America has built over the past several decades.

Furthermore, do these warmongering evangelicals really want to deal with the fact that we now have over 23 veterans and active-duty military personnel committing suicide EVERY DAY? That equates to more fighting men dying from self-inflicted wounds than from wounds received in the wars they are asked to fight. This is a first in US history. Is John Hagee interested in why so many of our fighting men are killing themselves?

Just recently, an Iraq War veteran killed himself and left a sad and compelling suicide-letter explaining why he ended his life. The letter was posted with the family's permission. This young soldier was engaged in over 400 combat missions as a machine-gunner in the turret of a Humvee. He was also involved in the interrogation of countless Iraqis. In the letter, the soldier said, "The simple truth is this: During my first

deployment, I was made to participate in things, the enormity of which is hard to describe. War crimes, crimes against humanity. Though I did not participate willingly, and made what I thought was my best effort to stop these events, there are some things that a person simply can not come back from. I take some pride in that, actually, as to move on in life after being part of such a thing would be the mark of a sociopath in my mind. These things go far beyond what most are even aware of.

“To force me to do these things and then participate in the ensuing coverup is more than any government has the right to demand. Then, the same government has turned around and abandoned me. They offer no help, and actively block the pursuit of gaining outside help via their corrupt agents at the DEA. Any blame rests with them.”

The distraught soldier went on to say, “Is it any wonder then that the latest figures show 22 veterans killing themselves each day? That is more veterans than children killed at Sandy Hook, every single day. Where are the huge policy initiatives? Why isn’t the president standing with those families at the state of the union? Perhaps because we were not killed by a single lunatic, but rather by his own system of dehumanization, neglect, and indifference.

“It leaves us to where all we have to look forward to is constant pain, misery, poverty, and dishonor. I assure you that, when the numbers do finally drop, it will merely be because those who were pushed the farthest are all already dead.

“And for what? Bush’s religious lunacy? Cheney’s ever growing fortune and that of his corporate friends? Is this what we destroy lives for?”

See the report and the soldier’s complete suicide-letter at:

[Iraq Vet Kills Himself After Being Ordered To Commit War Crimes](#)

What was the soldier’s lament? He was forced to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity. He was forced by the government to cover up these crimes. His government abandoned him in his hour of need. His pain and guilt was more than he could bear. The soldier’s own words were that his was “Not suicide, but a mercy killing.”

Mr. Hagee and the rest of you warmongering evangelicals out there, is this soldier’s suicide (and the

suicides of over 23 active-duty and military veterans every day) what you had in mind when you beat the drums for America’s undeclared, unconstitutional wars of aggression? This young soldier saw the reality of these wars up close and personal--and he didn’t like what he saw. And don’t try to brush this off by saying it’s always been this way. No it hasn’t! We didn’t have suicides like this during World War I or World War II. Whatever the politics back then was or wasn’t, those were lawfully declared wars in which our men knew what they were fighting for. They went in; they fought; they came home.

The war we are fighting in the Middle East is now America’s longest war, and there is no end in sight. Bush and Obama have made perpetual war an official US policy. In addition, this “War on Terror” has transformed the American people from citizens into suspects--every last one of us. Military drones by the tens of thousands are, or soon will be, flying over the skies of America. The American citizenry is being spied on relentlessly. Two super spy centers are currently being built: one in southern Utah and one near San Antonio, Texas. These super spy centers are designed primarily to spy on the American people. Liberties once protected by the Constitution and Bill of Rights are now publicly and blatantly abused. And evangelicals such as John Hagee say nary a word of protest. Instead, they continue to support and promote this so-called “War on Terror.” At what cost, Mr. Hagee? At what cost?

Hundreds of thousands of innocents are being killed; animosity against the United States is growing exponentially; in an effort to keep our country at war, our economy is being overburdened and overtaxed to the point of no return; in the name of the “War on Terror,” America is on the verge of becoming a giant police state; we are inciting China and Russia into nuclear war; and America’s military veterans are killing themselves more frequently than are enemy bullets. Is this what you want, Mr. Hagee? Is this really what you want?



Declaration of Secession from the Union

Words we would like to See

The course of the federal government is inimical to liberty, safety, and Christianity

Whereas Christianity is the historical faith of the People of these United States, who humbly acknowledge their dependence upon Heaven and Divine Providence for the enjoyment of liberty and prosperity,

Whereas the States and People created the federal government to secure to posterity the blessings of liberty,

Whereas the States and People conferred upon the federal government certain limited and enumerated powers,

Whereas the States and People reserved to themselves all powers not conferred upon the federal government,

Whereas the States and People have watched with alarm and amazement as the federal government has sought to throw off all limitation of its powers,

Whereas the federal government has so far abused its powers and thrown off all restraint that it now claims the right and power to regulate virtually every aspect of the People's lives,

Whereas the federal government has undertaken a campaign to spy upon the People and collect and maintain records of their private conversations without regard to a suspicion of criminality or violation of law,

Whereas agencies of the federal government have targeted and profiled People of the several States for harassment and persecution based upon their political and religious thoughts and convictions,

Whereas the federal government has revoked Posse Comitatus and the prohibition against the use of military power for police action among the several States,

Whereas the federal government now claims universal jurisdiction over local incidents of crime and violence, and has filled our streets with armored vehicles and automatic weapons, and claimed the right to enter our homes without warrant or suspicion of criminal wrong or harboring of fugitives (Boston),

Whereas the federal government claims the power to militarily detain indefinitely, without criminal charge, access to legal counsel, or judicial review, the People of the several States,

Whereas the People of the several States have borne with longsuffering the tyranny and usurpations of the federal government,

Whereas the federal government has evinced an intent to reduce the People of the several States to an absolute despotism,

Whereas the federal government has now seen fit to legislate perversion, claiming power to annul the right of the People and States to define and punish the crime of sodomy,

Whereas the federal government has now seen fit to declare its purpose to fasten upon the People and the States moral perversion, forbidding that they withhold the institution of marriage from lesbians and sodomites,

Whereas We the People might reasonably bear with the loss of our liberties and our enslavement to the federal government, but

Whereas We the People neither can nor will brook violation of Heaven's rule among men or submit to see the institution of marriage turned aside from its wholesome purpose as ordained by man's Creator,

Whereas under the current state of affairs there exists no moral, legal, or other reason binding the People of the several States to the federal government,

Whereas it is the duty of the People to stand firm in the protection of their liberty and obedience to rule of Heaven,

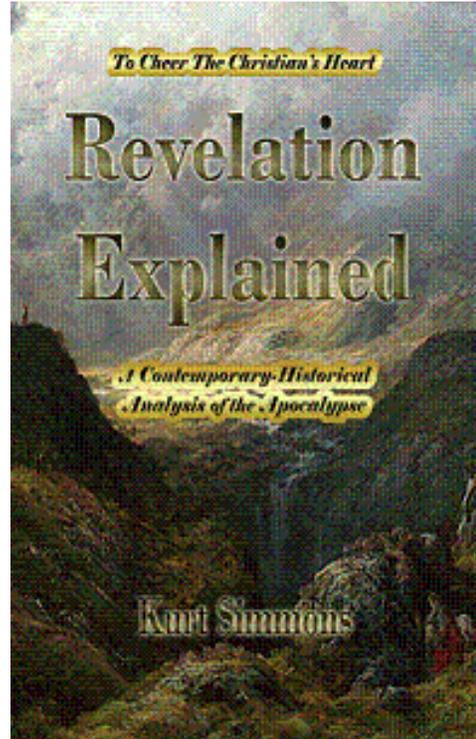
Whereas we deem it better to die defending liberty as martyrs of Christ, than submit to further federal usurpation,

Be it therefore resolved and declared by the People and State of _____ that all legal connection with the federal government and the Union of the United States is hereby annulled and at end

Questions from our Readers

Q: The outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred in the last days. With the coming of the 'perfect' or 'complete', the gifts were done away. The 'perfect' or 'complete' referred to the fulfillment of all things written. With the fulfillment of all things written, the Messianic was ushered in. Question: What is the role of the Holy Spirit, if any in the Messianic age? In other words, what does the Holy Spirit do today?

A: There are no miraculous manifestations of the Spirit today. These belonged to the age of the apostles, and have long ceased to exist. The miracles in the Bible were of such a quality that even the enemies of Christ could not deny them. Obviously, nothing like that exists anywhere today. The work of the Holy Ghost today is to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:7-11). The Spirit began this work with miracles to testify to the truth of the apostles' message, but today he uses just the word. One way to understand the work of the Spirit is to think in terms of electricity. The Spirit is the electric current; the word is the copper wire through which it runs and works. I Thess. 2:13 says the word works effectually in those that believe. That is, the Spirit uses the word to change our hearts and lives; it moves us. I believe that God also acts providentially in our lives to show us our sin and to draw us to Christ, but ultimately the word is the *sine qua non* of coming to salvation.



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