

REVELATION 17: THE DRAGON AND THE WOMAN

Research Paper

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EXCERPT: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? Who hath told it from that time? Have not I the LORD? And there is no God else beside Me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. —*Isaiah 45:21–22*

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. —*2 Peter 1:19–21*

If every idea we have entertained in doctrines is truth, will not the truth bear to be investigated? Will it totter and fall if criticized? If so, let it fall, the sooner the better. The spirit that would close the door to investigation of points of truth in a Christlike manner is not the Spirit from above. —*Ellen G. White, 1888 Materials, p. 187.*

I recommend to you, dear reader, the word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. —*Ellen G. White, A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views, p. 64.*

Since the passage of time and history challenge prophecy, Present Truth can only be validated in retrospect. —*Ingrid A. Homoet*

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SUMMARY

Revelation chapters 12 to 18 detail the final stages of a prophecy concerning the fourth earthly power, Rome. The past two millennia have shown how Earth's final kingdom has significantly impacted God's faithful followers. Revelation 17 describes the ultimate downfall of this power, leading to the Blessed Christian Hope of the establishment of Jesus' everlasting Kingdom. That pivotal event signifies the conclusion of the Great Controversy of the Ages, a promise that instills anticipation and hope.

Examining the challenging passages in the Book of Revelation is a rewarding experience. The words written in 1892 by the co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen White, still resonate today:

There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed and that all our expositions of Scripture are without error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. True doctrine will retain everything by close investigation.¹

This research emphasizes the crucial concept of continuous examination of Scripture when the goal is to interpret prophecy. Chapters 12 to 18 of Revelation provide a detailed account of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan throughout Christian history. Revelation 17, a pivotal chapter, vividly portrays the climax of apocalyptic events that signal the world's end and the following final judgment in Revelation 18 and 19. This research situates Revelation 17 within an expansive conceptual framework of four foundational contexts:

1. Prophetic Context: The prophetic background of Revelation connects the prophecies of the fourth kingdom described in Daniel chapters 2, 7, and 8, as well as the symbolism found in Revelation chapters 12–18. There are fifteen key symbols to consider, and while

¹ White, CW (1946), p. 35.2-36.1/RH December 20, 1892, par 1. [↗](#)

doing so, five (probable) misinterpretations in the Greek in Revelation 17 surfaced (in verses 9, twice in 10, 11, and 12). Correcting these makes the text comprehensible and straightforward. Ignoring this prophetic foundation significantly limits the understanding of Revelation 17. Revelation 17 illustrates how the Roman power, represented by the iron legs in Daniel 2, evolved into a distinct ecclesiastical Roman Church-State Monarchy, symbolized by the two feet of iron and clay in Daniel's vision.² Revelation 17 is about understanding that a counterfeit mark of authority and false worship will be imposed, as referenced in Revelation 13:6–8 and 14–17. Every individual will face a choice between two distinct forms of worship, proclaimed across all nations, peoples, tribes, and languages (Rev 13:7 and 14:6). A global agreement, driven by two dominant political forces, United States of America, symbolized by the two-horned beast (Rev 13:11–17) and United Nations of Europe, represented by ten kings, are central. These powers will collaborate to enforce doctrines of the Roman Church, conflicting with the values of God's kingdom. This will ignite severe tribulation for those who oppose it (Rev 17:12–15).

2. Singular Vision: The author interprets the Book of Revelation as a singular, unified, comprehensive vision that gradually unfolds more details through repetitive and complex scenes. Reminding oneself that Revelation's vision is an imaginative object lesson on eschatology, conveying profound truths, is essential. Symbols introduced in the early chapters should remain consistent throughout the narrative (e.g., Revelation 2:22 corroborates with Revelation 17:1–6, and Revelation 2:26–27 explains Revelation 12:5). The vision presents three great cycles, each expounding on a different view: the seven churches, the seven seals, and the seven trumpets.

² The first move of Imperial Rome to adopt Christianity as the State Religion occurred in 325, under Constantine the Great, at the Council of Nicaea. The practice became official in 380 with the Edict of Thessalonica by Emperor Theodosius. In 533, Emperor Justinian incorporated it into the Civil Law (Codex Justinianus), making the Church a department of the State and the Bishop of Rome the head of that department. In 538, the recognition of the Roman Church as the State Religion was solidified with the defeat of the Arian Ostrogoths during the Justinian reconquest of Italy. Thus, the unity of Church and State is not an invention of the Roman Catholic Church, but rather a Christianized transformation of the Roman Imperial Sun Cult, in which the emperor was the Pontifex Maximus.

3. Timeframe: The timeframe in Revelation spans the entire Christian era, beginning at Pentecost (Acts 2), the birth of the infant Church, and concluding with the recreation of Earth. The messenger angel emphasizes this critical timeframe four times: Revelation 1:1, 19, 4:1, and 22:6. Historical evidence supports this timeframe by illustrating how Pagan Rome impacted the infant Church of Jesus and how Papal Rome continued the same principles.
4. Historical Context: Revelation's historical context is rooted in the extensive and well-documented history of the fourth kingdom—Rome. It details how Pagan Rome evolved into the Roman Church we recognize today. Imagery, such as the iron legs and feet of iron and clay, and descriptions of a beast with great iron teeth, symbolize the full extent of Pagan Rome's power and influence. Daniel 8 suggests that Pagan Rome would overthrow the Judean monarchy (Dan 8:10), which occurred in 44 AD (Rev 12:4). It also notes that they would present themselves as an abomination surrounding Jerusalem (Dan 9:27), a prophecy echoed by Jesus in Matthew 24:15 and fulfilled with Titus's siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. This research thoroughly investigates the historical shift from Pagan Rome to Papal Rome. The evolution of the fourth kingdom unfolded through eight phases—seven ruling government phases representing Pagan Rome and one ruling phase representing Papal Rome. Historical records corroborate this process. In current Seventh-day Adventist thought, the transitions described as "was" and "is not" between 538 and 1798 refer to the Roman Church. Consistency also demands applying the third phase, "yet is and goeth unto perdition," to the Roman Church.

The research explores the meaning of Revelation 17 within the Great Controversy Theme in Revelation 12 to 18, based on two main research questions:

- (1) Can a new methodological approach, grounded in a theoretical framework of seven contexts, enhance the interpretation of Revelation 17?

(2) How do established interpretations align with the findings presented in this research, and what implications arise from these comparisons?

While seeking answers to those questions within the conceptual framework, I detected five misinterpretations of the Greek in Revelation 17, verses 9, 10 (twice), 11, and 12. When these are corrected lexically and grammatically, the puzzle pieces fall into place, revealing crucial identifiers for a comprehensive understanding of Revelation 17's imagery:

The great whore, the mother of the harlots, and the great city, Babylon. The imagery of "the great whore," "the mother of harlots," and "the great city Babylon" are presented under the symbol of a woman—a Church that has deviated from its loyalty to God (cf. Rev 17:5 to Jer 3:3). Biblical texts such as Daniel 2, 7, and 8, along with Revelation 17:2–6, reveal a straightforward answer: this church system traces its origins to the fourth beast—Rome—and has contributed to the rise of nominal Christianity. In this context, Babylon is a fitting metaphor. Babylon is a strong religious system, defying God.

The seven heads, mountains, and horns. In biblical prophecy, symbols like heads, mountains, and horns represent kings, rulers, governments, or kingdoms (see Dan 7:6, 24; Hab 3:6; Ezek 20:40; 28:14; Ps 3:5). In Revelation 17, these symbols collectively illustrate the entirety of Roman power, the fourth kingdom described in Daniel 2 and the fourth beast in Daniel 7 and 8. The symbols of heads and horns must refer to aspects of the depicted power when maintaining interpretative consistency. In Daniel 8:3 and 8:6, these elements indicate aspects of the Medo-Persian Empire, while in Daniel 7:6 and 8:8, they pertain to Greece. Historical analysis confirms that Roman power evolved through seven distinct phases of government, highlighting its complex political structure.

The scarlet-colored beast. The angel identifies the "scarlet-colored beast" as the eighth king. The original Greek indicates that this beast is not simply part of or resembling the seven but emerges "from" them, highlighting continuity and origin. This eighth king marks a

significant shift from the Pagan Roman Empire to the Papal Roman Church. The woman sitting on the beast symbolizes how the Roman Church's religious ambitions are upheld by its political power.

The ten horns. Regarding the ten horns, Daniel 7:24 and 8:8, 21–22 predict the rise of ten kingdoms within the territory of the fourth beast. Historical evidence shows that the western part of Imperial Rome eventually broke into ten distinct nations. Similar imagery is found in Revelation 12:3, 13:1, and 17:12, reinforcing this interpretation.

The eighth king, the beast. The timeframe, prophetic, and historical contexts of Revelation 17 disclose the identity of the eighth king of Revelation 17:10 as representing Rome's final political phase. The timeframe focuses explicitly on the period from 756 to 800. In 800, on Christmas Day, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne, king of the Franks, as Emperor of the Romans. This date historically marked the birth of the Holy Roman Empire, a symbolic revival of the Western Roman imperial, which fell in 476 AD. However, the decline of the Holy Roman Empire began with the Investiture Controversies in the 11th century, and gradually, the Popes lost their grip on the nations and peoples of Europe, as pointedly noted in Revelation 17:6. In 1806, the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved under pressure from Napoleon. Eight years prior, in 1798, Napoleon forced the Monarch of the Vatican to abdicate, annexing the Papal States to the French Republic and ending the political authority of the Popes. The beast, symbol for a political power, was severely wounded unto death. The text speaks about being in the Abyss. This wounded state lasted until 1929, when the Lateran Treaty restored the sovereignty of the Papacy, thereby reuniting Church and State. Revelation 17:8 anticipates this revival of political power, a theme echoed in Revelation 13:3, 12, and 14. This situation will last until the Second Coming of Christ. The prophecy suggests that the Papacy's influence over the nations will increase, eventually leading to a renewed European coalition in which the Church reclaims its former political position and reintroduces Medieval

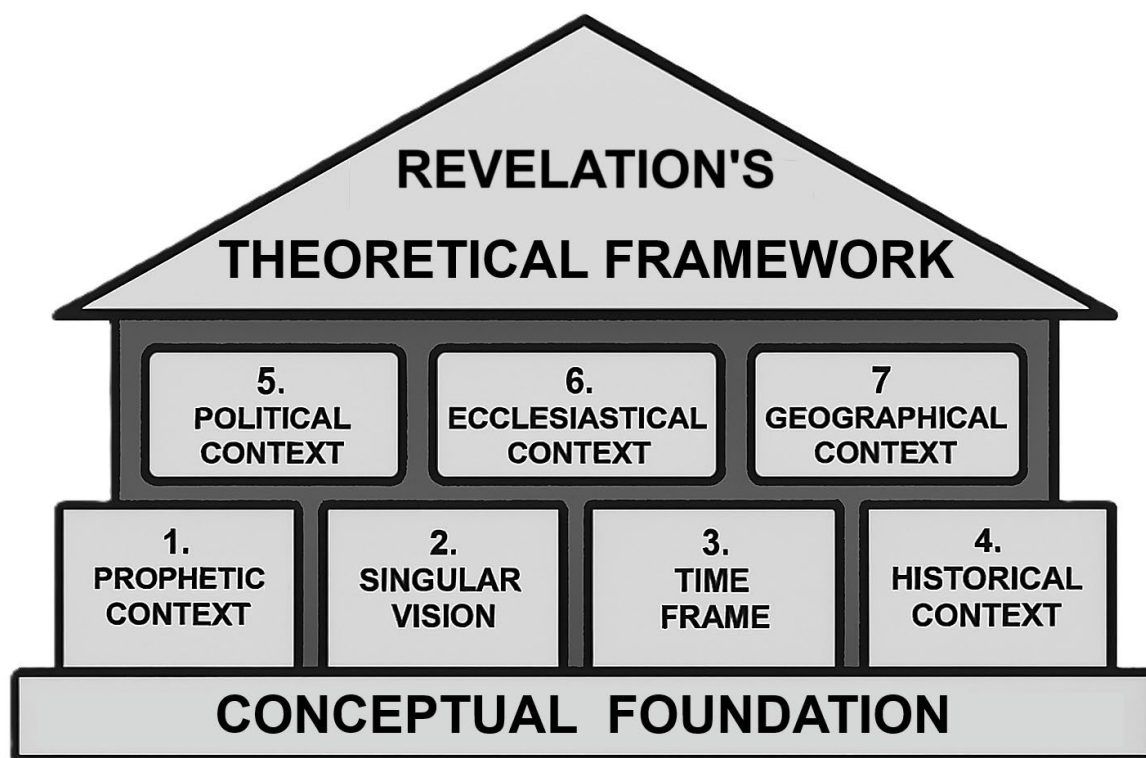
coercion (the image of or for the beast in Rev 13:14–17). God's people are encouraged by his promises of divine intervention to demolish all earthly powers "without human hands" (Dan 2:44–45, 7:13–14, 12:1–3, and Rev 18:8–10). "When he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things"—unquestionably, part of God's plan—"shall be finished" (Rev 1:19; 4:1 and Dan 12:7). Thus, Revelation 17 depicts the climax of the Great Controversy during the Christian Era.

The conclusions of this study are supported by biblical evidence, insights from various Bible expositors, Bible commentaries, and statements from Ellen G. White's writings. Lexical analyses and historical records further support these claims, prompting reconsideration of certain aspects of the prevailing Seventh-day Adventist perspective.

A NOVEL CONCEPTUAL METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopts a seven-fold framework to interpret Revelation 17, defining seven interrelated contexts: prophetic context, singular vision, distinct timeframe, specific historical, political, ecclesiastical, and geographical contexts. In this study, the first four contexts—prophetic, visionary, temporal, and historical—are directly applied to Revelation 17, while drawing on political, ecclesiastical, and geographical contexts to ensure a coherent and comprehensive reading of this intricate chapter.

This study starts by establishing a theoretical framework as a methodological approach to support a consistent and comprehensive interpretation of Revelation, with particular emphasis on chapters 12 through 18. The framework is built upon seven key contexts that serve as building blocks in a theological structure: Revelation's prophetic context, singularity and timeframe, alongside its historical, political, ecclesiastical, and geographical contexts. Taken together, these contexts form a structured conceptual framework for interpretation, guiding readers toward a deeper understanding of the text's unique nature and its interpretative implications.



The outcome of this approach is an in-depth analysis of Revelation 17, primarily utilizing the first four contexts—prophetic context, singular vision, timeframe, and historical context—while implicitly engaging with the remaining three: geographical, political, and ecclesiastical contexts.

The research situates Revelation 17 within the broader Great Controversy Theme spanning chapters 12 to 18, and is driven by two central questions:

1. Can a new methodological approach, grounded in a theoretical framework of seven contexts, enhance the interpretation of Revelation 17?
2. How do established interpretations compare with the findings of this study, and what implications emerge from these comparisons?

Revelation 17 captivates the minds of many, and the diversity of existing interpretations underscores its complex nature. To understand Revelation 17 comprehensively, insight into the vision's origin, intended purpose, and, most importantly, its intended audience is imperative. God initiates this vision as a sequel to the visions the prophet Daniel could not understand. He promised he would, and he kept his word. By his son, Jesus, a messenger angel is dispatched to John to disclose concealed future events. John's task was to record what he heard and saw so that God's great plan of salvation could be communicated to the audience, including readers, hearers, and expositors of our time. This profound interaction incorporates the audience in interpreting and understanding, underscoring their crucial role in the process. They are not passive recipients of the vision but active participants in its unfolding, engaging with the text and its implications. Their understanding and application of the prophecy's message are essential and crucial. The core of the message is straightforward: read, hear, understand, and act upon the words of this prophecy.

The methodology for this study involved extensive literature reviews, meticulous reading and analysis of Scripture, examination of the Greek language, and careful consideration of contexts. Furthermore, interpreting the prophecy's relationship to the recorded history of the Roman Empire has proved essential to tracing the trajectory of the Christian Church from 100 AD to the present day. The focus is on the transition from Pagan to Papal Roman power and its profound political influence from 756 to its conclusion at the Second Coming.

The methodological design encompasses Revelation's

1. **Prophetic Context.** The Book of Revelation continues the great prophetic outline introduced in Daniel 2, 7, and 8, especially in its middle section, chapters 12–18. Revelation 12 is the vantage point for understanding Revelation's End Game: the final acts in the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan and how the people of God are caught in the middle. The relevance of Daniel's and Revelation's visions lies in their precise fulfillment in human history. They alert us to the parts that are yet to be fulfilled.
2. **Singular Vision.** Viewing Revelation as a single vision, containing intricate scenes and recurring details that unveil a vast eschatological panorama, is an essential context to acknowledge. John did not receive Revelation as a book with 22 chapters and 402 verses. He got it as a singular, cohesive narrative. From beginning to end, the audience is invited to follow the interpretations of the imagery provided earlier.
3. **Time Frame.** Revelation's vision is set on a specific timeframe, from Pentecost to the recreation of a New Earth. Its chronology is intersected by divine encouragements and communication, referring forward to what will happen or referencing prior revealing of an image. Setting Revelation on the timeframe from Pentecost in the year 34 and culminating when all will have been accomplished, bears significance.

4. **Historical Context.** It is undisputed that the Bible refers to unconditional time prophecies related to the Plan of Salvation. Explaining time prophecy involves having a close watch on history. The historical context of Revelation is that of the Roman Power, representing the "fourth kingdom" of Daniel. Recorded Roman History provides a fascinating glimpse into the evolution of Roman power. In 63 BC, the pagan Roman Republic began its encroachment on Judea. Its sixth administrative phase, the Imperial period, started in 27 BC under Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus (Octavian) and ended in the Western territories in 476 under Romulus Augustulus. The seventh phase is recorded as the Exarchy, with its seat in Ravenna, Italy. The Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople established this fragile and insignificant administration to maintain control over Western territories, particularly Italy. It lasted from 584 to 751. The eighth phase is the Pontifical Absolute Monarchy of the Vatican City State, also known as the Holy See, which began in 756. It marks the final phase in the Roman historical context of Revelation.
5. **Political Context** reflects the red-colored dragon imagery representing the Roman Empire, while the beast symbolizes the Roman Church, which emerged from imperial structures. The conversion of Constantine the Great and his endorsement of Catholic doctrine played a pivotal role in shaping the Christian faith. Subsequent emperors paved the way for the establishment of the Roman Church and the dual role of the Pope as head of Church and head of State.
6. **Ecclesiastical Context** clarifies that the efforts towards unification of Church and State are a Roman invention. The Pontifical Church, for obvious reasons, never questioned the practice. In Revelation 13:2, the beast is said to have received authority from the dragon. Revelation 17:3 emphasizes that the woman is seated on the beast,

indicating that the beast provides her with a seat of power, rather than being directed by her.

7. **Geographical Context** situates the events depicted in Revelation 17 on the European continent, specifically in the former Western Roman Empire. This context helps to understand the geopolitical backdrop of Revelation 17, whereas Revelation 13 and 18 cover both the Old and New World.³

Together, these seven contexts form a structured lens for interpretation, guiding readers toward a deeper understanding of the text's unique nature and its interpretative implications. When the symbolism of Revelation's vision is approached within this framework, it provides a comprehensible explanation for the chapter under study, Revelation 17.

³ The terms Old World and New World are used here to reflect the geographical shift in prophetic focus—from Europe and the Middle East to the Americas. This usage is descriptive and alludes to the geographical perspectives in Revelation's narrative, which is part of this geographical context.

CONCLUSIONS

The Book of Revelation is a sequel to the Book of Daniel, revealed through Jesus and his messenger angel. The recipients of these messages, Daniel and John, are both revered as holy men of God, infused with the Holy Spirit and sharing similar attributes. The intended audience consists of believers who diligently listen, read, and strive to understand the teachings contained within these texts. The exegetical method employed in this research follows a structured approach, beginning with an overview and providing detailed analyses and key interpretations of the imagery presented. This study focuses on interpreting Revelation 17 within the broader context of the Great Controversy Theme articulated in Revelation 12–18. It aims to address two central research questions: (1) Can a new methodological approach, grounded in a theoretical framework of seven contexts, enhance the interpretation of Revelation 17? (2) How do established interpretations align with the findings presented in this research, and what implications arise from these comparisons? This concluding chapter seeks to provide answers to both questions.

With over 46 years as a Seventh-day Adventist, the researcher has encountered a variety of unconventional theological interpretations concerning the prophetic imagery in the books of Daniel and Revelation. Her enduring passion for history, coupled with a firm conviction in fulfilling God's prophecies in human affairs, has compelled her to address some inconsistencies that conflict with established historical records. A casual remark about Revelation 12:3–4, made five years ago, was severely challenged. This ignited an intense journey to understand Revelation's historical context better to give a comprehensible "answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Pet 3:15). The present paper is an excerpt from her manuscript titled *Earth's Final Kingdom — Revelation 12 to 18*. The insightful words of Ellen White, a co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which were penned in 1892, continue to resonate profoundly in contemporary discourses:

There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not

proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. True doctrine will retain everything by close investigation.⁴

The Adventist principle of "ever-learning," also known as "Present Truth," is a foundational guide in this research, fostering a renewed focus on understanding a specific aspect of Revelation. The primary objective is to provide a more precise and consistent interpretation of the conclusion of the Great Controversy on Earth, particularly as depicted in Revelation 17 through the imagery of the woman on the beast and its relationship to the papacy. This research also aims to offer insights beyond the Adventist community, providing clear explanations for individuals seeking a deeper understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) interpretation. The significance of this study is highlighted by its examination of key symbols in Revelation 12–18, which contributes to a broader understanding of Revelation 17, informed by four essential contexts. The findings suggest that the prophetic message of Revelation 17 reveals important insights regarding "what shall be in the latter days" (Daniel 2:28) of the fourth world power, as described in the visions of Daniel 2, 7, and 8. Revelation 12 elucidates aspects of Rome that Daniel could not fully grasp, framing the prophetic context in innovative ways. The researcher analyzes various interpretations of the imagery within the central segment of Revelation, with a particular emphasis on the perspectives within the Seventh-day Adventist theological framework. A notable gap identified in existing research is the inconsistency in the application of scriptural imagery, which complicates the understanding of various scenes, including those in Revelation 17. To address this gap, the researcher proposes a novel approach founded on four critical contexts for interpreting Revelation: the prophetic context, the conception of Revelation as a singular vision, the timeframe of events, and the historical context. This innovative methodology seeks to challenge traditional interpretations and foster new

⁴ White, CW (1946), p. 35.2-36.1/RH December 20, 1892, par 1.[↗](#)

perspectives, positing that the oversight of these fundamental contexts has led to inconsistencies and misunderstandings of the text.

Several issues merit further attention, particularly the insufficient consideration of contexts related to the interpretation of the middle section of Revelation, specifically Revelation 17, as well as the inconsistent application of prophetic symbolism:

1. Integrating powers such as Egypt and Assyria into Daniel's timeline complicates the interpretation of the scarlet beast described in Revelation 17. Recognizing that the prophetic context of the Book of Revelation serves as a direct continuation of the Book of Daniel is crucial for accurately interpreting the Book of Revelation. Failing to do so can lead to the misapplication of its imagery, resulting in interpretations that lack clarity and coherence.
2. A core principle of interpreting Revelation involves recognizing it as a singular vision presented to John in a series of scenes on a single day. This perspective is crucial for achieving a comprehensive understanding of the text. In contrast, the prophecies in the Book of Daniel were delivered over a period exceeding sixty years. Approaching Revelation as a collection of disparate or parallel visions, rather than a singular, cohesive vision, yields disconnected interpretations that undermine the text's integrity.
3. Revelation emphasizes a specific timeframe that begins with Jesus, who presents himself as resurrected and reaffirms his promise to remain with his Church until the end of time (Matthew 18:20). This context highlights the development of the Christian Church from Pentecost to Christ's Second Coming, thereby discouraging the incorporation of historical powers that existed before Rome into the narrative. Failing to consider this can lead to misguided interpretations that obscure the text's intended meaning.
4. To fully comprehend the Book of Revelation, it is essential to consider the historical context dominated by Roman power during its composition. A thorough examination of the extensive historical records about the Roman Empire is necessary for understanding the

historical context of Revelation, which plays a significant role in fulfilling its prophecies. The interpreter of Revelation must diligently seek indicators within Roman history that fulfill the prophecy by examining the imagery found in Revelation 12, which intricately connects Roman history with the prophetic vision.

Reviewed Key Symbols. The following symbols are crucial for a better understanding of Revelation 17. A detailed discussion of their meanings is presented on pages 42 to 69:

1. Woman (12:1, 2, 13): The 'Timeframe concept' is a key to understanding the woman adorned with the sun and giving birth to the male child. This concept helps us interpret the woman as the early Christian Church, and in verse 13, the adult Christian Church is in hiding.
2. Dragon or Beast (12:3–4; 13:1, 3–5; 17:3, 8, 9): The fiery red Draco (or serpent) is meant in 12:3–4 as a symbol of Roman power. The Bible reserves the prophetic term "Beast" for the Roman power's blaspheming, religious phase.
3. The Great Red Dragon (Rev 12:3–6) is the Roman Power, presenting itself in John's time as the oppressor of the Jewish system and the early infant Church. Even when it is evident that Satan is the animator behind the Roman Power, it is imperative to identify the acting power.
4. Jesus positively identifies the Great Dragon (Rev 12:7–17) as the devil, the accuser of the brethren, the power behind all evil that uses human systems as its agents.
5. Scarlet-colored beast (Rev 17:3) is a religious entity: it blasphemes. John does not refer to it as a dragon. The angel reveals it is the "eighth king" and "is of the seven." The Greek word *ἐκ* means from or near, indicating continuity with the previous seven.
6. Heads and Mountains (12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 9): The Bible interprets these symbols as ruling powers or kingdoms, and a mountain as a symbol for the Lord's protective might.

7. Horns and Crowns (12:4; 13:1; 17:3): The Bible interprets these symbols as rulers or governments.
8. Tail and Stars (12:4): The Bible interprets these symbols as, respectively, executive authority in God's congregation—Jewish or Christian. The Roman power successively demolished the threefold Jewish rulership, starting with the kingship in 44 AD.
9. Male Child (12:4): The newborn Infant Pentecostal Christian Church.
10. Two-horned Earth Beast (12:16; 13:11–17): The Earth symbolizes the New World, a haven for Protestantism, contrasting the sea and (many) waters, symbols for peoples and nations in the Old World. The two-horned beast represents the United States of America in its early historical stage, when it had two distinct governments (horns), presidents, and capitals.
11. Purple, Scarlet, and Jewelry (17:4): Display of wealth and status in Roman society, adopted by the Roman Church.
12. Babylon, the Great (17:5): Babylon is a title of confusion and apostasy, and greatness is in disloyalty. The name written on the forehead (conscience faculty) is a biblical symbol of adultery or loyalty by choice.
13. Mother and daughters (17:5): The system promulgated its principles to offspring.
14. Eight Kings (17:9–10): The eight government phases of Roman world power.
15. Sea and Many Waters (17:15): The Bible interprets the symbol as the nations and people in the political system of the Old World.
16. Armageddon (16:14–16): Unfolding under the literal sixth and seventh plagues, Har-Mageddon is a spiritual, symbolic polemic confronting every 'king of the earth' (symbolic: harim) with the King of Kings. It takes place after the close of probation and precedes the Second Coming.

Perceived misunderstandings of the Greek. Additionally, the researcher identified five misinterpretations of the Greek text, which obscure the understanding of Revelation 17. These misinterpretations are not unusual, given that most Bible translators and commentators did not fully understand or value the imagery of Revelation.

1. Translating the word *ὄρη* in Revelation 17:9 to hills and applying them to the seven literal hills of Rome is ascribing literalism to symbolism. When *ὄρη* is translated as mountain, a widely used biblical image for a ruling power or God's protective might (see Hab 3:6; Ezek 20:40, 28:14; Ps 3:5; and Matt 18:12), the image and its interpretation become concise.
2. Literally, the original Greek in Revelation 17:10 states: "There exist seven kings." These seven kings represent the historical stages of the Roman pagan power's governance. It is important to note that the pronoun *αὐτή* (they) in Greek would have been used to refer to the *κεφαλαί* (heads) mentioned in the previous verse if the Greek had meant to relate the kings to the heads. However, that connection is not made.
3. Also, in verse 10, in most Bible translations, the Greek phrase *ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μένειν* is rendered as "he must continue a short space" (KJV) or "he must continue a short time" (NKJ). However, careful lexical analysis ensures that *ὀλίγον* is used as a qualitative adverb, as in 1 Peter 5:10 or 2 Peter 2:18, signifying something of small worth or insignificance. The Roman chronicles confirm that the seventh Roman governing authority, stationed in Ravenna, was weak and struggled to maintain control in administering the empire's interests against the invading Ostrogoths and Lombards. Thus, it is appropriate to translate the phrase as "When he comes, he is bound to remain little."
4. In Revelation 17:11, the angel identifies the eighth political stage as the one that "was, was not, and yet is," and is the "eighth from the seven," underscoring the importance

of recognizing continuity. The Greek term *ἐκ* implies 'from' or 'near,' suggesting that the eighth king continues the political legacy of the previous seven. Notably, the wording is not from the *seventh* but from the seven. This final stage of governance is not a new power but a continuation, which aligns with the imagery in Daniel 2 regarding the feet of clay and iron as a continuation of the legs of iron. Thus, the scarlet beast represents a continuation of Imperial Roman power, not a separate entity; it is not simply "one of" the seven, as inaccurately suggested by the North American Standard Bible or by Uriah Smith: "[...] *the seventh*, is, [...] *the eighth*." These interpretations lack coherence because if the final entity is one of the seven, or is equal to the seventh, it contradicts the angel's emphasis that there would be eight. The seven heads align with the seven phases of pagan Roman governance: five had already occurred during John's time, one was in existence (the imperial phase), and one was yet to come (the Exarchate), which, according to the Greek, was bound to remain petite, small, or insignificant. The prophecy indicates that the eighth king's political influence will, with a brief interregnum from 1798 to 1929, last until Christ's second coming.

5. A fifth misinterpretation surfaces in Revelation 17:12. A closer reading of the Greek within the vision's seven contexts reveals a divinely appointed moment of unity (Rev. 17:12: Gr.: *μίαν ὥραν*; Heb.: *עֶחָד Echad*), not the broadly shared belief in Adventist circles of a literal 15-day alliance. Verses 13–14 and 17:17 underscore that the confederation will unknowingly fulfill God's will, powerfully affirming His sovereignty over human affairs.

Enhancing understanding of Revelation 17. The answer to the first research question—*Can a conceptual framework based on seven contexts strengthen the interpretation of Revelation 17?*—is yes. The novel approach of a theoretical framework and seven contexts solidifies the

interpretation and understanding of Revelation because it contextualizes the knowledge of a symbolically rich discourse. The seven contexts are foundational, which, for 21st-century readers, can feel as unfamiliar as learning a new language. The advice of Jesus applies: "What is written; how readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). Utilizing the four proposed contexts, the research paper firmly situates Revelation 17 within the Great Controversy theme in the mid-section of Revelation, chapters 12–18. Thus, it is framed more concisely and comprehensibly, revealing a vivid depiction of the climactic events in Earth's history and the final operations of Earth's last kingdom, Rome, in its end-time religious and political appearance. This helps readers unfamiliar with prophetic symbolism.

Impacting Prevalent SDA Theology. Answering the second research question—*how established interpretations align with the findings presented in this research*—is more nuanced and complex than addressing the first research question. Yes, the research methodology of interpreting Revelation 17 within the framework of foundational biblical and historical contexts potentially impacts the academia of biblical SDA interpretation and SDA communal understanding. The research demonstrates that several interpretations the Seventh-day Adventist Church has adhered to regarding some passages in the midsection of Revelation are inconsistent with the interpretation conveyed by Jesus through His angel to Daniel and John. Additionally, applying a more contextual translation for some crucial Greek words further facilitates the interpretation of Revelation. Because traditional translations are deeply embedded in mainstream Biblical Theology, they may hinder the acceptance of more contextually accurate alternatives. However, the research indicates that conventional text understandings hinder the proper interpretation and understanding of the passages under scrutiny. Seventh-day Adventists have boldly pointed to misinterpretations in Bible Passages before. Notable examples include the insertion of the word 'sacrifice' in connection with the

term *'hat-tā-mîd'* in Daniel, and the mispunctuation of Jesus' statement to the thief on the cross.

The research outcome also diverges on some crucial points from prevailing SDA academic work. For example, the research challenges prevailing interpretations of the seven heads, the nature of the papal wound in 1798, and whether the healing in 1929 was partial or complete. Seventh-day Adventists have always acquired knowledge through due process and have boldly addressed scriptural misinterpretations from the standpoint that, throughout the ages, the Holy Spirit has led to a deeper understanding of Scripture—the Adventist perspective of Present Truth. Prophecy is only fulfilled by perceiving and understanding established events of history and time. Because consistency is essential for theological scrutiny, it is crucial to humbly acknowledge when it has not been achieved. As early as 1889, Ellen White wrote:

Every position of truth taken by our people will bear the criticism of the greatest minds; [...] therefore every position we take should be critically examined and tested by the Scriptures. [...] Movements are at work to bring us to the front, and if our theories of truth can be picked to pieces by historians or the world's greatest men, it will be done. We must individually know for ourselves what is truth and be prepared to give a reason for the hope that we have with meekness and fear... We are nearing the time when we shall stand individually alone to answer for our belief. We shall be attacked on every point; we shall be tried to the utmost. We do not want to hold our faith simply because it was handed down to us by our fathers. Such a faith will not stand the terrible test that is before us.⁵

⁵ White, 5T, p. 707.1 [↗](#); LDE, p. 70.1 [↗](#)

To this, Neal C. Wilson, former president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (from 1979 to 1990), adds, in his Word to the Reader in the book *A Search for Identity* by George R. Knight: "[...] the most striking characteristic about Adventism is the fact that we believe that truth is progressive and not static. As a result, Adventism keeps searching, investigating, listening, reviewing, researching, and praying with the conviction that God may enlighten and enlarge its understanding of the salvation story."⁶ This is why the researcher stands firmly by her conclusions, while welcoming further study and meaningful dialogue at the 2025 Revelation 17 Conference.

Acknowledging the Researcher's Contribution. The researcher draws courage from the open-minded perspectives within the SDA scholarly and ecclesiastical community because she firmly believes that the four contexts serve as guiding parameters for interpreting the Apocalypse. They provide a foundation for the Great Controversy Theme as presented in chapters 12 through 18 of Revelation. From that vantage point, they offer a coherent and accessible interpretation of Revelation 17 that can withstand internal and external scrutiny. It is the responsibility of theological scholars and Church leaders to assess the potential impact of these contexts on the Seventh-day Adventist Church's understanding of biblical prophecies related to the Last Day Events in Daniel and Revelation. The researcher believes the SDA Church is well-equipped for this task due to several factors:

1. The SDA Church has previously shown a willingness to embrace new perspectives and insights from various sources, especially in relation to apocalyptic and prophetic Bible texts. This openness reflects the church's intellectual curiosity and readiness to adapt its understanding of divine revelations.

⁶ Knight (2000), p. 8.

2. The interpretations of Daniel and Revelation are not formalized as fundamental beliefs within the SDA Church. The concept of Present Truth resists rigid doctrinal fixation in the interpretation of apocalyptic and eschatological visions, as it is, by definition, the ever-deepening understanding of the historical fulfillment of biblical time prophecies. In other words, SDA's interpretation of Daniel and Revelation is rooted in historical analysis, which challenges our understanding of God's authority (Deut 18:21–22, Isa 45:21, and Jer 28:9). On the other hand, we should acknowledge that our peculiar theology influences the Seventh-day Adventist analysis of history.
3. The SDA Church has faced and overcome numerous challenges in prophecy interpretation throughout its history. A notable example is the Ten Horns Controversy, in which Uriah Smith and Alonzo Jones debated whether the Huns or the Alemanni should be recognized as one of the ten kingdoms of the Western Roman Empire.⁷ This record of overcoming obstacles instills confidence in engaging emerging interpretations of apocalyptic prophecy. Now, we may take this a step further and be more inclined to understand that the image of the ten horns represents the total fragmentation of the Western Imperial territory into what we now call Europe, rather than ten identifiable separate nations.
4. The SDA Church has grappled with significant non-prophetic issues, including the Sabbath-Sunday question, differing views on the timing of the Sabbath (whether from 6 am to 6 pm, from sunset to sunset, or from evening to evening), the distinction between clean and unclean meats, and the Spirit's role in inspiring and guiding the faithful. These historical disputes have provided valuable lessons in approaching Scriptural texts.
5. The 1888 Righteousness by Faith Controversy taught us to be cautious about hasty negative or dismissive responses to research findings that challenge established beliefs. It reminds us of the importance of thorough examination and thoughtfulness. Ellen G. White,

⁷ Rosario (2020). [↗](#)

in her prophetic wisdom, offered the following counsel during the 1888 Righteousness by Faith controversy:

If every idea we have entertained in doctrines is truth, will not the truth bear to be investigated? Will it totter and fall if criticized? If so, let it fall, the sooner the better. The spirit that would close the door to investigation of points of truth in a Christlike manner is not the Spirit from above. [...] I think it is high time that we were Christians at heart. The condition of things here is such that it requires most earnest, persevering labor to counteract the work that has been done here for a few years in the past. I am glad that a time has come when something will stir our people to investigate the points of our faith for themselves. We should not consider that either Elder Butler or Elder Smith are the guardians of the doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists and that no one may dare to express an idea that differs from theirs. My cry has been: Investigate the Scriptures for yourselves and know for yourselves what saith the Lord. No man is to be an authority for us. If he has received his light from the Bible so, may we also go to the same source for light and proof to substantiate the doctrines which we believe. The Scriptures teach that we should give a reason of the hope that is within us with meekness and fear.⁸

Final Remarks. In concluding observations regarding Bible prophecy, inviting careful reassessment of specific findings within this domain is essential. This research paper does not seek to undermine the credibility of early Adventist or contemporary scholars; indeed, their rigorous scholarship is respected and rooted in the context of their respective eras. However, specific findings merit reassessment. The Revelation 17 Conference is a conducive forum for collaborative inquiry, allowing participants to engage in meaningful discourse and refine their

⁸ White, 1888 Materials, pp. 186.2, 188.1. [2](#)

understanding of biblical truths. This process has historically contributed to the evolution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, shaping us into a Church Militant, a Beacon of Truth, and a Light upon a Hill. As attendees and presenters, we must uphold a posture of spiritual discernment and ongoing inquiry.

While divine credibility rests upon the outcomes of time prophecy, it is crucial to recognize that proposed interpretations are best understood as navigational tools rather than definitive endpoints. These interpretations facilitate a deeper comprehension of the Lord's intentions regarding His redemptive plan. Our primary objective should extend beyond acquiring theoretical knowledge or academic recognition; it should strive for greater fidelity to Jesus Christ and deeper reconciliation with God. A fundamental principle remains paramount: the Bible is the sole authoritative interpreter of truth. Any alternative perspective must be rigorously and consistently aligned with Scripture, consistently and unwaveringly. The researcher encourages continued reflection—whether theological, prophetic, or exegetical—and open dialogue, fostering a community grounded in discernment, humility, and the pursuit of Present Truth.