

# REVELATION 17: THE DRAGON AND THE WOMAN

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Research Paper

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by

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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*

## SUMMARY

Revelation chapters 12 to 18 detail the final stages of a prophecy concerning the fourth earthly power, Rome. The past 2,193 years 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 rewarding. 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.<sup>1</sup>

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 this expansive context and proposes four foundational theoretical conceptual ideas:

1. Prophetic Context: The prophetic background of Revelation connects the prophecies of the fourth kingdom described in Daniel chapters 2, 7, and 8, and the symbolism found in

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

Revelation chapters 12-18. There are fifteen key symbols to consider, and while doing so, five (probable) mistranslations 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 secular Rome's Church-State Empire,<sup>2</sup> 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. 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 opposers (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).

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<sup>2</sup> 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 by Emperor Theodosius in his Edict of Thessalonica. In 533, 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.

The vision presents three great cycles, each expounding on a different view: the seven churches, the seven seals, and the seven trumpets.

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 framework based on theoretical concepts 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, embracing and applying the four conceptual ideas, the puzzle pieces fell 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" symbolizes 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 woman, a 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 timeframe, prophetic, and historical context of Revelation 17.** The timeframe, prophetic, and historical contexts of Revelation 17 are closely tied to the eighth king of Revelation 17:10, representing Rome's final political phase. The timeframe focuses explicitly on the periods from 756 to 1798, and from 1929 to the Second Coming. During the first part, the political power of the Church-State Pontifical Monarchy experienced a gradual decline, as noted in verse 6. Revelation 17:8 anticipates the second part, in which a revival of power occurs, a theme echoed in Revelation 13:3, 12, and 14. This revival will eventually lead to a European coalition in which the Church reclaims its political influence and reintroduces Medieval coercion. God's people are encouraged that divine intervention will 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 are supported by biblical evidence, statements from Ellen G. White's writings, and other Bible expositors' insights. Historical records further support these claims, prompting a reconsideration of certain aspects of the prevailing Seventh-day Adventist perspective.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### Miscellaneous

BRI:	Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
DARCOM:	Daniel and Revelation Committee
ESDA:	Encyclopedia of Seventh Day Adventists.
IJHSS:	International Journal of Humanities and Social Science
JAAS:	Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary
JSTOR:	Journal Storage, <a href="https://about.jstor.org/">https://about.jstor.org/</a>
MHBC:	Matthew Henry Bible Commentary
MM:	Ministry Magazine
OPIL:	Oxford Public International Law ( <a href="https://opil.oupplaw.com/page/about">https://opil.oupplaw.com/page/about</a> ).
SDA:	Seventh-day Adventist

### Bible Translations

AMP:	Amplified Bible
CEV:	Contemporary English Version
ERV:	English Revised Version
ESV:	English Standard Version
GNT:	Good News Translation
ISV:	International Standard Version
KJV:	King James Version Bible translation into English, primary translation in the Paper.
LXX:	Septuagint, the Alexandrian translation of the Jewish Tanakh (Old Testament).
NAS:	North American Standard
NIV:	New International Version
NKJ:	New King James Bible translation into English
WEB:	World English Bible

### Cited works of E.G. White

1888:	1888 Materials (1887-1903)
3SP:	Spirit of Prophecy, Vol 3 (1878)
5T:	Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, (1881-1889)
6T:	Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 6, (1900)
7SDABC:	Comments, <i>The SDA Bible Commentary</i> , Vol 7 (1957)
AA:	The Acts of the Apostles (1911)
CW:	Counsels to Writers and Editors (1946 compilation)
DA:	The Desire of the Ages (1898).
GC:	Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan, (1911)
GW:	Gospel Workers (1892/ 1915 compilations)
LDE:	Last Day Events (1992 compilation)
LtMs:	Letters and Manuscripts (20 volumes, 1844-1915)
12MR:	Manuscript Releases (1897): 21 volumes, previously unpublished work)
RH:	Review and Herald periodical (1851-1959).
2TT:	Testimony Treasures, Vol 2
WM:	Welfare Ministry (1951 compilation)

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I am deeply grateful to my cherished Lord and Savior for guiding my faith journey. His wisdom has illuminated my path since our first encounter in 1980. The insights I have gained regarding prophetic imagery and its manifestation in history amaze me. In 2020, I was confronted with some alleged inconsistencies in the SDA explanations of Revelation, particularly chapters 12 to 17. For the past five years, I have approached my research with the same passion one might have for intensely studying Rembrandt's "De Nachtwacht" (The Night Watch), uncovering details once overlooked. Walking up with my Lord is a profound source of happiness that makes every effort worthwhile.

I want to express my deep love and gratitude to my husband. His encouragement, probing, stern, and challenging questions are my support system.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Steering Committee of the 2025 Revelation 17 Prophecy Conference. Your willingness to discuss my findings with esteemed theologians speaks volumes about your commitment and underscores your pivotal role in enhancing Seventh-day Adventists' understanding of prophecy. It is a true honor to share the stage with such respected individuals.

Lastly, I also appreciate the language coaches from the Academic English Now team. Their expert guidance to refine my writing style has been appreciated. I also thank my brother in Christ, Daniel Muller, for reviewing the paper and sharpening my arguments with probing questions.

## NOTES ON METHODOLOGY, STYLE, AND TOOLS

### **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher employed an inductive exegetical approach involving a comprehensive literature review on the Judean government and influential Adventist interpretations of the books of Daniel and Revelation. A meticulous study of biblical texts and historical context yielded a deeper and more nuanced understanding. The insights gained from this study are compiled into a book manuscript, of which this paper is an extensive summary to support the interpretation of Revelation 17.

### **STYLE**

This research adheres to The SBL Handbook of Style, 2nd ed., edited by Billie Jean Collins et al. (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2014), in connection with the updated explanations, clarifications, and expansions posted on The SBL Handbook of Style's blog: <https://sblhs2.com>.

### **TOOLS**

Unless otherwise stated, the cited texts from Scripture are from the King James Version.

Notes on Greek translation and grammar are from Herb Swanson's translations of Revelation's Greek, posted on <https://www.swrktec.org/>.

Literature review searches were conducted on websites such as:

Academia.edu, Scribd, Internet Archive, Everand, Encyclopedia Britannica, JSTOR, JIHSS, Catholic Encyclopedia, American History Net, EGW Writings, SDA Biblical Research Institute, Encyclopedia of Seventh-Day Adventists, Andrews University Archives, Complete Matthew Henry's Commentary, which can be found at <https://biblehub.com>.  
Smithsonian Timelines of History.

An English language review was conducted with Grammarly text help.

## ABSTRACT

Revelation 17 presents a striking portrayal of a religio-political entity, characterized by a woman adorned in purple and scarlet, seated upon a scarlet beast. This analysis elucidates two critical concepts that are undervalued within Seventh-day Adventist eschatology:

1. Timeframe: The Book of Revelation primarily focuses on future events while incorporating past events from the end of the first century that establish the foundation for these forthcoming occurrences.
2. Historical Context: A thorough understanding of the depiction of the Pagan Roman Empire as represented by the red dragon in Revelation 12 is essential for accurately interpreting Revelation 17.

These insights culminate in the conclusion that the vision of Revelation 17 refers to the resurgence of Medieval ideologies, represented by the image of the beast:

- The Woman symbolizes the Pontifical Roman Church, established in 538. She is called Babylon the Great, signifying corruption and apostasy.
- The Red Beast signifies political Rome, founded in 753 BC. It underwent seven distinct stages before evolving into an eighth stage in 756 AD—the absolute Monarchy of the Vatican City State. Its political authority was severed between 1798 and 1870. However, this "wound" healed in 1929, and the beast will persist until the end.

Given this interpretation, the question about the implications for the prevalent understanding within the SDA framework is apparent.

*Keywords: Revelation 12-18, Revelation 17, Timeframe, Historical Context, Red Dragon, Babylon the Great, Apocalypse, Imaging the Beast, Great Controversy Theme, Christian Era.*

(Note: Send-in abstract, accepted by the Revelation 17 Conference Steering Committee)

## INTRODUCTION

The research proposes that contextualizing Revelation 17 within the broader scope of Chapters 12 to 18 enhances understanding of the central theme: the actions of Daniel's fourth world power, Rome, Earth's final kingdom. This central segment of Revelation details the climactic events of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan during the Christian era and the final events of planet Earth.

The research was initiated by a casual remark that challenged a widely accepted belief among Seventh-day Adventists: "If the woman adorned with a garland of twelve stars in Revelation 12 is not Mary, the mother of Jesus, then the male child she bears cannot be Jesus, the baby." Consequently, the assumption that the child's snatching to God's throne refers to the Ascension must also be questioned." The remark provoked some serious objections, prompting the researcher to investigate the history of ancient Rome and its governmental structures.

The researcher's starting point is to define seven key theoretical conceptual ideas as foundational boundaries to facilitate a consistent and comprehensive interpretation of Revelation, particularly chapters 12-18. These theoretical concepts encompass Revelation's singularity, timeframe, prophetic, historical, geographical, political, and ecclesiastical context. This paper delivers an in-depth analysis of Revelation 17, utilizing the first four theoretical concepts while implicitly addressing the remaining three – the geographical, political, and ecclesiastical context – due to their significance. They also contribute to a structured framework for interpretation, guiding readers in understanding the unique nature of the texts and their interpretative implications.

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 framework based on theoretical concepts 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?

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. Through 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. 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.

Those familiar with Jesus' teaching methods in the Gospels will recognize a similar narrative style in Revelation. After his resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days helping his disciples grasp the foundational gospel message. Sixty-four years later, he urged Christians to open their eyes and ears to more truth, noting that many prophets longed to see what they were witnessing (Matt 13:17). Thus, the book of Revelation is a parable recounting the Christian Era amid the tumultuous historical context of the fourth world power described in Daniel 2, 7, and 8. It conveys assurance that Christ and his followers will emerge victorious. Christ

counters scenes of strife and persecution with hope and encouragement, inspiring a sense of optimism and reassurance and reminding believers that God's plan will be accomplished. This message of hope and reassurance is a key aspect of Revelation 17 that inspires and uplifts the readers.

The researcher's methodological approach promotes a nuanced interpretation of the texts. The process 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. The study traces the historical trajectory of the Christian Church from 100 AD to the present day, focusing on the transition from Pagan to Papal Roman power and its profound political influence from 756 to its conclusion at the Second Coming.

In the first chapter, the researcher lays the groundwork for the discourse by discussing the relevance of four proposed foundational theoretical concepts: the prophetic context of Revelation, the singularity of Revelation as one overarching vision, its timeframe from 100 AD to the end of the world, and its historical context. These concepts are crucial as they provide a solid framework for understanding the unique nature of Revelation. The prophetic context helps enhance understanding of the vision's purpose, as the singularity of Revelation as one overarching vision ensures that it is interpreted as a unified whole. The timeframe guides knowledge of the sequence of events, and the historical context provides the backdrop against which these events unfold. These concepts are not just theoretical constructions but serve as keys to unlocking the deeper meaning of Revelation 17. The researcher argues that once these four theoretical concepts are established, interpreting Revelation 17 becomes a straightforward disclosure of a beautiful picture.



The second chapter discusses the importance of consistently applying the imagery of Daniel 2, 7, 8, and Revelation 12-18. Interpreting Revelation 17 begins with understanding the imagery in the book's midsection (chapters 12 to 18), where the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan unfolds and reaches its climax.

The third chapter explains Revelation 17 section by section, based on the findings from chapters 1 and 2.

The concluding chapter addresses the research questions and discusses some implications for prevailing Seventh-day Adventist interpretations of Revelation's central section.

Finally, some research limitations and suggestions for further study are proposed.

Five appendices, integral to the research, are added. These appendices include (I) an artist's impression of the Roman Draco Standard; (II) an overview of Revelation's three overarching cycles of seven: churches, trumpets, and seals; (III) an overview of the Judean threefold government structure and how the Roman authorities part-by-part tore it down between 44 and 429 AD; (IV) an overview of the historical transformations of Roman power; and (V) an overview of the Great Controversy Theme in Daniel and the Revelation. Each appendix provides additional context and information essential for a better understanding of the broader context of the research and enhances awareness of Revelation 17. The reader is encouraged to refer to these appendices as they progress through the paper.

As the angel emphasized in Daniel 12:4, learning is not a static process; it is an ongoing endeavor that requires continual reevaluation of one's understanding. This active engagement is crucial for adequately reassessing communal and academic beliefs by aligning them with Scripture and underlying secular contexts. Emerging from the Bible-researching Philadelphia period, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is accustomed to this attitude of continual

engagement. The researcher shows that a historicist hermeneutical approach to interpreting Revelation 17 is foundational to its understanding because the relationship is intentional: God has purposed prophecy to be fulfilled in secular history (Deut 18:21-22, Isa 45:21, and Jer 28:9). This emphasis on continual learning and reevaluation underscores the interpretation and understanding of Revelation 17.

## THEORETICAL CONCEPTUAL IDEAS

The researcher posits that Revelation needs to be interpreted within the boundaries of at least seven foundational theoretical conceptual ideas: a prophetic context, a singular vision, a distinct timeframe, and a specific historical context. Initially, two were chosen to underscore the interpretation of Revelation 17. While researching, it became evident that at least two additional ones were crucial.

The word "revelation" refers to the act of disclosing something that is hidden. While standing on the beach of Patmos, John observes a series of scenes flashing in the firmament. A messenger angel pulls back the curtain before the Conflict of the Ages—the intense spiritual battle that will determine the future of Christianity. Jesus, the Revelator, anticipates that God's children will comprehend the vision. The revelations of God are in the public domain (Deut 29:29), and reading, listening, and understanding are essential. Like the parables in the Gospels, the specifics are not literal unless such a reading is unmistakably clear from the context. Thus, every subject, action, and object must first be understood as a symbol. Parenthetical views and intermezzi of encouragements and implements refer to the circumstances of God's people.

The proposed conceptual ideas<sup>3</sup> emphasize that the Book of Revelation is rooted in the prophetic context of the fourth beast or world power described in Daniel 2, 7, and 8, and it is a single vision containing intricate details that reveal a vast eschatological parable. The vision is centered on a specific period or timeframe, from Pentecost to the recreation of a New Earth, and the historical context spans from 95 to 96 AD to the end of this world. When the symbolism of Revelation's vision is approached this way, it provides a comprehensible explanation for the

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<sup>3</sup> The researcher proposes seven theoretical conceptual ideas analyzed in the book manuscript: Prophetic Context, Singular Vision, Timeframe, Historical Context, Political Context, Ecclesiastical Context, and Geographical Context. These seven concepts are the foundation of her book manuscript, *Earth's Final Kingdom: Revelation 12 to 18*. The first four underscore the research of Revelation 17, to be presented at the Revelation 17 Conference, with the other three implicitly addressed. The research paper summarizes various sections of the book manuscript.

chapter under study, Revelation 17. The other three conceptual ideas are not discussed at length.<sup>4</sup> They are introduced, though, because they add significance to the understanding of Revelation 17:

- The geographical context firmly situates the events depicted in Revelation 17 on the European continent, specifically in the former Western Roman Empire. This concept helps to understand the geopolitical backdrop of Revelation 17, whereas Revelation 13 and 18 cover the Old and New Worlds.
- The political context highlights how the dragon image alludes to the political affairs of the Roman Empire and the beast image to the Roman Church, which evolved from the Roman Empire, and how the Roman Empire's endorsement of Christianity contributed to the evolution of the Roman Church.
- The ecclesiastical context clarifies that the unification of the Christian Church with the State is Imperial Rome's invention and did not originate from the Pontifical Church. The Pontifical Church, for obvious reasons, never questioned this practice. The woman is seated on the Roman beast, not driving or steering it. Instead, the beast provides a seat for the woman (Rev 13:2).

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<sup>4</sup> Their application are more elaborately discussed in the book manuscript.

## Revelation's Prophetic Context

The Book of Revelation continues the great time prophecies introduced in the Book of Daniel. Its middle section, chapters 12 to 18, addresses the challenges posed by the final world power—Rome—as outlined in Daniel 2, 7, and 8, which affect the people of God. Like Daniel 2, Revelation's eschatological scene begins with an introductory chapter in Revelation 12. Revelation 12 sets the stage. It is the vantage point or helipad for understanding Revelation's End Game, AKA, The Great Controversy Theme in its midsection, chapters 12 to 18. Starting on the wrong foot here is missing the point in the coming chapters. The relevance of Daniel's and Revelation's visions lies in their precise fulfillment in our secular history. They alert us to the parts that are yet to be fulfilled. Acknowledging the prophetic context is pivotal to understanding Revelation 17.

In numerous instances, the Bible underscores the awe-inspiring authority of God, which is rooted in the prophecies he imparts. His divine claims are undisputed: 'Who has declared this from ancient times? Who has foretold it from that time? Is it not I, the Lord? There is no other God besides me, a righteous God, and a Savior; there is none besides me' (Isa 45:21 paraphrased; also read: Deut 18:21-22 and Jer 28:9). True prophecy originates from him and unfailingly comes to fruition at the designated time. He will always adhere to the stipulated duration.

The Bible houses two remarkably prophetic timelines: the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Daniel was granted insights into the rise and fall of four world powers from 603 BC until the end of the world. The Book of Daniel details the first three world powers. In it, the fate of the fourth is deferred to "the latter days" (Dan 2:28). Daniel, unable to comprehend, is reassured by the angel Gabriel that the predictions would be understood "at the last end of the indignation, for at the time appointed, the end will be" (Dan 8:19). Bible students know that all God's promises in the Old Testament have happened – and when he says it is for the time of the end, he means our time. In Daniel 2, the fourth beast, representing the power that will govern the world during the final days, is depicted as having iron and transitioning to iron and clay. The iron reflects its unyielding severity and brutality. The composite of iron and clay indicates a distinct political hegemony compared to its

predecessors and a strange kind of union ("partly strong and partly broken [...] they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay": Dan 2:42-43). It suggests a decline in strength while retaining harshness and a tendency to be molded. In the visions of Daniel 7 and 8, the transition phase is presented as a new, peculiar power (the little horn) gradually emerging and possessing religious characteristics, as suggested by its haughty declarations, self-exaltation, and antagonism toward the "Prince of princes," which is not alluded to by the previous powers. The metamorphosis of the fourth beast and its implications are weighty, shaping the understanding of the prophetic context. Daniel's visions allude that during the composite iron-clay-little horn phase, all world powers will be destroyed without human intervention, as indicated in Daniel 7:7-8, 11, 12, and 23-25. God will always be faithful to his promises, and "the appointed time" was John's time to explain the essential things in connection with the development of the Christian Church from Pentecost until Jesus' second coming. The explanation, recorded in 95 AD in Revelation, was understood during the Great Awakening period of the Philadelphia era (1740-1844), the time of the end. It pertains to the context of the fourth world power, Rome. Revelation picks up the baton to reveal its peculiar characteristics, ten horns and a little horn coming up from among the ten, as mentioned in Daniel 8. The similarity of the imagery is striking.

The prophetic context presents a historical overview of a tremendous eschatological parable, conveyed through the symbolism of four metals and four beasts, which originated more than 2,600 years ago (Dan 2:28, 31-33 and 36-44; 7:3-10 and 8:3-14, 20-25).<sup>5</sup> The narrative commences with Babylon, followed by two successive world powers delineated with meticulous attention to detail. However, the specific characteristics of the fourth beast remained obscured. Early Church fathers such as Jerome positively identified the fourth beast

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<sup>5</sup> According to the Canon of Ptolemy, Nebuchadnezzar dreamt about the statue in 604 BC, the second year of his reign as king of Babylonia.

of Daniel 7:7-8 with the Roman Empire.<sup>6</sup> However, the mystery about the little horn and the 2300 evenings and mornings unfolded in more clarity before the believers in the Philadelphia Church Era (1740-1844), "the time of the end" (Dan 8:17). They recognized Daniel's exegetical method: an initial overview followed by successive detailed elaboration. Following the same principles, one may understand that interpreting Revelation 17 demands the consideration of the prophetic context of four critical Bible passages:

1. In Daniel 7:6-8 and 24, and Daniel 8:3, 5, 8, and 22, horns and heads are articulated as integral components of the depicted power.
2. The messenger angel<sup>7</sup> begins in Revelation 12:1-5 with a rehearsal of the eschatology of Daniel about the fourth kingdom that would be on Earth. And how this power would impact the people of God. By Daniel's imagery, it is an 'out of the world' ferocious creature: a Great, Fiery and Red Dragon, with many heads, horns, and crowns. The imagery shown was what John could see in his everyday life: the colors of the "abomination that bringeth desolation" were alarming, the abrogating of the Jewish leadership was a disgrace, and John knew from personal experience the birth pains of oppression. The devilish power behind the scenes is disclosed in the second section of chapter 12, verses 7-17.
3. While John was standing on the beach, he saw a scene of a beast rising from the Mediterranean Sea (Rev 13:1-2). A seven-headed beast with ten horns appeared before his eyes. Its religious attribute of blasphemy emphasizes that it is a spiritual power challenging God's authority. The angel strengthened the rehearsal by reiterating

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Kimberley Fowler, *Jerome, Commentary on Daniel II.40* (2018). Accessed on April 30, 2025. [↗](#)

<sup>7</sup> Though the text does not disclose the identity of the messenger angel, there are some indications that it might be Gabriel. He is the messenger to Daniel (Dan 8:16 and 9:21), to Zacharias (Luke 1:19), and Mary (Luke 1:26). To avoid speculation, the term messenger angel is used.

the sequence in Daniel in reverse order: Beast, Dragon, Panthera, Bear, Lion, as if to say: 'Do you remember Daniel's vision? That is what I am talking about.' The angels further emphasized that the Roman dragon provided for the beast's position, as if to say: 'Make no mistake here, John, this beast is not a fifth power; it is the prolongation of the Dragon.'<sup>8</sup>

4. In Revelation 17:3, a scarlet seven-headed beast with ten horns serves as a throne for a fallen Church system, as depicted.

The Apostle John was granted insight into the defining characteristics of Earth's final political power. Although it was described in mysterious terminology, he could understand it because it existed during his lifetime. He discerned that these attributes would persist until the end of time, as foretold in the book of Daniel. The prophetic symbolism further indicates a focus on the geographical western region of Imperial Rome, with Italy positioned as its epicenter, thereby underscoring the Roman power's influence and dominance over the remains of the Roman Empire.

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<sup>8</sup> Our children would call it a Transformer.



## Revelation's Singular Vision

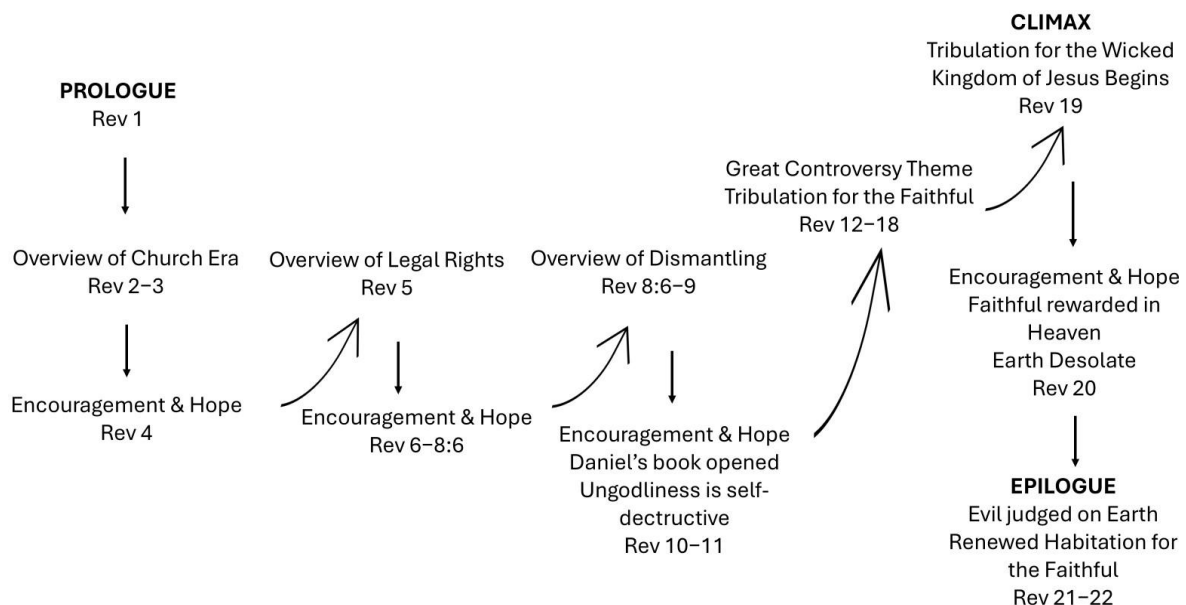
John did not divide the Book of Revelation into 22 chapters and 404 verses; this structure was created in the twelfth century. He received Revelation as a singular, cohesive narrative of a unified apocalyptic message. Adhering to this unity prevents misinterpretation and actively engages the audience to consider earlier interpretations when encountering recurring symbols, thereby deepening their understanding of the text's profound message.

Revelation, believed to have been received around 95-96 AD, was presented to John in a single day, providing a concise overview from the birth of the Christian Church until the end of this world. The narrative employs several recurring settings or scenes, including seven churches, which represent religious settings and serve as a lens through which to view the challenges and affirmations faced by Christianity. The seven trumpets represent the wars and conflicts in the outside world, the seven seals symbolize the gradual march of the gospel through the ages and Christ's legal ownership of his people, and the seven vials represent the final outpouring of God's wrath in his decisive battle in "The Valley of Decisions" (Har-Megiddon). These recurring settings influenced numerous theologians to assume that Revelation comprises multiple visions. However, Revelation reads – and is to be understood – as one overarching vision. The central section, chapters 12 to 18, covers the period from the Thyatira to the Laodicea Church era and culminates in the Second Coming of Jesus. The narrative concludes in chapters 19-22, marking the end of the Great Controversy. Table 1 and Figure 1 summarize the vision and its scenes.

Table 1: The Scenes of Revelation

1	Introducing the Divine Messengers (God, Jesus, and his angel), the agent (John), and the aim of the vision: a revelation to the human believers – the audience.
2-3	Seven Churches: Overview of the condition of the Christian Church through the ages.
4	Encouragement: God sits on the throne, and He reigns supreme.
5	Seven Seals: Overview of Jesus's legal rights to His people.
6-8:6	Encouragement: Jesus is the rightful owner of the faithful. His people will be sealed and get their legal papers.
8:6-9	Seven Trumpets: Overview of Dismantling of the Western and Eastern Roman Empires.
10	Encouragement: The book of Daniel will be discovered, and the faithful will gain hope from the promise that the truth about Christ's second coming will be told.
11	Evil will get out of control (like in Sodom and Egypt) until humanity recognizes the destructive consequences of living without God. The Ten Commandments will be reintroduced as moral guidance.
12-18	Overview and details of Tribulation for the Faithful: The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan throughout the Christian era. The narrative alternates between disturbing trials and encouragement.
19	Seven Vials: Tribulation of the Wicked: Evil is judged, and Jesus' kingdom begins.
20	The faithful receive their reward in heaven.
21-22	The wicked receive their reward on earth. Earth renewed, and God chose habitation among His people.

Figure 1: The Overarching Vision of Revelation



Numerous passages in Revelation support the notion that the book consists of a singular vision:

- The Greek word *apokalupsis* in Revelation 1:1 (Strong's 602: ἀποκάλυψις, N-NFS) suggests a single, unified revelation from Jesus, unlike its other uses in the New Testament, where the word refers to more discrete or partial revelations. The text emphasizes that it is the *apokalupsis* of Jesus Christ—he does the act of revealing. Thus, the word is in the nominative case. In the remaining 17 instances where the word appears in the New Testament, it is utilized in distinct contexts and cases: accusative in Luke 2:32, Romans 5:19, 16:25, 1 Corinthians 1:7, 14:26, 2 Corinthians 12:1, Galatians 2:2, Ephesians 3:3; or dative in 1 Corinthians 14:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 4:13; or genitive in Romans 2:5; 2 Corinthians 12:7, Galatians 1:12, Ephesians 1:17.
- In Revelation 1:9-10, John states that he received the vision on a Sabbath day.<sup>9</sup> He does not say, 'I began to see things on the day of the Lord.' He notes the repeated appearance of "another angel" a remarkable ten times, highlighting strong coherence and continuity across the unfolding scenes (Rev 7:2; 8:3; 14:6, 8, 9, 15, 17, 18; 18:1). This repetition not only underscores a seamless transition between scenes but also reinforces the idea that these revelations are interconnected, instead of separate apparitions. Furthermore, in Chapter 12, he provides an overview of future events that will affect the Christian Church. Before recounting in chapter 13 how the conflict will escalate, he notes that he is still standing on the beach (cf. Rev

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<sup>9</sup> White, AA 581.4 [↗](#). Seventh-day Adventists believe that there are only two days of the Lord in the Bible: 1) the weekly Sabbath day (e.g., Lev 23:38; Ezek 20:12,20); or 2) Judgement Day – for Israel or Judah, or the second coming of Jesus (e.g., Isa 13:6-13; 2 Pet 3:10).

10:5, 8 with Rev 13:1, KJV<sup>10</sup>). Revelation mentions the sea fifty-two times, and eleven references specifically indicate that John stands on the beach of Patmos, gazing out at the water and the sky above it (see, Rev 8:8-9; 10:1-2, 3, 8; 13:1; 16:3; and 18:21). By doing so, John crafts a powerful and immersive vision that draws readers into the unfolding drama of divine revelation.

- Once the vision defines a symbol, the interpretation thereof should not be altered.

This principle also underscores the necessity of enhancing the audience's comprehension through close consideration of the prophetic, historical, and cultural contexts of the text:

1. Revelation 2:22 identifies the woman in Revelation 17:1-6 as Jezebel, symbolized during the Thyatira period. Jezebel was a prophetess of Baal who introduced widespread apostasy in Israel (1 Ki 19). In Revelation 2:20-23, Jesus rebukes the Medieval Church for its negligence in the face of the inroads of apostasy, warning that the Church will suffer, and her children will be confused and dispersed. This passage corresponds with Revelation 17:15-18. During the Thyatira period, the influence of the Roman Church on the Holy Roman Empire (800-1806 AD)<sup>11</sup> was sickened by the Reformation denouncing most of her teachings and the subsequent confiscation of her wealth, especially during the

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<sup>10</sup> "Καὶ ἐστάθη ἐπὶ". The Byzantine text, based on the Textus Receptus, renders ἐστάθη (the first person aorist passive indicative of ἵστημι) instead of ἐστάθη, the third person. The KJV (rightfully) numbers this phrase as part of Revelation 13:1. See Revelation 12 and 13 in Greek at <https://www.swrktec.org/>. Retrieved October 20, 2024.

<sup>11</sup> There was a strong bond between the European political entities and the Roman Catholic Church, perfectly fulfilling the prophecy's claim of 'sitting on many waters' (Rev 17:1, 15). The Church was not just a religious institution but a central force that profoundly influenced nearly every aspect of daily life within the Holy Roman Empire. This vast Church-State system had its roots in the Carolingian Empire in France, beginning in 751 with Pepin and gradually expanding its influence until its peak years 800-814 as a political union of states and Dutchies in Germany, Italy, Bohemia, Burgundy, Austria, France, Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Slovakia, Croatia, Poland, Denmark, Hungary, Monaco, and San Marino.

reign of King Henry VIII in England (1509-1547), the secularization period of France (1789-1799), and land reforms in Spain (1836).

2. In Revelation 2:26-27, Jesus clearly states that the chastising iron rod or staff is in the hands of the faithful. This interpretation must also apply to Revelation 12:5, as both passages emphasize Christ's triumph and the faithful's triumph. Maintaining this consistency reinforces the coherence and continuity of symbolism in Revelation 12:5-6. Doing this ensures that the symbol of the iron rod consistently signifies Christ's authority and triumph through the faithfulness of his people.
3. Right at the beginning of the vision, Jesus explicitly explains the mystery of the stars (Rev 1:16, 20). They denote leadership. This explanation applies whenever stars appear in an apparent symbolic setting, as in Revelation 2:1 and 3:1, where Jesus explains the leaders of the church periods (Rev 1:20). Revelation 8:10-11: History shows that Attila, leader of the Huns, is referenced. Revelation 8:12: History reveals the gradual dismantling of the Roman government structure of the Western Empire during the military coup of Odoacer and the establishment of the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy (476-553). The sun symbolizes the emperor, the moon is the consulate, and the stars represent the senate. Revelation 9:1: History shows Mohammed, the leader of the Saracens. Revelation 12:1: The undisputed interpretation is the twelve apostles. Revelation 12:4: The abolishment of the kingship in Judah, corresponding with Daniel 8:10. However, the star symbol does not apply to Revelation 6:13, relating to

Matthew 24:29, whose literal fulfillment is accepted to have happened on November 13, 1833.<sup>12</sup>

4. In Revelation 12:3, the imagery of the great red dragon with seven crowned heads and ten horns parallels the description of the formidable beast found in Daniel 7:7-8, 19-21, and 23-25. The symbolism of seven heads and ten crowned horns is reiterated in Revelation 13:1, 17:3, and 12, underscoring their similarity. Considering that the prophetic context pertains to the fourth world power, it is defensible to conclude that these passages refer to the same political authority.

The theoretical concept of Revelation as a singular vision is crucial for understanding how the details of the fourth beast in Daniel 7 and 8 help identify the great red dragon in Revelation 12 and the earth beast in Revelation 13. It also enriches the audience's understanding of the scarlet beast in Revelation 17.

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<sup>12</sup> Historically referred to as "The night the stars fell." [↗](#)

## Revelation's Timeframe

The research concludes that the vision marks its beginning and duration, establishing limitations to time and space, the chronology of secular history, and the interpretation of symbols. A timeframe of Revelation, commencing at Pentecost in the year 34 and culminating when all will have been accomplished, bears significance. Considering these boundaries also helps to understand the prophetic timeline and Revelation 17.

Acknowledging the timeframe within which the vision of Revelation is established is imperative. In Revelation, a messenger angel is dispatched to John to assure him that the glorious living Jesus is with his Church every step of the way (Rev 1:12–18) and that the time has come to reveal the final phase unto completion of the plan of God (Rev 1:1,19 and Rev 4:1). The angel's role in both Daniel's and John's visions establishes the continuity of the prophetic narrative of what started in the Book of Daniel to be completed in Revelation. A more literal translation of the Greek in these verses reads:

"[...] to show his servants what shortly must be completed [...]. Write now what you see, and what will come, and what is about to be (must be) completed after these (things). [...] come here, and I will show you what is bound to be completed with this" (Rev 1:1,19; 4:1).<sup>13</sup>

With this phrasing, John's attention is immediately drawn to the urgency of what can be understood, what is happening, and what is to come until all earthly things are fulfilled. With this, the Revelation of Jesus is defined within a timeframe that progresses<sup>14</sup> from John's time to the end of the Christian Era, emphasizing its message and the role of interpreters in

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<sup>13</sup> 1:1 [...] δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ, ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου [...]: δεῖ: verb, third-person singular, present indicative active of δέω: to bind (it must). γενέσθαι: verb, present middle (deponent) infinitive of γίνομαι: to be created, begotten, born; to arise, take place, come to pass; to complete, to finish. 1:19 γράψον οὖν ἃ εἶδες καὶ ἃ εἰσὶν καὶ ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα: μέλλει: verb, third-person singular, present indicative active of μέλλω: to be about to be, must; there is no escape. 4:1 [...] ἀνάβα ὧδε καὶ δείξω σοι ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα [...]: μετὰ: preposition - with. ταῦτα: demonstrative pronoun, accusative masculine singular of οὗτος, αὗτη, τοῦτο: that, this - these (things). Translated from the Revelation Greek at <https://www.swrktec.org/>. Retrieved October 20, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> In Revelation, time does not regress; it deals with the future actions of the fourth world power.

understanding. Framing time prophecies is a familiar aspect of the biblical narrative, as seen in the parables of Jesus, wherein the interpretation of the metaphors remains within a designated timeframe. For example, in Matthew 21:33-41, the Christian era stretches from the Ascension to the Second Coming. In Old Testament prophecies, the beginning and the end are often unambiguously established; for example, in Daniel 2, silver follows gold, sequenced by brass and iron; the Kingdom of Jesus follows the iron mixed with clay. The fulfillment of the prophecy of the Messiah would follow a sequence of events (Dan 9:25-27). In 2 Kings 20:19, Hezekiah realizes that the prediction about Judah's exile would not affect him.

Disregarding the designated timeframe leads to misinterpretations: If the assertion is valid that Revelation 12:1-5 refers to the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, the interpretation extends the symbolism to literalism, creating an out-of-context flashback. It is implausible that Mary, the mother of Jesus, could have been wearing a garland of 12 stars.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, some suggest that the woman is the Jewish congregation anticipating their Messiah.<sup>16</sup> However, it is written that the Jewish people did not (John 1:11). The symbols of the glowing sun and the moon's location at her feet, which play a significant role in the interpretation, are also influenced when Revelation 12:1-5 refers to baby Christ. Consistency would also require Revelation 12:6 and 13 to refer to the Jewish congregation fleeing into the wilderness for 1,260 years, which would be strange logic. However, if Revelation 12:5 pertains to the inception of the Infant Christian Church, the interpretation aligns perfectly with the prophetic and historical context. Moreover, two Old Testament passages confirm this assertion, specifically Exodus 4:22 and Hosea 11:1-3, in which Israel is described as God's son, a

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<sup>15</sup> More about the star symbol on pp. 57-58.

<sup>16</sup> For example, Stefanovic (2002), pp. 380-81.



newborn male. According to the text, God cleansed Ephraim of his birth blood and instructed him to follow his instructions. He raised and nurtured him in the wilderness to grow into a congregation.<sup>17</sup> The birth of that child occurred on the day of the Exodus. In the New Testament, similar imagery is found. Paul equates believers in the Corinthian church with infants (1 Cor 3:12). Ellen White's writings contain at least six unique references to the Ephesus church (Rev 2:1) as 'the infant church.'<sup>18</sup> These references, such as 'the Jews were trying to destroy the infant church' and 'the times were filled with peril for the infant church,' highlight the precarious nature of the early church's existence. If the vision begins with the inception of the Christian Church in Acts 2, then Revelation 12 depicts an infant growing into adulthood, the new congregation and bride of God. According to Ezekiel 6:8-14, she was not adorned with jewelry but with the sun of the Gospel and educated by the moon of the Torah. Thus, Revelation 12's symbolism prefigures the imagery of the following chapters.

Researchers of Revelation must adhere to this consistency and critical thinking. Other features in the metaphor provide further insight into the Timeframe concept. In the Bible, feet represent standing and walking in pursuit of knowledge and understanding (for example, 1 Sam 2:9; Ps 8:7; 73:2; 119:59; Isa 52:7) and submission to authority (for example, Ps 47:4; 99:5; Matt 28:9; Mark 5:22). The woman standing on the moon symbolizes the church's walk of faith and understanding, rooted and educated in, and founded upon the teachings and prophecies of the Old Testament, a part of Scripture that is as valid today as in the days of the Prophets. That the woman is crowned by the radiant sun of the Gospel of the New Testament signifies the glorious fulfillment of the Old Testament shadows about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The wreath of twelve stars around her head, the center of her cognitive abilities,

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<sup>17</sup> The first mention of God's people as a congregation is in Exodus 12:3.

<sup>18</sup> See White in: AA 105.1 [↗](#); 3SP 323.3 [↗](#); ST Jan 29, 1885, par 8 [↗](#); WM 67.1 [↗](#); DA 177.1 [↗](#).

symbolizes the leadership of the twelve apostles – the first appointed leaders of the newborn Christian Church. This understanding is further strengthened by the realization that Judaism was as involved in the fierce controversy of the ages as Christianity is today. Both were, upon delivery, educated in the principles of God – the one for 40 years in the literal wilderness, while the other needed 1,260 years to cultivate their understanding of God's plan in a mythical wilderness, hiding near God's throne. Both were haunted by Satan's agencies, one by Pharaoh's army and the other by the mighty arms of pagan and papal Rome, represented by the dragon and the beast. Understanding these biblical contexts is crucial for comprehending the challenges faced by early Christianity, the impact of the controversy between Christ and Satan on God's people throughout the ages, and the ultimate resolution of this controversy. Thus, the theoretical idea of the Timeframe of Revelation supports the audience's understanding that Revelation 12-17 discloses the various aspects of the end-time Great Controversy. The events depicted in Revelation 12 and 15-16 are primarily in the past, Revelation 14 is in the present, and Revelation 13 and 17 depict events in the past and the future. In Chapter 18, the concluding events of the controversy are revealed, where final decisions are made, fate is sealed, and the work of redemption is ended. Revelation 19-22 wrap up the vision's Final Events – the glorious Hope of the Second Coming, the Heavenly Homecoming Celebration, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Heavenly Sukkot, the Eradication of Evil, the Purification of Planet Earth, the Emergence of a New Creation, and ultimately, Earth privileged with God's forever Emmanuel presence in the New Jerusalem.

## Revelation's Historical Context

The prophecies in Daniel 2, 7, and 8 provide crucial insights into the historical context of the Book of Revelation. From a prophetic standpoint, the Roman Empire represents the "fourth kingdom" prophesied to endure until the Second Coming of Jesus. In 63 BC, the pagan Roman Empire began its encroachment on Judea. Its sixth administrative phase, the imperial phase, started in 27 BC under Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus (Octavian) and lasted until 476 under Romulus Augustulus. These phases, each with unique characteristics and implications, provide a fascinating picture of the Empire's evolution. The seventh phase was the Exarchy, with its seat in Ravenna, Italy. This phase functioned under the authority of the Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople 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 historical context of Revelation.<sup>19</sup>

What is to be understood as unconditional time prophecies in Daniel and Revelation is often debated.<sup>20</sup> However, it is undisputed that the Bible refers to unconditional prophecies related to the Plan of Salvation. That is the nature of time prophecies: they are foresight, affirmed by hindsight – reading tomorrow's newspaper yesterday (Deut 18:21-22, Isa 45:21, and Jer 28:9).<sup>21</sup> For such prophecies, one cannot present evidence of fulfilment if history has not yet happened. On the other hand, no one is excused from neglecting history that has occurred. Therefore, interpreters must approach prophecy with the same rigor and discipline as historians. This research adopts a historicist perspective,<sup>22</sup> as Ellen White (co-founder of the SDA Church) and early Seventh-day Adventist expositors adhered to when explaining the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. Ellen White's writings further emphasize the need for a studious approach. Concerning Revelation, she wrote in 1897,

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<sup>19</sup> For a more concise review of the history of Roman Power in the context of the period of the fourth beast of Daniel, see Appendix IV, pp. 123-61.

<sup>20</sup> The prophecy about Nineveh's destruction was conditional; Jonah's message is referred to as a "cry out and an invitation" and not a prophecy (Jonah 1:2). In contrast, the prophecy about the 70 years in exile in 2 Cron 36:21 was "to fulfill, or complete" a condition, and the 70 weeks of the Messiah in Daniel 9:24, were "determined". Often, the context determines which one applies. A rule is that when the prophecy pertains to the Plan of Salvation, its fulfilment is unconditionally determined in the future.

<sup>21</sup> A Bible prophet possesses hindsight, insight, and foresight. Moses had hindsight about Genesis. Typically, prophecy pertains to elucidating current events or providing insight or foresight regarding future events. In both books, Daniel and Revelation, it is explicitly stated that the visions pertain to the future. When flashbacks are used (for example, in Revelation 5:6 and Revelation 12:11), they serve as reminders to enhance comprehension of the upcoming developments.

<sup>22</sup> See DARCOM, Volume 6, pp. 148-49.

In this book are depicted scenes that are now in the past, and some of eternal interest that are taking place around us; other of its prophecies will not receive their complete fulfilment until the close of time, when the last great conflict between the powers of darkness and the Prince of heaven will take place.<sup>23</sup>

In 1911, she added,

Let none think, because they cannot explain the meaning of every symbol in the Revelation, that it is useless for them to search this book in an effort to know the meaning of the truth it contains. The One who revealed these mysteries to John will give to the diligent searcher for truth a foretaste of heavenly things. Those whose hearts are open to the reception of truth will be enabled to understand its teachings and will be granted the blessing promised to those who "hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." In the Revelation, all the books of the Bible meet and end. Here is the complement of the book of Daniel. One is a prophecy; the other a revelation. The book that was sealed is not Revelation, but that portion of the prophecy of Daniel relating to the last days. The angel commanded, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end" (Dan 12:4).<sup>24</sup>

Understanding the historical context thoroughly is essential for a sound interpretation of the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. At the same time, the interpreter must remain prepared to adapt if historical records surface that contradict the previous stance. Ignoring the historical context in favor of mystical interpretations of symbols is not acceptable. Jesus assured that the visions of Daniel would be understood, and the biblical standpoint is that the

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<sup>23</sup> White in RH, August 31, 1897, par 5 [↗](#).

<sup>24</sup> White (1911), AA 584.2-585.1 [↗](#).

outcome of prophecy is tested by documented secular history. Therefore, the chronicles of Rome should be examined for clues about Revelation's imagery, as Rome represents the fourth and final power in apocalyptic prophecy. Indeed, numerous clues can be found when searched diligently. Jesus encouraged readers to see, hear, understand, and heed the words of Revelation's prophecy (Rev 1:3). They shine in dark places (2 Pet 1:19).

**Decline of the Western Roman Empire.** The unified Roman Empire broke into two in 395, an eastern and western part governed by separate emperors.<sup>25</sup> The Western emperor, Theodosius I, relocated to the natural stronghold of Ravenna in 402, leaving Rome under the control of aristocrats and the growing influence of the Roman Church. Rome, known as the Eternal City and strategically important, was coveted by various Germanic tribes, with every warlord aspiring to make it the capital of their kingdom. The Huns devastated Gaul (modern-day Spain) in 451 with heavy taxation, creating significant instability within the Western Empire. Following this, the Vandals plundered Rome for two weeks in 455.<sup>26</sup> In 476, Odoacer, a Germanic officer from the *foederati* mercenaries serving in the Roman army, led a revolt that resulted in the abdication of the Western Empire's last emperor, Romulus Augustus. Odoacer declared that a single emperor was sufficient for the Roman Empire. In 488, Theoderic the Great of the Ostrogoths invaded Italy, establishing a separate Ostrogothic Kingdom from 493 to 526, with its capital in Ravenna. Theodoric recognized the Byzantine Emperor as the ruler over the remaining Western territories. In 533, Byzantine Emperor Justinian initiated the Gothic Wars to reclaim Italy from the Ostrogoths. By 538, General Belisarius recaptured Italy. General Narses decisively defeated the Ostrogoths in the Battle of Mons Lactarius in 553, re-establishing Byzantine control over Italy. In 584, the Byzantine

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<sup>25</sup> Bradley (1888), p .84.

<sup>26</sup> Ermatinger (2004), pp. xxx, xxxi, 44-48.

Empire established the Exarchate in Ravenna to oversee its interests in the Western territories.<sup>27</sup> Until 751, the Byzantine Empire struggled to maintain its political interests in the Western Roman Empire through this governmental structure. It was a dukedom and represented the seventh and final phase of the pagan Western Roman Empire. Scripture indicates that this phase would remain insignificant, testifying that it was "bound to remain little (*ὀλίγος*)."<sup>28</sup>

**From Pagan Empire to Papal Monarchy.** From the time Theodosius I relocated the capital to Ravenna, the political aspirations of the bishops of Rome aimed at increasing their temporal power, culminating in the formalization of the eighth phase of Roman authority in 756.<sup>29</sup> Historians<sup>30</sup> agree that the Roman power underwent seven stages of ruling government and that its decline was contributed by ten separate tribal nations surging into its western territories,<sup>31</sup> as prophesied in Daniel 7:24: "And the ten horns **out of this kingdom *are* ten kings *that shall arise***: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings" (emphasis applied). This led to its seventh and final pagan phase transitioning into a unique, different hegemony than the previous ones – that of the pontiffs of Rome, thus providing a political structure for the Roman Church, symbolized by the woman on the scarlet beast in Revelation 17. Its uniqueness was not merely due to its State–Church union; the Roman state was always intertwined with Roman religion, so this

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<sup>27</sup> Baumgartner (2003), p. 10. The Exarch did not assume the title of king or emperor but was nevertheless the administrative representative of the Byzantine emperor in the Western Empire region.

<sup>28</sup> In Revelation 17:10, the Greek word *ὀλίγος* can be an Adjective or an Adverb. Because the nouns 'time' or 'space' are not suggested in the original text, the grammatical construction suggests an adverb, meaning 'little, puny, insignificant, weak.' Historically, this would be a perfect description for this 7<sup>th</sup> stage.

<sup>29</sup> Mgr. L. Duchesne, p. 21-48. Duchesne dates the beginning of the Pope's temporal power to 754. Most other historians acknowledge 756 as the formalization date of the Donation of Pepin (e.g., Noble (1984). While it is true that in 754 the king of the Lombards was ordered to return the territories of the bishops of Rome, this was implemented in 756.

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix IV, pp. 123-61.

<sup>31</sup> Jones (1898), pp. 591-696. [↗](#)

was not a new development. Roman rulers had long before claimed the authority to ensure that the populace adhered to "the correct religion"—first by deifying the emperor and later by recognizing Christ as God. Historical records indicate that at the Council of Nicaea in 325,<sup>32</sup> presided over by Emperor Constantine the Great, a ban was imposed on Arianism in favor of Nicene Christianity. Successive emperors codified Christianity in civil law. In 380, Emperor Theodosius issued the Edict of Thessalonica, declaring Nicene Christianity the sole authorized religion in the Roman Empire.<sup>33</sup> Later, in 533, Byzantine Emperor Justinian took a further step by proclaiming the bishop of Rome the head of the Christian Church through his codification of Catholicism in Roman civil law in the *Codex Justinianus*.<sup>34</sup> The authoritative ecclesiastical position of the bishop of Rome was solidified in 538 when the third horn (the Ostrogoths) was ousted from Rome with the assistance of Byzantine General Belisarius, fulfilling the prophecy in Daniel 7:24. Thus, the Roman dragon granted the composite beast from the sea its seat (in Rome) and "great authority" over the Christian Church, as prophesied in Revelation 13:2. However, until 752, popes required direct approval for their election and consecration from the Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople or indirectly through his representative, the Exarch in Ravenna. The first thus appointed pope was Vigilius (537-537), and the last was Zachary (741-752). Therefore, until 752, the pontiffs were effectively subjects of the Byzantine emperors.<sup>35</sup> The arrangement was mutually beneficial: emperors complied with the bishops' religious demands to secure their souls' salvation; in return, they

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<sup>32</sup> The Council of Nicaea (325) debated the nature of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. Arians believe that Christ is a created being and not equal to the Father and deny the doctrine of the Trinity (modern-day Arians are Jehovah's Witnesses). Catholicism debates that Christ is fully divine, co-eternal, and consubstantial with the Father and defines the Trinity as one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are co-equal and co-eternal.

<sup>33</sup> McGinn, Bernard J., et al., "Christianity." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 11, 2025. [↗](#) Accessed January 12, 2025.

<sup>34</sup> The *Codex Justinianus* (533) was the first comprehensive Roman Civil Code. In addition to secular civil laws, it codified the Catholic Doctrine for Roman Citizens. [↗](#)

<sup>35</sup> Baumgartner (2003), p. 10.

provided military and civil protection to the pontiffs. However, in 751, the Byzantine Emperor lost control over Italy when the Lombards conquered the Exarchate of Ravenna. Byzantium could not assist in protecting Italy against the Lombardian attacks because its troops were engaged in battles in the East. The Exarchate ceased to exist in 752. Due to the Exarchate's limited power against the Lombards and Ostrogoths, Pope Stephen II sought political protection from the Franks. In 754, the Frankish King Pepin agreed to protect Rome and the papal territories from Lombardian invasions.<sup>36</sup> Finding a more favorable ally in the Franks, the popes distanced themselves from the Byzantine Empire. In 756, following the defeat of the Lombards with Pepin's help, the Frankish king demanded that the keys to cities and territories in central Italy, which had submitted to papal authority, be handed over to Pope Stephen II.<sup>37</sup> This transfer of political control is historically marked as the moment when the Roman Church became a state—a Pontifical Monarchy with governance over a substantial territory in Italy, its capital in Rome. All three criteria for statehood were met: a ruler as the head of government, an official title, and a defined territory (cf. fourth Commandment about the Heavenly Sovereign in Exodus 20:8-11).

According to Adventist theologians,<sup>38</sup> the political power of the Roman Church began in 538 when the Justinian army subdued the Ostrogoths, and Emperor Justinian handed over the keys of Rome to the pope.<sup>39</sup> However, 538 ended a conflict between the Bishops of Rome and the Ostrogoths concerning Catholicism's authority over Arianism rather than acquiring political power. Actual political authority remained with the Byzantine Emperor until 751.

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<sup>36</sup> Browning (1992), pp. 57-58.

<sup>37</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Donation of Pippin". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 16, 2005, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Donation-of-Pippin>. Accessed January 15, 2025.

<sup>38</sup> Maxwell, in DARCOM, Vol 7, pp. 76-77, 121-22; cf. White, GC, pp. 266.3 [↗](#); 439.2 [↗](#); Ahn in IJHSS, Vol 7, no. 1, 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Pepin established that the keys of Rome and the recaptured Papal cities were handed over to the Pontiff. In 538, the Justinian Civil Code, codifying the position of the Bishop of Rome, came into effect. See Noble (1984), p. 92.



The text in Daniel 7 portrays the little horn as blasphemous. Blasphemy has religious connotations. The little horn comes up between the ten as a spiritual power having authority in doctrinal matters. History confirms that. It was not before 756 that the popes established their temporal authority, and Pope Stephen II, with the aid of Pepin, became an independent monarch in Rome, governing a large territory in Italy. Revelation 13:3 suggests that one of the heads of the Roman beast, meaning one of its political phases, consistent with Daniel 7:6 for Greece, would be fatally wounded but later revived. According to the prophecy, this could only occur *after* the emergence of the eleventh, little horn from within the territory of ten and *after* the uprooting of three horns (Dan 7:7-8), thus calculating to the sum of eight. Therefore, the prophecy posits the emergence of the eleventh horn during the dismantling of the Western Empire, a period that history records from 395 to 752. Logic dictates that the wounding of one of its heads must have occurred after the establishment of the little horn. This is historically recorded to have happened in 1798. Furthermore, the dragon or beast with the seven heads symbolizes Rome in its imperial and Pontifical stages. It is the Roman power in its Pontifical stage that Christ's Second Coming demolishes. It is crucial to note that the ecclesiastical power of the Roman Church was formally recognized in 538 and that only its political power was withdrawn in 1798. Between 533 and 756, the bishops of Rome's ecclesiastical power grew more assertive while their doctrines dominated the Christian Church. Symbolically, the Roman Church is a woman, not a beast - a controlling political authority. While the prevalent Adventist interpretation correctly states that the political power of the beast was wounded in 1798, history also confirms that the 1,260-year period of oppression of the saints (from 538 to 1798) pertained to the ecclesiastical power represented by the woman. The text in Daniel 7:25 alludes to ecclesiastical power: speak against the Most High – blasphemy; oppress the saints, change times and laws – the second, fourth, and tenth

commandments; the saints were given in his hands. Therefore, historically and prophetically, the period of Church–State (religio-political) unification, characterized by the beast that "was" (Revelation 17:8 and 11) *and* the woman seated on it, spans from 756 to 1798. From 1798 to 1929, the Pontifical Monarchy of Rome was without territory and unable to exert political authority. This "is not" phase is symbolized in the vision as the beast in the abyss, the realms of death. Some scholars argue that this entity pertains to Satan<sup>40</sup> or demonic locusts in Revelation 9:1.<sup>41</sup> However, such interpretations are contradictory. Revelation 17:11 unambiguously states that the entity that was not is **the eighth king coming from the seven**, as in, from the exact origin as the seven, i.e., the Roman power. It is rather strange to assert that Satan is referred to as the eighth king from Rome. The locusts in Revelation 9:1-5 pertain to the insurrections of the Persians and the Muslims in the Eastern parts of the Empire, under the symbolism of the fifth and sixth trumpet. The fulfilment of that scene is uncontrovertibly the rise and decline of the Ottoman kingdom.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, it begs the question, when was Satan, when was he not, and when, coming from the realms of death, to be again still until the end, while the scarlet-colored beast is the Roman power that is to be destroyed by the Second Coming? This assertion also contradicts the consistency that the symbol of heads on a specified beast is integral to the portrayed entity (see Dan 7:6 for Greece).

The Lateran Treaty of 1929 fully rehabilitated the Vatican monarchy, restoring its political power and acknowledging the territory of Vatican City, spanning 0.44 hectares, as an independent nation. This restoration marks the beginning of the "yet is" phase. The unique union of the Church and the State of the Roman Church was an invention of the former Roman Empire. Roman power provided the "throne"—a seat in Rome—and "great

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<sup>40</sup> Müller (2007), JAAS 10.1, p. 50

<sup>41</sup> Stefanovic (2002), p. 510

<sup>42</sup> See more details in Appendices II, pp. 111-17, and Appendix IV, pp. 123-61.

authority." Revelation 17:3-6 hints at its religious authority, while Revelation 13:2-4, 17:8, and 11 refer to gaining and re-establishing its political power. This final phase of the fourth world power will continue until the end, culminating in its downfall—"goeth into perdition."

In conclusion, understanding Revelation's historical context requires thorough research due to the vast amount of recorded information. No kingdom has had its history as extensively documented as the Roman Empire. The rise, decline, and fall of both the Western and Byzantine Empires and the rise of the ecclesiastical and temporal power of the Papal Monarchy are well chronicled and lend credibility to the prophecy. All the elements of symbolism make sense—one beast symbolizes one political power, with red or scarlet as its primary colors. The seven heads represent its seven governmental phases, while the ten horns, whether crowned or not, indicate distinctive parts of its declining Western region. It was the insurgency of the Barbarian tribes in the Western territories that weakened Imperial Rome. An eleventh horn emerged with cunning strategies from within this part of the Empire.<sup>43</sup> At that time, the insurrections in the East were not in view. While the seventh head was powerless to resist, the eighth was gaining strength (Revelation 17:10-11). A thousand years earlier, Daniel detailed this sequence of events: an eleventh horn would arise from among the ten, signifying that its emergence would occur *after* the establishment of the ten (Dan 7:20, 24). This new power was formally established *after* the removal of three who refused to submit to its ecclesiastical authority, as "the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority" (Rev 13:2). At the height of its strength, it culminated in the eighth Roman king (Rev 17:12),<sup>44</sup> marked by Pope Stephen II's assumption of sovereign rule over the former imperial territories in central Italy in 756. Pope Stephen broke ties with the

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<sup>43</sup> KJV: understanding dark sentences; ISV: proficient at deception; NKJ: understanding sinister schemes.

<sup>44</sup> The remaining eight were the Alemanni, Franks, Burgundians, Visigoths, Suevi, Anglo-Saxons, Lombards, and Pontifical Monarchy. See summary in Table 2 on page 44.

Byzantine Empire, which had previously claimed the right to approve the selection and consecration of popes through its Exarch in Ravenna.<sup>45</sup> He took control of the newly established Papal States, which included the Exarchate of Ravenna, the Duchy of Rome, and other territories previously under Lombardian and Byzantine control. He extended Papal influence over Europe, beginning with the Frankish Kingdom and later involving the Holy Roman Empire. Jesus instructed John to record what he could not envision, how the political authority of the beast would be severely wounded yet destined to revive (2 Thess 2:3-4; Rev 13:3; 17:8 and 11). The first deadly wound occurred in 1798 when Napoleon's forces annexed Rome to his French Republic; this wound was exacerbated by the Italian Republic in 1848 and then again by the Italian Monarchy in 1870. As a result, the pope lost all his territories in Italy, political authority, and title as Monarch, declaring himself a prisoner in his Vatican palace.<sup>46</sup> Many believed at the time that the Pontiff in Rome would never regain temporal power; the beast had descended into the abyss, symbolizing death.<sup>47</sup> However, in 1929, the Lateran Treaties restored the territory of Vatican City to the Papal Monarchy, establishing Vatican City State as the World's smallest independent nation with its autocratic leader, the Pope. Since then, papal political influence has grown stronger and will remain until the

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<sup>45</sup> Some historians do not count Pope Stephen II because he died three days after his election. He was the first Pope whose election was not confirmed by the Byzantine authorities due to his untimely death. His successor, Stephen III or, to some, Stephen II, did not seek consecration from the Greek authorities, breaking with the custom that the Pope was a subordinate to the Empire. Pope Zachary (741-752) was the last pope consecrated by the Emperor. After 752, the papal candidacy was for the Roman rich who could pay for the office. See De Cormanin, (1847), pp. 185–94.

<sup>46</sup> When the Vatican opened its archives for academic research in 1979, details about the Papacy's struggle for temporal power surfaced unbeknownst to interpreters of Revelation. Kertzer's book, *"Prisoner of the Vatican,"* is a valuable source of information.

<sup>47</sup> Its political power was taken away and was thought never to be restored. Revelation 9:11 – ἄβυσσος. Bible Hub states: "Derived from the Greek prefix 'a', meaning 'without' and 'buthos', meaning 'depth', it means 'without depth' or 'bottomless.'" The abyss, unfathomable depth, a predominantly Jewish conception, the home of the dead and evil spirits. The Hebrew equivalent often associated with the concept of the abyss is תְּהוֹם (*tehom*), which refers to the deep or the primeval ocean (e.g., Genesis 1:2). In ancient Greek cosmology, the concept of the abyss was associated with the primordial waters or the underworld. In Jewish apocalyptic literature, the abyss is depicted as a place of imprisonment for demonic forces. This imagery is carried into the New Testament, where the abyss is portrayed as a temporary place for evil until the final judgment." <https://biblehub.com/greek/12.htm>.

remnants of the fourth kingdom are destroyed, not through human warfare, but by the Rock cut out of the Mountain of the Lord in the North (cf. Dan 2:44, 45 and Isa 14:13). It is crucial to comprehend that unraveling Revelation's historical context requires employing the historicist hermeneutic method: our understanding of the text, by its various contexts, determines our interpretation, and history is brought in to confirm it. It is always a two-way street. See, for instance, the 70 weeks of Daniel. The text sets its beginning at the third decree by Artaxerxes I (in Ezra 7) to restore Jerusalem in 457 BC, *and* the historical crucifixion marks its end, reaffirming its beginning. Understanding historical events is essential for grasping biblical time prophecies, as prophecy is validated by secular history. Failing to recognize secular Roman history leads to a misunderstanding of Revelation 17. Table 2 summarizes the historical context and provides an overview of the developments discussed in this chapter and Appendix IV (pp. 123-61).

Table 2: The political powers of Daniel and Revelation and their historical periods

Kingdoms	Dan 2:7-12; 7:4-8, 19-21; 8:3-12	Historic periods
1 <sup>st</sup>	BABYLON – head/lion	605–539 BC
2 <sup>nd</sup>	MEDES & PERSIANS – breast/bear	539–331 BC
3 <sup>rd</sup>	GREECE – belly & thighs/leopard	331–168 BC
4 <sup>th</sup>	ROME – legs & feet/unidentifiable beast	168 BC–perdition
Heads	Governmental entities of ROME	
FIVE ARE FALLEN (Rev 17:10)		
1	Absolute Monarchy	753–509 BC
2	Republic of the Consuls	509–451 BC
3	Republic of the Decemvirs	451–449 BC
4	Republic of the Dictators	449–60 BC
5	Republic of the Triumvirs/Tribunes	60–27 BC
ONE IS (Rev 17:10)		
6	Unified and Divided Empire	27 BC–476 AD
ONE IS TO COME AND IS BOUND TO REMAIN SMALL (Rev 17:10) The Greek text does not suggest 'time' or 'space'. Translators inserted those words.		
7	Dukedom Exarchate of Ravenna	584–751
THE SCARLET BEAST IS THE 8 <sup>th</sup> KING AND IS FROM THE SEVEN (Rev 17:11). The Greek text does not say 'seventh' but 'seven,' meaning it follows from the previous ones, continuing the pagan Roman political power.		
8	Absolute Monarchy, Vatican City State	
	was	756-1798*
	was not	1798-1929
	is still	1929-perdition
Horns	Disintegration of Western Imperial Rome into eleven distinct entities	
1	Alemanni	260
2	Franks	358
3	Burgundians	406
4	Visigoths (Western Goths)	408
5	Vandals	409-534 †
6	Suevi	409
7	Anglo-Saxons	449
8	Heruli	494-508 †
9	Ostrogoths (Eastern Goths)	451-538/553 †
10	Lombards	546
11	Pontifical Monarchy's <i>rise</i> to temporal power	508-756
5 <sup>th</sup>	KINGDOM of JESUS – THE ROCK	Second Coming
Judgment of Earth Powers (perdition) and Beginning of Eternity		

\*Prevailing Adventist understanding is that the 'was' period was from 538-1798: 1,260 years, 42 months or 3.5 times of oppression (Dan 12:7; Rev 12:6, 14; 13:5) pertains to the Roman Church. However, the political power, the beast part, got wounded. Historical records indicate that the political power of the Papacy was not established until 756 (Kertzer, 2004; Noble, 1984; Duchesne, 1972). The text in Daniel 7:25 presents only religious usurpation and oppression. Therefore, the 1,260 years of religious oppression pertain to its Papal ecclesiastical power rather than its political power. Indeed, the Papal system exerted authority through its ecclesiastical claims over the souls of men. However, *the stealthy rise* to political hegemony commenced in 508 when Clovis pledged Frankish alliance to the Papacy. Frankish protection ended in 1798, precisely the 1,290 years of Daniel 12:11.

## IMPORTANT SYMBOLS

Revelation 12 is crucial for understanding chapters 13 through 18. It functions as a prelude and an outline, illustrating how the Great Controversy unfolds to its climactic end. Consistent use of symbols enables a coherent progression through this pivotal section of the Revelation, allowing for a clear understanding of the vision's uniqueness and continuity.

Jesus had a unique approach to education. He imparted knowledge through symbols, parables, and practical lessons that were often connected to the social context of Judah at the time (Mark 4:11-12). We recognize his style in Revelation.<sup>48</sup> As in the Gospels, the reader, hearer, and interpreter must first search for the meaning behind the symbol within the context of the time the vision was given and indicators found in the Bible. The following 16 symbols are imperative to consider when explaining Revelation 17 within the context of the Great Controversy Theme of chapters 12-18:<sup>49</sup>

Woman (12:1, 2, 13)

Dragons and Beasts (12:3-4, 7-17; 13:1, 3-5; 17:3, 8-12)

Great Red Dragon (12:3-4)

Great Dragon (12:7-17)

Scarlet Colored Beast (17:3, 8-12)

Heads and Mountains (12:3; 13:1; 17:3,9)

Horns and Crowns (12:4; 13:1; 17:3)

Tail and Stars (12:4)

Male Child (12:4)

Two-horned Earth Beast (13:11-17)

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<sup>48</sup> He that hath ears to hear, let him hear: Matt 11:15; 13:9, 16, 43; Mark 4:9,23; 7:16; Luke 8:8; 14:35; Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9.

<sup>49</sup> Although these chapters have more symbols, the listed ones are deemed the most significant for understanding Revelation 17.

Purple, Scarlet, and Jewelry (17:4)

Babylon, the Great (17:5)

Mother and Daughters (17:5)

Eight Kings (17:9-10)

Sea and Many Waters (17:15)

Armageddon (16:12-16)

### **Woman (12:1, 2, 13)**

In an abstract sense, the woman symbol refers to the religious system of the mature congregation of believers in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.<sup>50</sup> A virtuous woman symbolizes the remnant of God's people throughout history.<sup>51</sup> An impious woman or adulteress represents an unfaithful church system that pretends to worship God but worships the gods of their fabrications instead (See Jer 3:1-3, 6, and 8). The Bible never uses the woman symbol to denote idolatrous faith systems. It is always used in the context of faithfulness to God or rebellion against him.

### **Dragons and Beasts (12:3-4; 13:1-5; 17:3, 8-12)**

One cannot help but notice that the characteristics of the beasts in Revelation 13:1-5 and Revelation 17:3, 8, 9 match those of the great red dragon in Revelation 12:3. However, different Greek words are used: in Revelation 12:3-4: *drakōn* (δράκων); in Revelation 13:1 and 17:3: *theriōn* (θηρίον).<sup>52</sup> *Drakōn* is often associated with a mystical, unidentifiable, and unnatural creature, typically translated as a sea monster (Leviathan), a serpent (Latin: Draco),

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<sup>50</sup> In various symbolic passages, a city is often compared to a woman, such as Jerusalem (2 Kgs 19:21; Ps 9:15) or the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:2, 9, 10).

<sup>51</sup> Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were the covenant people of Israel (Exod 12:13, 23, 31; Ezek 16:8-14), faithful Jews before and after the Babylonian Exile, God's faithful people from Pentecost to the Second Coming, the glorious bride.

<sup>52</sup> In the LXX, the fourth beast (Dan 7:7) is described as *theriōn* (a beast), not as *drakōn*.



Satan, or a demon.<sup>53</sup> *Theriōn* is more generally used in a literal sense for a ferocious, wild animal or just a zoological creature (for example, Acts 28:5; Hebr 12:20; 1 Cor 15:32). In Daniel, the first three world powers are presented as animals known in the natural world; the fourth, however, is presented as a beast alien to the natural animal kingdom, a mystical dragon. In Revelation, both *drakōn* and *theriōn* symbols are used in different phases for the fourth world power—Rome. When the angel wanted to emphasize the pagan Roman power, it used the dragon symbol (Rev 12:3-4; 13:2, 4); when the ecclesiastical Roman phase is prominent, it uses the beast symbol (Rev 13:1-2; 17:3, 8). The dragon does not blaspheme; the beast does. Pagan powers do not blaspheme; they do not acknowledge the God of heaven. However, the beasts in Revelation 13:1-2, 5-8 and Revelation 17:3 blaspheme. In the Bible, blasphemy is defined as claiming Divine power to forgive sin (Matt 9:2-3; Mark 2:5-7) or claiming to be God (Mark 14:61-64). So, when the emphasis shifts to the religious claims of the final stage of the Roman power, following the fragmentation of the Western Roman Empire into ten kingdoms, the angel employs the symbol of the beast (Rev 13:1-2; 17:3, 8).

With the dragon symbol in Revelation 12:3-4, the angel focuses on first-century Imperial Rome, symbolized by its fiery, red, serpent-like Draco, a token of its invincible power, carried like an idol on a pole. This symbol, referred to by Jesus as the "abomination that makes desolate" (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Dan. 11:31), holds profound significance in understanding the texts. It represents the oppressive power of Rome that sought to destroy the early Christian community in its infancy. However, the dragon depicted in Revelation 12:7-17 is not the serpent Draco of Pagan Rome, but the Serpent Satan, who employs his agents to

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<sup>53</sup> The ancient Greeks classified a "dragon" as a serpent-type mystical creature. The Surinamese Bible translates it as "caiman." In the LXX, *δράκων* is also translated as "jackal" (Jer 9:11), "Leviathan" (Isa 27:1; Ps 74:13), or "sea monster" (Ezek 32:2; Job 7:12).

influence individuals and nations, to crush the infant and mature Church, and wage war against "the remnant of her seed".

Revelation 13:1-2 combines the characteristics of the beast from the sea with those of the previous world powers—Lion: Babylon, bear: Medo–Persia, Leopard: Greece, and Dragon: pagan Rome. Furthermore, the verse mentions that the power and authority of the beast originated from (Gr.: *ἐκ*) the pagan Roman Dragon (Rev 13:2 and 5).<sup>54, 55</sup> History affirms that in 533, Emperor Justinian codified the Roman Church as the state religion in his Civil Code, Codex Justinianus, and ordered that the bishop of Rome be head of the Christian Church. This position was formalized in 538 when the influence of the third striving Arian kingdom ('horn') over Italy, the Ostrogoths, was severed.<sup>56</sup>

### **Great Red Dragon (12:3-4)**

In Revelation 12, John sees a great red (Gr. *pyrros*)<sup>57</sup> dragon. Revelation 13 describes a similar image as a beast from the sea, and in Revelation 17, it is a scarlet-colored beast. In ancient Rome, red, scarlet, and purple held significant meanings. These colors were the distinguishing marks of the Roman aristocracy and remain emblems of the Roman Catholic Church. The characteristics of the red dragon in Revelation 12, the beast from the sea in Revelation 13, and the red beast in Revelation 17 correspond to the fourth non-identifiable beast of Daniel 7 and 8, the various transformations of pagan Rome, and its final transformation into the political arm of the Pontifical Monarchy of the Roman Church. The

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<sup>54</sup> LaRondelle in DARCOM-series, Vol 7, p. 171.

<sup>55</sup> The dragon and the eagle were the emblems of Imperial Rome, just as the eagle is in the coats of arms of Germany and the United States. It may be incidental, but the coats of arms of the popes Clement IV, Gregory XIII, and Paul V had a dragon on them.

<sup>56</sup> Smith, (1897), pp. 134.1-3 [↗](#)

<sup>57</sup> The great red dragon is *pyrros* colored. *Pyrros* means fiery or flame-like. Historical records mention that cohorts of the Roman cavalry carried a yellow or purple-red snake-like standard. See the artist's impression in Appendix I, p. 108.

fall of Byzantium in Ravenna saw the Popes of the end-stage Roman power assume full political power and separate themselves from the Greek Empire. The Holy See was created as the sovereign Monarchy of the Vatican in Rome, Italy. It is incontrovertible that the position of bishop of Rome as head of the Christian Church was established in 538. That year, the resistance of Arianism against Catholicism was "plucked up by the roots" (Dan 7:8) by the defeat of the Ostrogoths during the Justinian reconquest of Italy.<sup>58</sup> According to the Seventh-day Adventist understanding, that marks the beginning of the prophesied 1,260 years of persecution of the conscience of believers and punishment of heretics, being those who wish to worship according to their own beliefs. The 1,260 years ended with a deadly wound to the political authority of the Papal System in 1798. Captured Pope Pius VI died in exile in 1799. In 1848, the Constituent Assembly of the Italian Republic inflicted a second wound and declared that the political Papacy would never rise again.<sup>59</sup> However, with the help of France, it did, only to be inflicted a third and final wound in 1870 by King Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy. Each wound resulted in a smaller territory for the kingdom of the Papacy, leaving the Pope in 1870 with virtually only the grounds on which his Palazzo Apostolico stood. He declared himself a prisoner of the Vatican until 1929.<sup>60</sup> However, the Roman Church never lost its ecclesiastical authority during the process because the confiscators valued the

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<sup>58</sup> While the Ostrogoths remained until the Battle of Mons Lactarius in 553, it was destined to fade away.

<sup>59</sup> Kertzer (2004), p. 14: *"Article I of the Constitution of the new Roman Republic pronounced the pope's temporal power forever ended. The people were now free to say, think, write, and act as they liked; the Inquisition was no more. The Jews were freed from their ghettos, and even Protestants could worship freely. From then on, the government was to be elected by the people. The new Utopia did not last long before the French and Austrian troops marched in and restored the pope to power."*

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 55, 57, 82.

remission of their sins in the afterlife; they believed only the Pope could provide that for them.<sup>61, 62</sup>

### Great Dragon (Rev 12:7-17)

It is significant to see that in Revelation 12:7-17, the dragon symbol is also used for Satan. However, he is unambiguously identified as "the great dragon," without specific features such as heads, horns, and crowns. Within Adventism, several interpretations of the great red dragon symbol exist, which come to either Satan<sup>63</sup> or Satan behind the secular powers of the world.<sup>64</sup> Considering these perspectives stimulates critical thinking, enhancing a conclusive interpretation of Revelation 17. Ranko Stevanovic is one of the leading contemporary expositors of Revelation, whose insights carry weight.<sup>65</sup> He states the following on pages 381-82 of his book *Revelation of Jesus Christ*:

[...] 12:3-5 John now describes the second character in the drama—namely, the tormentor of the woman. He sees another sign in heaven; this sign is evidently related to the first one in Revelation 12:1. This sign is a great red dragon.

According to Revelation 12:9, **the dragon stands for Satan**, [...]. **Red is the color of oppression and bloodshed** ([...]. William G. Johnsson suggests that **the seven heads of the dragon "represent kingdoms through which Satan has worked to oppress God's people throughout the ages"** with the intent of preventing the coming of the offspring of the woman. [...] The ten horns of the sea beast are the ten horns of the fourth beast from Daniel, where they symbolize

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<sup>61</sup> Isabey (1998), p.16: In 1804, Napoleon insisted on being crowned by the next pope (Pope Pius VII). However, the length of the ceremony displeased him, and he crowned himself.

<sup>62</sup> Kertzer (2004), p. 60: King Victor Emmanuel of Italy was greatly distressed by being excommunicated by the Pope.

<sup>63</sup> William Shea in DARCOM-series, Vol 6, p. 349.

<sup>64</sup> Andersson (2006), p. 290.

<sup>65</sup> Stefanovic (2002), pp. 381–82.

the kingdoms that follow the breaking up of the Roman empire into ten parts (Dan. 7:7, 23–24; cf. Rev. 17:12). **The seven crowns on the heads of the dragon suggest Satan's false claim of full authority and power** in opposition to the true "King of kings and Lord of lords" who wears "many crowns" (cf. Rev. 19:12–16). The dragon primarily symbolizes Satan acting behind the power of pagan Rome, attempting to destroy Christ and, subsequently, his followers. [...] (Bolded emphasis applied).

This explanation presents at least four challenges:

1. The seven heads cannot represent any political power other than the prophetic entity on which they are projected. Prophecy and history contradict this. (cf. Dan 7:6). The heads, and the beast to which they belong, denote the same world power, the fourth, Rome, and not a seventh or an eighth, for it is prophesied that there would be only four.
2. It is odd to suggest that the seven crowns on the seven heads accommodate the fullness of Satan's claims on the premise that seven is the number of totality. Like the heads in Daniel 7:6, the crowns indicate authority. The heads constitute an integral component conveyed by symbolism. As the dragon represents Rome, the crowned heads represent components of Rome.
3. Satan is not to be confused with evil earthly powers. Even if he is the cause or instigator of all evil, it is imperative to identify the agents he employs. Pagan Rome persecuted the early Christians (Rev 12:4-5), followed by Papal Rome (Rev 12:6, 14). In the final conflict, Satan intends to utilize, once again, a global Church-State system to bring the world's inhabitants under his dominion. History tends to repeat itself.

4. Red, scarlet, and purple are important Roman characteristics. Not so for Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Greece. See paragraph Purple, Scarlet, and Jewelry on page 64.

Another contemporary explanation comes from Jonathan Paulien:<sup>66</sup>

[...] There are further and more detailed allusions to Daniel 7 throughout chapters 12 and 13 of Revelation. This is further evidence that the dragon represents more than Satan, it also represents earthly powers in the service of Satan. In Daniel 7 carnivorous beasts represent successive empires beginning with Babylon and ending with Rome. The ten horns of Daniel 7 follow the fourth beast in point of time, representing what would occur after Rome. [...] In Revelation (17:9-10), **pagan Rome would be one of the seven heads**. [...] Here are crowns on the heads but not on the horns. That situation is reversed in Revelation 13:1-2, which represents a later period in history than 12:1-5. The word for "crowns" here (*diadêmata*) represents the kind of crown worn by kings and rulers [...]. This underlines the point that **these various heads represent kingdoms or empires on earth that dragon (Satan) uses to forward his agenda**. [...] In this scene the crowns are worn on the dragon's heads, in contrast to the beast from the sea, which wears its crowns on the horns. [...] (Bolded emphasis applied).

Paulien's interpretation recognizes the historical context but takes a notably different stance. He does not acknowledge the seven heads as integral to the political entity. Instead, he views them as representing all the successive nations that have opposed God, of which Pagan Rome is one. This interpretation also conflicts with Daniel 7:6.

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<sup>66</sup> Paulien, The Facebook Commentary on Revelation: Revelation 12, p. 4 (PDF). [↗](#)

Early Adventists followed a more historicist hermeneutical approach to the texts: Ellen White wrote that the great red dragon, the leopard-like beast, and the beast with the lamb's horns will be engaged in trampling upon God's law and persecuting his people. They will remain until the Second Coming.<sup>67</sup> She assumed that the sea beast in Revelation 13:2, the scarlet beast in Revelation 17:3, and the beast resembling a lamb in Revelation 13:11 symbolize earthly powers, not Satan.<sup>68</sup> Uriah Smith explained that the red dragon in Revelation 12:1 and the scarlet beast in Revelation 17 symbolize pagan Rome.<sup>69</sup> Stephen Haskell took a different approach. He assumed the great red dragon represented the devil, and the seven heads with the ten horns represented the Roman Empire, where the devil was believed to dwell. In *The Story of the Seer of Patmos*, he wrote:

"There appeared another wonder in heaven;" it was the opposing power of Satan embodied in the ruling monarchy of earth-the empire of Rome, with Cæsar Augustus at its head. It is plainly stated in Revelation 12:9 that the great red dragon is the devil; and the seven heads with the ten horns represent the Roman Empire, in which the devil dwelt. This power during the reign of paganism, crucified the Saviour; and in its modified form, known as the papacy, held the church of God in bondage for twelve hundred and sixty years.<sup>70</sup>

Haskell could not make up his mind. He identifies the great red dragon as the pagan Roman power *and* Satan. However, it cannot be both. The great dragon in Revelation 12:7-9, identified by Jesus as Satan, is not depicted as having a red color, with heads, horns, crowns, and a tail. Jesus meticulously identified the great dragon as:

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<sup>67</sup> White, 4SP, p .276.1-2. [↗](#).

<sup>68</sup> White, 7BC 972.5. [↗](#)

<sup>69</sup> Smith (1897), DAR 510.3-512.2. [↗](#)

<sup>70</sup> Haskell (1905), SSP 214.1. [↗](#)

1. The leader of a contraband group in heaven (vs. 7, 9).
2. The one who presented his arguments during a heavenly debate (*polemos* (πόλεμος; cf. Rev 16:4).<sup>71</sup> The English equivalent is *polemic*: stirring up controversy against a targeted group, expressed in opinions, but lost (vs. 7).
3. The old serpent, devil, and Satan (vs. 9).
4. The one who was let go and subsequently fell to Earth,<sup>72</sup> so his origin is not Earth, but Heaven.
5. This is emphasized again in verses 12-13: the devil.
6. The one who set himself to fool the world into believing a false gospel (vs. 9, 11, 12)<sup>73</sup> and, obviously, through his agents, began persecuting the church that had grown out of its infancy (vs. 5, 6, 13-16).
7. The accuser of the brethren (vs. 10, cf. Zech 3:1-2).

### **Scarlet-Colored Beast (17:3)**

The scarlet-colored beast of Revelation 17 is definitely a religious entity: it blasphemes. John does not refer to it as a dragon. The angel reveals that the beast is the eighth king and "is of the seven." The Greek word *ἐκ* means from or near, indicating continuity with the previous seven. Thus, the scarlet-colored beast continues the political lineage of Rome's earlier seven government structures. Five were in the past by John's time; one was currently in power – the Empire stage, and there would be a seventh to follow. Being the eighth and originating from the previous seven, denotes a continuation of Roman power. Prophecy (Dan 2:40-44, 2 Thess

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<sup>71</sup> Christ does not fight with weapons; his weapon is the sharp sword coming from his mouth – the rebuke from the Word of God. See Zech 3:2; Matt 4; 2 Cor 10:4; and Jude 1:9.

<sup>72</sup> *ἐβλήθη*: verb, third person singular, aorist passive indicative of *βάλλω*: to throw. Strong translates cast, throw, rush; often used in the weaker sense of place, put, and drop. The text says that Satan lost his place in heaven, he was let go, God took his hands from him, and the earth was the only place for him to go.

<sup>73</sup> He came down (verse 12: *κατέβη*: verb, third person singular, aorist indicative active of *καταβαίνω*: to come down, descend) to destroy humanity.



2:3, and Rev 17:8, 11) and the Roman Church system and its seat of (political) authority, the Vatican and Holy See, testify to this fact.<sup>74</sup>

### **Heads and Mountains (12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 9)**

The great red dragon of Revelation 12:3 and the red beast of Revelation 17:3 are characterized as "having" seven heads. The angel's explanation in Daniel 2:38, 7:6, and 8:8 points out that the head symbol represents the ruling governments associated with the political entity. While some theologians argue that these heads are consecutive world powers beginning with Egypt,<sup>75</sup> this perspective is inconsistent with Scripture. Regarding the second identifier – mountains, some translations<sup>76</sup> inaccurately translate the Greek word "ὄρη" as "hills." This has led Preterist scholars<sup>77</sup> to interpret it as referring to the literal seven hills of Rome. However, this interpretation fails to align with Scriptural symbolism because the seven hills of Rome did not come up one after the other. In biblical terms, a mountain symbolizes a nation or kingdom. For instance, Habakkuk 3:6 states, "He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered." Other verses, such as Ezekiel 20:40, 28:14, and Psalms 3:5, reference God's holy mountain to signify His heavenly throne. As in Daniel 2:38, 7:6, and 8:8, the symbols of heads and mountains represent ruling governments of the power of which they are part.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, in the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine on the mountain, indicating their protection by the Lord while searching for the one that is lost

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<sup>74</sup> See article on Vatican website: The Roman Church and the Vatican. [↗](#)

<sup>75</sup> Various Adventist theologians adhere to this view, e.g., Reynolds, pp. 73-74; Stefanovic, p. 38, among others. Specifically, compare Mueller (1998), p. 6, to Paulien (2006), pp. 187-207.

<sup>76</sup> For example, AMP; CEV; GNT, and NIV.

<sup>77</sup> For example, the Presbyterian theologian William J. Reid (1878), p. 401; David E. Aune, p. 944-945. Many SDA scholars suggest that the two-horned beast of Rev 13:11 represents the unity of political, civil, and religious ideologies. For example, Stefanovic (2002), p. 423; Andersson (2006), p. 312; Smith (1897), p. 538 [↗](#); Paulien, The Facebook Commentary on Revelation: Revelation 12, p. 4. [↗](#) The application of like imagery in Daniel for Greece offers the insight of two separate governments in one nation.

(Matthew 18:12). Thus, interpreting mountains in this context as representing governments or authorities is consistent with Scripture. It is also crucial to recognize that the woman depicted in Revelation *sits* upon the beast, which symbolizes imperial Roman power supporting the ecclesiastical authority of the Roman Church. The beast is the primary focus, not the woman. She does not drive the power; the beast has dominance.<sup>79</sup> Historical evidence confirms that Byzantine Rome promoted Catholic Christianity over Arianism, codified Catholic doctrine in Civil Law, and consecrated the Popes. This shaped the status of the Roman Church.

### **Horns and Crowns (12:4; 13:1; 17:3)**

In Revelation, the great red dragon (12:4) and the red beast (17:3) are depicted as "having"<sup>80</sup> ten horns. The angel explains the meaning of these horns, which is crucial because the interpreter does not have to guess. This symbolism relates to the collective rulers of the nation represented by the beast of which they are part, as seen in the visions of Daniel 7:7-8 of Alexander the Great and the four ruling governments of his Diadochi: the four horns on the goat and the four heads of the Panthera in Daniel 7:7-8 (also see, and (Dan 8:3, 5, and 20-22). In Daniel 7:24, it is noted that ten horns would arise from the territory of the fourth beast, symbolizing Rome. According to the interpretation upheld by Seventh-day Adventists, the ten horns signify the fragmentation of the Western Roman Empire. In contrast, the eleventh horn represents the emerging religious entity (it blasphemes) from within the Roman power system, necessitating the removal of three Arian kingdoms. Likewise, Gabriel explains that the ten horns are independent nations with ruling power from within the territory of the specified Roman power (Dan 7:24). Furthermore, in the Bible, crowns symbolize honored rulers (Isa 23:8), also within the entity. Notably, in Revelation 17:3, the ten horns are not yet

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<sup>79</sup> See the sound interpretation of Smith (1897), pp. 602.1-603.4. [↗](#)

<sup>80</sup> ἔχων or ἔχον: to hold or to have. See Revelation Greek at <https://www.swrktec.org/>. Retrieved October 20, 2024.

crowned, implying that they will receive executive power in unity with the beast at the appointed time during the ultimate conflict against God's people (Rev 17:2 and 18:10). While the term "one hour" is usually interpreted as a prophetic period (approximately 15 literal days), the Greek word "μίαν" also corresponds with the Hebrew word "אֶחָד" (Echad), suggesting unity, as highlighted in Deuteronomy 6:4. Revelation 17:17 supports this assertion by suggesting that "hour" represents the divinely predetermined Echad-unity to fulfill God's specific purpose.

### **Tail and Stars (12:4)**

This symbol is deeply rooted in biblical references. As per these references, the tail can signify either weakness (Deut 28:13) or active executive authority (Isa 7:4). The text under review suggests aggressive behavior. In Revelation 19:10-19, the locust-like horses sustain this meaning. However, the most obvious indication is in the Greek grammar of verse 4. It indicates the subject, object, time, and actuality to us: "The tail (of) himself arrested the third (of) the stars (of) the heaven, and he (himself) threw them into the land."<sup>81</sup> Verse 9 points to Satan as the object and Michael as the subject. However, in verse 4, the dragon's tail (the dragon) is the subject, while the third of the stars of heaven is the object. The Greek language supports the conclusion that the events described in Revelation 12:4 and 12:9 are unrelated. Furthermore, biblical evidence can be found in the seven stars of Revelation 1:16 and 20, which are often interpreted as representing the leaders or representatives of the seven

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<sup>81</sup> ἡ οὐρὰ αὐτοῦ σύρει τὸ τρίτον τῶν ἀστέρων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ ἔβαλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν γῆν: The verse does not only talk about ἔβαλεν: verb, third person singular, aorist indicative active of βάλλω (to throw, to let go, to drop), but also about σύρει: verb, third person singular, present indicative active of σύρω: to drag or draw; to arrest and accuse in court; to sweep. The Present tense indicates a linear (ongoing, progressive) and punctiliar (whole, complete) type of action. The Indicative mood, which is significant in this context, affirms the actuality of the statement. The Active voice indicates that the subject acts – the action originates from the subject. The present active indicative indicates that the action occurs in the present time (John's), that the subject acts, and that it is a true statement. Also see, Herb Swanson, Revelation 12&13-Greek [2](#); Greek for All, Retrieved on October 28, 2024 [2](#)

churches of the early Christian era. Revelation 12:1 similarly employs stars as the twelve chosen apostles who led the infant Christian Church.<sup>82</sup> Smith states:

The dragon being a symbol, could deal only with symbolic stars; and the chronology of the act here mentioned would confine it to the Jewish people. Judea became a Roman province sixty-three years before the birth of the Messiah. The Jews had three classes of rulers: kings, priests, and the Sanhedrin. A third of these, the kings, were taken away by the Roman power.<sup>83, 84</sup>

Furthermore, the historical record provides ample evidence that the Roman authorities abrogated the three components of Judaic leadership, beginning in 44 AD with its kings.<sup>85</sup> The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the dragon's tail represents the impact of early Imperial Roman authority on Judaic leadership—a third of God's leadership on Earth was demolished.

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<sup>82</sup> Also see, White, GW 13.3-14.1 [↗](#); RH May 31, 1887, par 5. [↗](#)

<sup>83</sup> Smith, (1897), p. 510.4 [↗](#).

<sup>84</sup> Ellen White used the phrases, 'many angels' and 'many of the angels:' 7BC 972.6 [↗](#); 'who joined him,' 7BC 973. 1 [↗](#); 'all those who united with him in his rebellion: 7BC973.7 [↗](#), and 'all those who sympathized with him' 7BC 973.1/8. [↗](#) 'Many of them'— 18LTMs, Lt 114, 1903, par 4. [↗](#) (also in 7BC 973.4 [↗](#); 7MR 63.2 [↗](#) and in 7BC973.4 [↗](#)). In Letter 165 (1903), paragraph 17, she refers to Revelation 12:7-9, where she quotes the Biblical text without further specifying a number. Idem in Letter 256 (1906), par 11 [↗](#). There is only one instance from early in her ministry, which was most likely because of the prevailing thinking of that time. Supporters of the position love to quote this statement: 5T 290.3–291.1 (1889). [↗](#) There, she writes, "[...] *that through their sympathy with him, one-third of the angels lost their innocence, their high estate, and their happy home.*" The context of this statement is not Revelation 12:3,4 but an exhortation about the deceitful behavior of Brother D. She presents what (supposedly) happened in heaven as an example of how it ends when the church lets influential, unholy persons have their way - they pull others into their fall. She also compares it to the devious work of Korach, Dathan, and Abiram. This statement, about one-third of the angels from 5T 291.1 (1885), reappears in Testimony Treasures, Vol. 2, (2TT 103.1), compiled in 1949. [↗](#) It has been quoted and recited ever since.

<sup>85</sup> See Appendix III, pp. 118-22.

### Male Child (12:4)<sup>86</sup>

There is ample Scriptural and theological support that the male child symbolizes the infant Christian Church. For 300 years, Rome attacked and persecuted the young church, here depicted as the newborn male child (cf. Hos 1:11). The Bible commentator Matthew Henry says about Revelation 12:1-6:

The church, under the emblem of a woman, the mother of believers, was seen by the apostle in vision, in heaven. She was clothed with the sun, justified, sanctified, and shining by union with Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. The moon was under her feet; she was superior to the reflected and feebler light of the revelation made by Moses. Having on her head a crown of twelve stars, the doctrine of the gospel, preached by the twelve apostles, is a crown of glory to all true believers. As in pain to bring forth a holy family, desirous that the conviction of sinners might end in their conversion. A dragon is a known emblem of Satan, and his chief agents, or those who govern for him on earth, at that time the pagan empire of Rome [...]. As watchful to crush the Christian religion; but in spite of the opposition of enemies, the church brought forth a manly issue of true and faithful professors, in whom Christ was truly formed anew; even the mystery of Christ, that Son of God who should rule the nations, and in whose right his members partake the same glory. This blessed offspring was protected of God."<sup>87</sup>

Ellen White says about Revelation 12:3-6 and 13-17: "The people of God are symbolized by a holy woman and her children [...] they are in the minority, and in the last

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<sup>86</sup> This symbol from Revelation 12 confirms the timeframe of Revelation.

<sup>87</sup> Matthew Henry's Commentary on Revelation 12:1-6, MHBC 1180.2. [↗](#)

days, only a remnant remains."<sup>88</sup> This is the only reference she makes to the woman and the male child.

The imagery of the iron staff symbolizes the power of the Gospel, which will shatter the conspiracy and deliberations of the secular world against God, like smashing pottery (Ps 2:1, Ps 2:8, Rev 19:15-16). It also highlights the radical consequences of Christianity (Rev 2:26-27). Scripture identifies several figures who will rule in this manner. Christ: Psalm 2:8-9 is specifically interpreted to refer to Jesus. When Jesus came to Earth, he aimed to establish authority over the Gentiles with a rod of iron, a metaphor for victory. He will end the conspiracy similarly—the Word of God will radically condemn the ungodly (Rev 19:15). Interestingly, the Bible provides a broader interpretation of these symbols. Herding with an iron staff and striking with a sword are more frequently applied to those who overcome through the Gospel, which means those who are victorious in their faith and obedience to God's Word: the infant church represented by a male child (Rev 12:5), the saints of the church (Rev 2:26-27), the oppressed saints (Rev 20:4-6), and indeed all saints (Ps 149:6-9). From this, we understand that the rod, the two-edged sword, the staff, or the stick—all symbols for the Word of God—extend to those who associate with Jesus. The iron rod and the two-edged sword function as defensive weapons for God's people against the conspiracy of evil (Ps 2:1; Heb 4:12). Every evil thought is shattered by the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Ps 2:8; Rev 2:26-27; Rev 19:15, and Rev 20:4-6) and the testimonies of the saints (Rev 12:12). Therefore, the symbol of the man-child is not solely applicable to Christ. His followers, those who believe in him and follow his teachings, also play a significant role in advancing the Gospel, which has profound consequences, particularly in the context of Revelation. This insight suggests that his rule encompasses those who reign alongside him as ministers of

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<sup>88</sup> White, in 7BC 972.5. [↗](#)

reconciliation, a term referring to everyone who brings others into a restored relationship with God, underscoring the integral role of believers in Christ's mission. Further elaboration can be found in Revelation 2:7, 10, 11, and 17, where the overcomers of pagan brutality receive assurance that their sacrifices are not overlooked. Revelation 6:9-10 highlights that the victors who lost their lives were given white robes and were told to rest a while longer under the altar until the iniquity of their oppressors was complete, which is historically believed to have occurred in 1798.

The apparent question is if the male child is not Jesus, what is meant by "and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne?" It is often noted that at his ascension, Christ was taken up and seated on God's throne (Eph 1:20-21; Heb 8:1; Rev 3:21). However, it is essential to clarify that Christ ascended not as a child but as a fully grown man.<sup>89</sup> The Greek word *harpazō*<sup>90</sup> means to seize, snatch, catch up, or rob out of the hands of an enemy, like claiming a bounty or prize. This term is used 14 times in the New Testament: Matthew 11:12; 12:29; 13:19; John 6:15; 10:12, 28, 29; Acts 8:39; 23:10; 2 Corinthians 12:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Jude 1:23; and Revelation 12:5. One thing can be ascertained: Jesus' ascension was not a seizure. In the context of Revelation, something other than Christ's ascension seems more fitting. The vision does not suggest Christ's death on the cross either, as the Timeframe indicates. Jesus begins the Revelation with: 'I was dead, but I am alive, and I will show you what will happen next' (Rev 1:8). History shows that in the first three centuries, Rome was hostile towards Christians, causing the church to go underground (into the catacombs) while approaching God's throne from the caves of the Earth. The Greek word *tronos* refers to a

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<sup>89</sup> In Revelation 1:18, Jesus refers to his death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension as "experienced" by an adult and not an infant.

<sup>90</sup> Strong's number 726: The Greek verb *harpazō* conveys the idea of seizing or snatching away with force or suddenness. It is often used when something is taken quickly or forcefully, sometimes implying a rescue or deliverance. In the New Testament, it is frequently associated with divine intervention or the power of God.

physical seat of power, a ruler, or a judicial court. We may understand that the faithful continually appealed their case before God's judicial court (Exod 3:9), and his throne exists wherever believers come together to worship.<sup>91</sup> Thus, it can be argued that in the context of Revelation, the throne of God symbolizes a place of worship. In Jesus, believers are always close to God's throne, where he intercedes for them (Rev 1:13, 16; Rom 8:34). This imagery powerfully illustrates the triumph of the Christian church. The church encountered intense opposition in its early days, but God stepped in to protect his people under his divine throne. A beautiful image can be found in the life and death of John the Baptist. Ellen White writes that Satan believed he had triumphed over John the Baptist by having him beheaded. In truth, John was lifted to God's safety, snatched from the clutches of his greatest foe.<sup>92</sup>

The prevalent Seventh-day Adventist explanation that the first five verses of Revelation 12 are a flashback is inconsistent with the historical context and the timeline of Revelation. On the one hand, expositors argue that the radiant woman in verse 1 represents the people of God, symbolized by a holy woman and her children —the church of the living God, empowered by the Holy Spirit and organized by twelve apostles, overseers, teachers, and deacons. Other interpreters claim that the church that gave birth to the "male child" is the expectant Old Testament Jewish congregation that, according to the promise of Genesis 3:15, produced the Seed (male child), the Christ, and that Satan wanted to kill that child through Herod.<sup>93</sup> However, both positions cannot be held simultaneously. The Jews did expect their Messiah, and when he came, they rejected him. Moreover, he was born to a literal, not a

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<sup>91</sup> In the period of the fifth seal, the believers were brutally slaughtered (sacrificed), with the name of Jesus on their lips (e.g., Stephen in Acts 7:59, 60). In Revelation 6:9-11, the blood of the murdered saints cries out for retribution from beneath the altar on which they were sacrificed for their faith.

<sup>92</sup> White (1898), DA, pp. 224.2–5. [↗](#)

<sup>93</sup> See Johnson, in DARCOM Vol 7, p. 18; Reid (1878), p. 271; Stefanovic (2002), p. 382.



symbolic, Jewish woman. If the shining woman in verse 1 is metaphorical, so should her child.

### Two-Horned Earth Beast (13:11-17)

There are many interpretations for the two horns of the Earth Beast: democracy and republicanism, Protestantism in America,<sup>94</sup> the union of Church and State,<sup>95</sup> the non-oppressive Protestant denominations, and the non-oppressive Republican government,<sup>96</sup> or the two liberties represented in the American Constitution: civil and religious freedom.<sup>97</sup> However, the historical context and imagery found in Daniel 7:17 and 8:5, 8, 20–23 contradict these assertions. A consistent interpretation of the imagery suggests that the earth beast (*theriōn*) depicted in Revelation 13:1, 2, and 11 refers to North America, where Protestants fled Medieval Papal persecution.<sup>98</sup> America became a refuge for the persecuted church after 1,260 years of oppression, symbolized by the earth swallowing the waters that followed the woman (Rev 12:16).<sup>99</sup> This political entity, a young nation in its infancy (represented by the horn stubs of a lamb), had two ruling governments (the horns). The prophecy illustrates, and history confirms, the emergence of a new political context in a new geographical setting. All indicators point to the early United States of America, from July 4, 1776, to April 9, 1865, a period marked by one nation divided into two separate entities: the Northern United States of America and the Southern Confederate States of America. In that infant stage, there were two capitals—Washington, DC, and Richmond, VA—and two

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<sup>94</sup> Smith (1897), p. 537.2-539.2 [↗](#); White in 14LtMs/ MS51, 1899, par.5 [↗](#).

<sup>95</sup> Jones (1901), pp. 868.3-869.1 [↗](#)

<sup>96</sup> Andrews (1860) quoted by M.C. Maxwell in DARCOM Vol 7, p. 102.

<sup>97</sup> Stefanovic (2002), p. 423.

<sup>98</sup> Earth (Rev 12:16; 13:8, 11-14) is the accepted interpretation for the New World, a haven of freedom for Protestantism. In a prophetic sense, "sea and many waters" symbolizes the influence of Catholicism, and "earth" the influence of Protestantism.

<sup>99</sup> Article, *The Mayflower, the Birth of America*. Accessed on February 12, 2025. [↗](#).

presidents (horns): Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis.<sup>100</sup> The context suggests that this nation would emerge when the dominance of the sea beast was waning, followed by the fall of the Papal States in 1798. It is somewhat ironic that this nation, once a beacon of freedom and Protestantism, is destined to make "an image of (or to) the beast" by adopting the same coercive and persecuting principles as Medieval Europe.<sup>101</sup> Empowered by its global influence, it will issue a global mandate demanding that Protestantism comply with the false doctrines of the sea beast, thereby reverencing and worshipping the former.<sup>102</sup> It is essential to recognize that Revelation 13:12-17 portrays scenes of oppression that echo the impact seen in Revelation 17:14, albeit within different geographical and historical contexts. The Medieval persecuting actions of the great red dragon (Rev 12:13) belong to the past. The Medieval-imagining actions of the New World's earth beast (Rev 13:11-17 and 17:14), about the future, are what is meant by "the image of the beast."

### **Purple, Scarlet, and Jewelry (17:4)**

The opulence of Rome's aristocracy, marked by a strict hierarchy and deep-rooted status consciousness, was vividly represented through the colors purple, red, and scarlet, along with an extravagant display of jewelry and material wealth. Tyrian purple, the most prestigious and costly hue, was exclusively reserved for the emperor, the supreme leader. Scarlet and red signified power and military prowess, serving as the hallmark colors for the military, magistrates, and other high-ranking officials. Ordinary citizens who wore imperial purple risked having their property confiscated and facing potential punishment because

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<sup>100</sup> American History Net, article Union vs Confederacy, (Accessed on September 18, 2024). [↗](#)

<sup>101</sup> Jones (1901), p. 868.3: "[...] to make an image to the papacy [...] being a union of Church and State, with the Church using the power of the State to enforce the doctrines of the Church and to compel submission to her decrees." [↗](#)

<sup>102</sup> Sunday worship, as the exclusive mark of usurped authority, is but one of its many false doctrines.

assuming a royal identity was deemed treasonous.<sup>103</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Popes, selected from the ranks of Rome's affluent bureaucrats and aristocrats,<sup>104</sup> were accustomed to such ostentatious displays of power and wealth. The Roman Church, inheriting the traditions of pagan Rome, perpetuated the practice of using color to denote authority levels, ensuring that the lavishness of wealth remained a hallmark of its hierarchy.

### **Babylon, the Great (17:5)**

In the Bible, Babylon stands as a powerful symbol of multiple negative traits: the lure of wealth (Isa 13:19; Dan 2:38), the danger of idolatry (Isa 21:9), the reality of oppression (Isa 14:4), the depths of sadism (Ps 137:3), the chaos of confusion (Gen 11), and the spirit of rebellion (Isa 14:4-24). It represents not only sin and iniquity but also the influence of evil spirits and blatant apostasy. Babylon has become the embodiment of all that is corrupt. Its prominence lies in its masterful expression of rebellion against righteousness. In Revelation 17, Babylon epitomizes a corrupt Church system that amalgamates these attributes into a strikingly unified act of defiance against God.

### **Mother and Daughters (17:5)**

The Church, as depicted, has given rise to religious offshoots that fundamentally resemble the original. Consequently, she is called both a mother of children and a mother of idolatry. Her name is written on her forehead, signifying that all her actions result from thoughtful and intentional decisions (cf. Jer 3:1).

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<sup>103</sup> Croom (2012), pp. 29-32.

<sup>104</sup> Cormanin (1847), pp. 185-89; Noble (1984), pp. 128, 193.

**Eight Kings (17:9-10)**

The Greek text, a powerful corrective tool, says, "There are seven kings" (Gr. *εἰσιν* (VPIA-3P). Proper translation renders: "There exist seven kings," which indicates a further characterization of the beast, not its heads. The possessive pronoun *αὐτῶν* (Gr. PPro-NF3P) – they – to refer to *κεφαλαὶ* (Gr. N-NFP) – heads – would have been used to denote a relationship between the kings and the heads (*they are*). However, this is not the case, which highlights that the kings as part of the fourth world power are to be interpreted the same way the four ruling governments of Alexander's Diadochi of the Greece power are characterized by the four horns on the goat in Daniel 7:8 and the four heads of the Panthera in Daniel 8:8. The angel reveals that the beast is the eighth king and "of the seven." The Greek word *ἐκ* means from or near, indicating continuity with the previous seven rather than suggesting it is the seventh. The eighth king continues the political lineage established by the earlier seven kings. Five of these kings had fallen by John's time; one was currently in power, and there would be a seventh to follow. The eighth king originates from the previous seven, denoting that the beast represents a continuity of Roman power (Revelation 17:11). The Greek wording emphasizes the notion of origin rather than simply being "one of" the seven, as misinterpreted in translations like the NAS. Thus, the eighth is from the same source and continues the Roman Empire's political power. The angel's explanation of the beast in Revelation 17, framed by the four conceptual ideas, serves as a guiding principle and can be summarized in Table 3:

Table 3: The Scarlet Beast of Revelation 17

Fourth Beast of Daniel: Rome	Angel's Explanation		Symbolic language	Historical Context of the Western Roman Empire
<b>βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν – here are seven Kings ...</b>				
<b>Pagan</b>	Five are fallen	{	1 <sup>st</sup> King	Kings 753-509 BC
			2 <sup>nd</sup> King	Consuls 509-541 BC
			3 <sup>rd</sup> King	Decemvirs 541-499 BC
			4 <sup>th</sup> King	Dictators 499-59 BC
			5 <sup>th</sup> King	Triumvirs 59-27 BC
	One is	{	6 <sup>th</sup> King	Emperors 27 BC-476 AD
	One is yet to come and is bound to remain insignificant	}	7 <sup>th</sup> King	Exarchs 584-751 AD
<b>Papal</b>	The Beast, with the woman on top, is from the seven	{	8 <sup>th</sup> King	Church received religious authority from Pagan Rome 533-538 AD
	<i>Was</i>			Peculiar Church-State 756-1798 AD
	<i>Is not</i>			Politically wounded: Dead (Abyss) 1798-1929 AD
	<i>Yet is and unto perdition</i>			Politically restored: Wound healed 1929-perdition

### Sea and Many Waters (17:15)

The angel explains this symbol as "a multitude of people and nations." During its imperial period, the Roman Empire was the most significant political entity in the world, spanning a vast territory across Asia, Africa, and Europe. The beast depicted is incontrovertibly a political entity (cf. Dan 2:7, 8, 37, 38; 7:23; 8:21). In Revelation 13:1-2, the beast from the sea combines characteristics of previous empires: the lion-head represents Babylon, the bear-parts stand for Medo-Persia, the leopard-parts symbolize Greece (as noted in Dan 7:18 and 8:20-23), and the dragon represents the fourth beast, symbolizing Rome. The context of the timeframe indicates that Revelation chapters 12, 13, and 17 align with the period of the fourth world power described in Daniel 2, 7, and 8: the Roman system. The messenger angel continues in Revelation 12 to clarify to John the aspects of the fourth world power that were not fully understood in Daniel's time (Dan 8:17, 19). Revelation 12 also

highlights an additional element of this political entity: the nature of its tail (Rev 12:4). The emblem of the snake-like Draco standard, used by the Roman cavalry, one of its most potent army divisions, was presented to John as a contemporary symbol he should have understood.<sup>105</sup> There are three more indicators that John should have recognized in this imagery: the disabling of the Judean kingship (as noted in John 19:15 and Acts 1:6), the oppression of the infant church, which was the reason for his exile to Patmos, and the fact that the beast emerges from the sea and sits upon many waters (Rev 13:1 and 17:1, 15). John should have been able to understand the scenes, and so should we. Therefore, the angel rebukes him—John should not have been confused, nor should we. Consequently, it can be inferred that Revelation 12:1-5 refers to the inception of the Christian Church around 34, the disbanding of the Judean kingship in 44, and the 300 years of conflict between Christians and Roman authorities. Revelation 12:6-17 reveals Satan as the source of this conflict and explains how the dispute will continue until all is fulfilled. The phrase "to be accomplished" is the same Greek word (*γενέσθαι*) that Jesus uses in Revelation 1:19 and 4:1.

### **Armageddon (16:12-16)**

When discussing Armageddon, many theologians refer to the typology of the Old Testament's physical battlegrounds of Megiddo or Mount Carmel. Adventism agrees that Armageddon is a typological, spiritual battle over doctrine and world dominion.<sup>106</sup> However, applications to Islamic terror, the so-called Axis of Evil, or Al Qaeda,<sup>107</sup> are out of line with

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<sup>105</sup> Brzezinski (2002), pp. 32, 38-39; Marciniak (2010), pp. 102-31; Coulston (1991), pp. 101-14; Andersson (2006), p. 290.

<sup>106</sup> Paulien (2008), Ch 4; Anderson (2006), pp. 338-41 and 361-69; Stefanovic (2002), pp. 495, 499-501; De Ligne (1971), pp. 237-43; Smith (1897), pp. 647.1-652.6. [Z](#)

<sup>107</sup> Paulien: <https://www.thebattleofarmageddon.com/armageddon-in-revelation-trilogy-part-ii/>. Since Armageddon occurs during the sixth and seventh plagues, and by then, probation had ended, those applications can be refuted. Islam does not play a role in the apocalyptic narrative. Revelation 9, the rise and decline of the Turkish-Ottoman kingdom, is portrayed to emphasize the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire.

the prophetic and historical context of Revelation. Moreover, the Old Testament type is not Mount Carmel, but Megiddo, the Valley of Decision.<sup>108</sup> The first reference to Megiddo is in Joshua 12. As the Israelites reached the Promised Land, Moses defeated two Canaanite kings on the east side of the Jordan River and allocated their land to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land (Deut. 32:52), and Joshua assumed command. In Joshua 12:7-24, he defeated 31 Canaanite kings on the west side of the Jordan on the Plains of Megiddo, resulting in the utter defeat of the Canaanite alliance. Joshua divided their territories among the remaining tribes of Israel. The kingdom of Megiddo was assigned to the other half of the tribe of Manasseh. Manasseh, however, struggled to expel the remaining Canaanites, who continued to pose a threat (Josh 17:11-13, Jud 1:27). The tension eventually led to the conflict, described in Judges 5, a second major battle at Megiddo. A third notable battle occurred when Pharaoh Necho of Egypt confronted King Josiah of Judah at the site. Egypt was engaged in a conflict with Assyria near Carchemish, which is located 800 to 1,000 kilometers from Judah's territory. For unknown reasons, King Josiah chose to confront Pharaoh, overestimating his strength and believing he had divine support. Despite warnings to stay out of Egypt's affairs, he pressed on, only to be stopped at Megiddo. Josiah was unexpectedly fatally wounded and died in battle (2 Chr 35:22-25; 2 Kings 23:29). His death was mourned throughout Judah, including by the prophet Jeremiah. Revelation 16:16 uses these decisive clashes of the ungodly heathens against Joshua and the presumptuous believers against Pharaoh as a metaphor to depict the uniting of two groups against God. Thus, Armageddon symbolizes the final confrontation of God's

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<sup>108</sup> While the researcher of this Paper did not review the whole spectrum of ideas, she has found Uriah Smith's interpretation, in which he applies the sixth and seventh plagues to the fall of the Turkish-Ottoman kingdom, to be out of line with the prophetic, historical, and geographical context of Revelation. When the plagues are poured out, probation is closed.

enemies, and the ultimate battle between Christ and Satan is anticipated to conclude as definitively as the Old Testament battles fought at Megiddo.

Because the text states that the place is called "Harmageddon" in Hebrew, the name is thought to be a fusion of the Hebrew words "Har," meaning mountain, and the verb "*gedud*" (Hebr.: גִּדּוּד; Strong's Lexicon 1416), meaning to band together in worship assembly or hostility. Thus, Bible commentators think *gedud* refers to Megiddo, an ancient battleground in Israel, but this remains debatable. There is no mountain called Megiddo in the Old Testament; the historical and geographical contexts indicate that it was a Canaanite kingdom at a strategic site where decisive battles were fought. In the prophetic contextual imagery of Revelation, Armageddon in Revelation 16 must be approached as a metaphor. Also, the Bible clearly states that the end of this world will not be the outcome of a physical battle among earthly powers nor between Christ and worldly powers. Daniel 2 states that the end will occur "without human hands." The Greek word used for "war" in Revelation 16:14, in which the same Armageddon event is portrayed, is *polemos* (πόλεμος; cf. Rev 12:7). The English equivalent of *polemic*: stirring up controversy against a targeted group, expressed in opinions. Thus, the "gathered kings" refer to Revelation 17:14 and 18:10: they have gathered themselves in unity (Gr.: μίαν; Hebr.: יְחָדָה, *echad*), for some time (ὥραν: season) in opposition to God and coercing his people. They will not prevail. Consequently, the term "place" in verse 16 is also metaphorical, suggesting that Christ will bring the kings of the earth into a pivotal situation—a "place" or a decisive outcome. As Joshua triumphed over the Canaanite kings (the ungodly), Pharaoh triumphed over King Josiah (the presumptuous believers). The horrifying seventh plague over the ungodly and the disobedient will usher in destruction, of which the destruction of Judah was a type (cf. Jer 15:3 to Rev 19:17). Christ will appear as Victor. He is the ultimate "Har": King of kings, and not the rulers of an earthly



confederacy that have claimed the title for themselves since Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>109</sup> Revelation 12:11 and 17:14 state that Christ conquers, "for he is Lord of lords and King of kings," and his Chosen conquer with him through the merits of his blood and their testimony of faith and loyalty. So, Armageddon is a metaphor for when, during the last plague, all human systems will crumble to dust (Dan 2:34-35 and 44).

There can be no debate about Adventists' understanding that the opportunity to choose for or against God concludes right before the seven plagues commence after the sealing and end of probation (cf. Rev 7:1-3). The seven plagues will fulfill their intended purpose, revealing the futility of claims to divinity and authority, like the sorcery of Jannes and Jambres, who could not stop the plagues, only enhancing them (Exod 7:11-12; 2 Tim 3:8). Furthermore, the imagery of Armageddon in Revelation 16 has no application after the millennium. For the futile attempt of Satanic forces uniting with the resurrected doomed attacking the New Jerusalem after the millennium (Rev 20:7-10), a different typology is used – "Gog and Magog," a prophetic coalition of nations against God and his people. Bible expositors explain Gog as the Antichrist and Magog as an antichristian coalition (Rev 19:19-20).<sup>110</sup> Armageddon symbolizes the disintegration of all human systems during the last

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<sup>109</sup> All the rulers of the world powers of Daniel – Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius, and Alexander the Great – bore the title King of Kings. The Romans preferred titles as Emperor, Caesar, and Augustus. One of the historical titles of the Pope is "Father of kings," – i.e, King of kings, expressing his influence over the rulers of other (European) nations

<sup>110</sup> Gog is the apocalyptic prophetic figure, leading a great coalition of nations, that will undertake a final, desperate, and presumptuous attack on God's people from which there is no chance of winning. Magog is a type for the most far and remote regions, "the land of Gog," the land of the Gentiles. [↗](#) See for instance Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible (MHCW): [...] *"This prophecy here of Gog and Magog is without doubt alluded to in that prophecy which relates to the latter days, and which seems to be yet unfulfilled (Rev. 20:8), that Gog and Magog shall be gathered to battle against the camp of the saints, as the Old-Testament prophecies of the destruction of Babylon are alluded to, Rev. 18. But, in both, the Old-Testament prophecies had their accomplishment in the Jewish church as the New-Testament prophecies shall have when the time comes in the Christian church. In this chapter we have intermixed, I. The attempt that Gog and Magog should make upon the land of Israel, the vast army they should bring into the field, and their vast preparations (v. 4-7), their project and design in it (v. 8-13), God's hand in it (v. 4). II. The great terror that this should strike upon the land of Israel (v. 15, 16, 18-20). III. The divine restraint that these enemies should be under, and the divine protection that Israel should be under (v. 2-4 and v. 14). IV. The defeat that should be given to those enemies by*

plague, right before the Second Coming. The fragile unity against God and his people, which would seem successful for a season, will be "shattered to dust" (Dan 2:34-35 and 44).

Armageddon is not an earthly battle; it is God's final judgment over the ungodly and the presumptuous believers. Additionally, the metaphor of the drying of the Euphrates River in Revelation 16:12 alludes to how God judged and brought the great city of Babel to its end: that mighty city collapsed when the confederacy of the Medes and the Persians - coming from the East - dried up the Euphrates River, which was the city's primary water source and protection against invasion. When the ten kings (the "many waters" symbol for the nations of "the old world") recede their support for Babylon the Great, that anti-typical mighty city will face a similar fate. Her Mene, Mene, Tekel moment will come-numbered, weighed in the balances, and found wanting (Dan 5:25-27). Thus, Revelation 16:16 reveals the climactic showdown during the sixth and seventh plagues. Christ will appear in the sky as King Triumphant. Armageddon's imagery powerfully represents these impending events.

Revelation 16:15 stands between verses 12 and 16 as a reminder and encouragement to God's people to stay vigilant and not to cease praying. Satan and his allies will only be able to enhance evil to the plagues. The end will befall them as unexpectedly as a thief in the night.

When consistency is the standard, Table 4 illustrates the characteristics of the beasts in Revelation. Table 5 provides an overview of how the powers continually conflicted with God and His people.

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*the immediate hand of God (v. 21–23)." [...] "Here is, I. An express prediction of the utter destruction of Gog and Magog, agreeing with what we had before (v. 1-7). II. An illustration of the vastness of that destruction, in three consequences of it: the burning of their weapons (v. 8–10), the burning of their slain (v. 11–16), and the feasting of the fowls with the dead bodies of those that were unburied (v. 17–22). III. A declaration of God's gracious purposes concerning his people Israel, in this and his other providences concerning them, and a promise of further mercy that he had yet in store for them (v. 23–29)." [↗](#)*

Table 4: Characteristics of the Beasts of Revelation

Chapter	Heads	Horns	Crowns	Color	Period
12:1-5	7	10	7	red	1 <sup>st</sup> –3 <sup>rd</sup> Century Pagan Rome
12:6-17	–	–	–	–	Outline of the Great Controversy during the Christian Era and 1,260 years of persecution during the Middle Ages
13:1	7	10	10	–	5 <sup>th</sup> –8 <sup>th</sup> Century: Rome's Exarchate transitioning into Pontifical Absolute Monarchy (the beast is the eighth head)
13:11	–	2	–	–	Early America: The two-horned beast in its infancy – Union and Confederacy period – creating an image of Medieval persecution
17:3,7,9	8	10	–	red	Pontifical Absolute Monarchy originated from the seven
17:15-18	8	10	–	–	The ten-horned beast with dominion over the 'kings' of Medieval Europe

Table 5: The Satanic, Political, and Religious Powers of Revelations 12, 13, and 17 in their historical context

	Prophetic Symbol: Dragon or Beast	Satan, Devil, Old Serpent	Totality of Imperial Roman power <sup>111</sup>	10 nations of Western Imperial Rome <sup>112</sup>	Medieval Roman Church <sup>113</sup>	Earth-power mimics the medieval system <sup>114</sup>	End-time Pontifical Roman Monarchy <sup>115</sup>
Rev 12:3-4	Great red ( <i>pyrros</i> ) dragon, 7 crowned heads, <sup>116</sup> 10 horns		X	X			
Rev 12:6, 13-18; 13:2	Dragon ( <i>drakōn</i> , Roman Draco Serpent)		X				
Rev 12:7-12	Great dragon ( <i>drakōn</i> ) let go of	X					
Rev 13:1, 5-8	Leopard-bear-lion sea-beast ( <i>theriōn</i> ), 7 heads and 10 crowned horns, and blasphemy				X		X
Rev 13:2	Beast from the sea ( <i>theriōn</i> ), emphasis on the fourth kingdom		X				
Rev 13:11	2-horned earth-beast ( <i>theriōn</i> ) speaks (legislating) like the medieval Church–State system ( <i>drakōn</i> ) of Rev 13:5 and 7					X	
Rev 17:3, 8-10	Blaspheming scarlet beast ( <i>theriōn</i> ), 7 heads		X	X			
Rev 17:4-6	Blaspheming woman (apostate church)				X		X
Rev 17:11	Eighth head of 4 <sup>th</sup> beast ( <i>theriōn</i> ) of Daniel 7– Rome						X
Rev 17:12	Yet uncrowned 10 horns					X	

<sup>111</sup> Old Political context.<sup>112</sup> Geographical context.<sup>113</sup> Ecclesiastical context.<sup>114</sup> New Political, Geographical and Historical Context.<sup>115</sup> The eight Church-State governmental form and successor of pagan Rome.<sup>116</sup> Pagan Rome's seven governmental phases.

## REVELATION 17 DECODED

Revelation 17 is rich with biblical imagery and can be understood through four key concepts: Prophetic Context, Singular Vision, Timeframe, and Historical Context. These concepts form a solid foundation for interpreting the chapter. By applying the symbols outlined in the Bible, we can gain a clear and engaging understanding of this passage. Jesus promised blessings for those who read, hear, and follow the message of the vision. The audience has a crucial role, as they are not just passive recipients of prophecy but active participants in its interpretation.

Those familiar with Daniel's visions in chapters 2, 7, and 8 will find the narrative style of Revelation 17 familiar, featuring a 'Reveal-and-Explain' format where the prophet is shown a stunning scene and then receives clarification from the messenger angel. Revelation 17 must be understood, considering Revelation 12 to 18, which sets the groundwork for its dramatic events. These earlier chapters outline the decline of Imperial Rome, the rise of the Pontifical Absolute Monarchy, and God's judgment upon the fourth world power. In this midsection of Revelation, Christ reveals why he condemned the fourth world power: it supports a Church system that has strayed from true faith and symbolizes an unfaithful woman called Babylon.

### **The Dragons, the Beasts, and the Woman**

It is essential to begin with Revelation 12 to gain a proper understanding of Revelation 17. In Revelation 12:3-6, the great red dragon is often misidentified as Satan, as depicted in verses 7-9. Christ designates that dragon as the great dragon, the old serpent, the devil, and Satan. It is not pictured as having crowned heads and horns. He is expelled and cast down, indicating that his origin is not Earth but Heaven. The remainder of chapter 12 illustrates Satan's ongoing efforts to persecute God's people through worldly powers. The great red dragon is depicted with seven crowned heads and ten horns, historically reflecting the Pagan Roman dominance from its inception in 753 BC until it fractured into the nations of Europe.

The Timeframe of Revelation spans from its sixth (Imperial) stage until the end of Earth's history. This concept is crucial for interpreting Revelation. Moving on to Revelation 13, a sea beast is described as a composite entity: it has the head of a lion, the paws of a bear, and the body of a leopard, and derives its power from a dragon. This imagery corresponds to the sequence of empires outlined in the Book of Daniel: Babylon (Lion – Dan 7:4), Medo-Persia (Bear – Dan 7:5), Greece (Leopard – Dan 7:6), and historically, Rome, depicted as a fearsome Dragon with 10 horns, and between those, a little one was protruding (Dan 7:7-8).

In Revelation 17, the Dragon has become a beast, still "having" seven heads and ten crowned horns, portraying Pagan Rome at its imperial decline, troubled by Barbarian warlords, and evolving into the last-day stage of the little horn. This power is a significant concept in the Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of Revelation, representing a final, unified force that will oppose God's people in the end times. Revelation 17 projects a scarlet-colored beast with seven heads and ten uncrowned horns. This scene provides further details: the seven heads represent seven mountains, which, like the heads themselves, must be approached as symbolic. Additionally, the angel in Revelation 17:10-11 provides clues about the seven kings. These kings are connected to the Roman beast, which is also metaphorical and represents the different forms of Roman power's government. As prophesied in Daniel 7:3, 17-18, and 23, from Babylon forthgoing, there would be four world powers, and the sequence would end with God's kingdom as the fifth. So, explaining the heads and the kings of the Roman power as separate world powers, starting with Egypt and ending with an eighth, contradicts Scripture. In John's time, five kings belonged to the past; one was in power during John's time, and one was yet to come, destined to be insignificant. The eighth king, referred to as the Beast itself, is interpreted as Rome's final stage of government—its pontifical monarchy. The merging of Church (woman) and State (beast), a concept rooted in Imperial Rome to ensure proper religious observance, is central to the Great Controversy Theme in the

Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of Revelation. This theme, which revolves around the cosmic conflict between good and evil, is not merely a historical note; it poses concerns for both the present and the future, especially for believers. For the Seventh-day Adventist community, this issue highlights the importance and necessity of a clear and accurate understanding of these prophetic texts.

**Revelation 17:1-2.** 1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: 2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

The "seven vials" refer to the seven bowls of God's wrath described in the book of Revelation. Their mention signals judgment against the unfaithful and wicked. One of the angels, poised to unleash the final plagues upon the world, emphasizes Revelation 17's focus on God's final judgment concerning the blatant apostasy of a Church and its allies—the kings of the former Western Roman Empire. John is directed toward the pivotal events of the end times: he is shown the apostate Church of the latter days, supported by nations and peoples to which rulers have pledged their loyalty. The imagery of wine serves as a symbol for doctrine (Matthew 9:17), truth (Isaiah 65:8), or deception (Proverbs 4:17). Wine is often used as a symbol for doctrines. Served by an adulteress, they can only be doctrines contradicting God's will.

**Revelation 17:3-6.** 3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: 5 And upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus:

In the first scene shown to John, he sees a woman dressed in purple and scarlet sitting on a scarlet beast, which symbolizes Pagan Rome. She is depicted as extremely wealthy and

powerful, serving wine, representing false doctrines and idolatry, from a golden chalice. On her forehead, which is characterized as a "whore's forehead," are written mysterious words. She is insatiable for the blood of the saints, who were killed without mercy. The colors red, scarlet, and purple, along with her extravagant jewelry, symbolize the opulence of Rome's aristocracy, a well-documented aspect of history. Until 752, popes were typically chosen from the Roman aristocracy, acting as diplomats between Italy and the Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople or his representative in Ravenna.<sup>117</sup> Rooted in the traditions of Pagan Rome, the Pontifical Monarchy adopted these vibrant colors and lavish displays to signify different levels of authority within its Church-State system (cf. Rev 18:12 and 16). Furthermore, history confirms that the Roman Church derived its ecclesiastical authority from the political structure of the Roman Empire, likened to a fiery dragon (Rev 13:2), with its influence "seated" in the ancient imperial city of Rome. The Roman Emperor Justinian privileged the Roman Church in 533 through his Justinian Code, and this arrangement was solidified by his generals in 538. Interestingly, it is the beast part that speaks blasphemy.

According to Daniel 2, 7, and 8, the Roman power would be the fourth and final world kingdom, beginning at Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. Any interpretation must align with the Bible's teachings. The interpreter cannot infer anything beyond this biblical explanation. The seven heads refer to the seven forms of government that Rome experienced from 753 BC until the fall of the Western region in 751 AD. Historians Livy and Tacitus noted the various phases of government in their time, including those of kings, Consuls, Dictators, Decemvirs, Tribunes, and Emperors. The Exarchate of Ravenna (584-751) historically represented the seventh and final Pagan Roman constitution. The horns symbolize rulers, kings, or nations, reflecting similar imagery in Daniel 8:3, 5, 8, 9, 20, 21, and 22. History shows that the ten

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<sup>117</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Ravenna". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 27, 2024. Accessed January 25, 2025. [Z](#); Duffy (1997), pp. 72-73.



kingdoms that emerged from the fragmented Western Roman Empire now correspond to Western European nations.<sup>118</sup>

The symbol of the harlot is often found in the Old Testament, representing backsliding and disloyalty to God, as seen in Jeremiah 3:6 and 8. The forehead, where the brain's frontal lobe is located, plays a key role in moral decision-making. Thus, the forehead symbolizes willpower and stubbornness. In Exodus 28:36-38, the high priest in Israel wore a golden plate on his forehead to remind him that all his decisions were made in the presence of the Lord. Jeremiah 3:3 likens Israel's and Judah's obstinacy to a whore's forehead, which is unashamed and resistant to correction. The woman described in Revelation 17:4-6 is presented as "the mother of whores and abominations of the earth," indicating that she has offspring that engage in similar practices, such as following false doctrines and idolatry contrary to Scripture.

In biblical symbolism, Babylon represents confusion and blatant rebellion. The imagery applies to a Church system (represented by a woman) that claims divine authority on Earth, as referenced in various passages (Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2-21; 2 Thess 2:4). These references, along with others, form a weighty biblical critique of the Roman Church's claims. The Roman Church claims the authority to bring the heavenly sanctuary to Earth, attempting to replace Christ's role as Redeemer and Heavenly Mediator with the vicarious claims of the Pope. By doing so, it commits blasphemy by assuming authority over grace, life, and death, claiming the power to forgive sin, and managing canonization and beatification. Daniel 8:10-13's reference to *hat-tā-mîd* (חַתְּתָמִיד), and Hebrews 8:1-2's reference to *archiereia* (ἀρχιερέα) abrogate these claims. Moreover, this Church violated God's Ten Commandments, particularly the second, fourth, and tenth, as indicated in Daniel 7:25. It propagates unbiblical

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<sup>118</sup> Jones (1898), pp. 591-696. [↗](#)

doctrines from a golden chalice full of abominations. In biblical terms, gold signifies God's glory and divine presence, as shown by the pure gold used in the sanctuary's furnishings (Exodus 25:10-39) and the purity achieved through the Refiner's work (Mal 3:3). That this final phase of Roman power oppressed God's people for 1,260 years during the Medieval Inquisition is an undeniable characteristic of its identity and cannot be objectively refuted. Therefore, when Babylon is referred to as a woman and a great city,<sup>119</sup> its perceived greatness lies in its excellence of deference from the truth. The Roman Church's distortion of salvific aspects in the Word of God is a significant part of its identity. It is contrasted with the City of God, a symbol of the True Church, where God dwells among His people (Ps 46:5-6), and believers are strengthened by His Word through the Spirit (Eph 2:22).

**Revelation 17:6-7.** 6 [...] and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. 7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

John is deeply troubled by what he observes concerning the Church of Christ, which, despite being blessed with Divine grace, has strayed from its faith and loyalty to the source of that grace. This decline is an overwhelming mystery, reminiscent of the fall of Lucifer as depicted in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14. Revelation 18:2, echoing Revelation 14:8, urges everyone to recognize that this once-powerful entity has fallen<sup>120</sup> and is under judgment because God has withdrawn his grace. The angel rebukes John again for his ignorance amid the rich Roman symbolism surrounding him, emphasizing the importance of understanding these signs, as Jesus stated in Matthew 13:16: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your

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<sup>119</sup> In the Bible, 'great city' symbolizes either great apostasy (for example, Jerusalem before the Exile – Jer 22:8; Nineveh – Jonah; Frankish kingdom – Rev 11:8), the Roman Church – Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19), or great adherence to God – Rev 21:10.

<sup>120</sup> The Greek word *epesen* (verb *piptó*, Strong's number 4098) means a deep spiritual falling away and being placed under condemnation. Compare the idol Dagon in 1 Samuel 5:3 in LXX. The Roman Church-State system fell away from God because it failed to meet the divine standard.

ears, for they hear." Despite the rebuke, the angel kindly promises to reveal the mystery of the woman and the beast that bears her, characterized by seven heads and ten horns.

**Revelation 17:8.** The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall 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.

Verse 8 presents a political power (beast) that has temporarily lost its strength (bottomless pit: *ἀβύσσου*, abyss, realm of the death) but will be astonishingly revived. Historical events validate this prophecy, particularly regarding the Papacy's political power, which was taken away from 1798 to 1929, and no one expected its restoration.<sup>121</sup> Nonetheless, it regained power, analogous to Christ's resurrection, claiming to be the earthly representative of Christ. This surprising revival garnered considerable admiration from nations worldwide. The angel warns that those whose names are *not* in God's Book of Life will be fascinated by and honor this resurrected power, recognizing its spiritual leadership, as seen in Revelation 13:4, 7, and 8. The beast will maintain this restored position until Christ's second coming, as referenced in Daniel 2:44, 7:11, and 8:25. The term "wondered" (*thaumázō* in Revelation 13:3-4 and 17:8) conveys a sense of astonishment. At the same time, "worship" (*proskynéō* in Revelation 13:8) implies offering religious respect and reverence, often expressed through humility, such as kissing the ground. These concepts depict complete emotional submission, which is disconnected from reason and common sense, also hinted at in Revelation 13:3 and 8. They remind us of Christ's warnings in Matthew 24:4-5 and Revelation 13:13, urging us to be vigilant and discerning.

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<sup>121</sup> See footnote 59.

**Revelation 17:9.** And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

Verses 9 to 14 provide the most cryptic passage of Revelation 17, which, according to the angel, requires divine wisdom for proper understanding. A thorough examination of Imperial Rome's extensive historical records provides crucial insight into these verses. Four key ideas guide this understanding. The prophecy in Daniel chapters 2, 7, and 8 first outlines the fourth kingdom that would dominate the world. Secondly, there are notable similarities between the red dragon in Revelation 12:3, the beast from the sea in Revelation 13:2, and the scarlet beast of Revelation 17:8, each featuring seven heads and ten horns, with some crowned and others not crowned at distinct periods in history. These symbols of dragons and beasts represent the totality of Roman power across different historical periods, from its founding in 753 BC up to the Second Coming of Christ. Consistently interpreting apocalyptic symbols from Daniel in Revelation challenges the notion of consecutive world powers starting with Egypt.<sup>122</sup> Rather, the sequence of world powers in Daniel 2 begins with Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, and the recurring visions in Daniel 7, 8, 9, and 10 do not regress. In Revelation, the prophetic sequence continues with the early Christian period, symbolized by the Church of Ephesus (Rev 2:1). At that time, the fourth and final world power—Rome—was already in place, underscoring Revelation's concept of timeframe. Logic demands all heads on this beast-power to remain connected to the political entity they signify—Rome. No intelligent arguments exist to decapitate the beast of its heads and apply the heads without the body to different powers and different periods in Earth's history. Furthermore, the angel likens the beast's seven heads to seven mountains. In some Bible translations,<sup>123</sup> the **first**

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<sup>122</sup> The allusion to literal Babylon, referenced by the mouth of a lion, Medo-Persia, referenced by the paws of the bear, and Greece, referenced by the body of the leopard in the representation of the sea beast in Revelation 13:2, emphasizes that the sea beast is a continuation of Daniel's sequence of world powers. No reference is made that the prophecy goes further back to Egypt or Assyria.

<sup>123</sup> See AMP, CEV, GNT, and NIV.

mistranslation of the Greek in Revelation 17 occurs in this verse, leading to a consequential misinterpretation: translating the word *ὄρη* as "hills" and applying it to the seven actual hills on which the city of Rome is built. However, when *ὄρη* is translated as mountain and understood to be 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 are consistent and comprehensible.

**Revelation 17:10-11.** 10 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. 11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

Verse 10 refutes the hills theory because it necessitates the symbolic mountains to come up one after the other, which cannot be said of the literal seven hills of Rome. Further evidence is found in Roman history, which indisputably accounts for Pagan Rome to have experienced seven distinct governmental ruling systems. However, in some Bible translations,<sup>124</sup> Revelation 17:10 contains a **second** mistranslation that obscures understanding. The original Greek states, 'There are seven kings' (Gr. *βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν*). A more precise translation would be, 'There exist seven kings.' These seven kings are significant as they represent the historical stages of the pagan Roman power. It is essential to note that this verse describes the beast, not its heads. The pronoun *αὐτή* (they) in Greek would have been used to refer to the *κεφαλαί* (heads) mentioned in the previous verse if a connection between the kings and the heads was implied. However, in this case, that connection is not made. The characterization of the Roman beast should mirror how the Diadochi kings of Greece are represented by the four horns on the goat in Daniel 7:8 and the four heads of the Panthera in Daniel 8:8. In John's time, five of these ruling Roman governments stages were in the past, one was in power, and a seventh was yet to come.

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<sup>124</sup> See NIV, ESV, and WEB.

Understanding the historical context of Revelation reveals insights that are often overlooked. Additionally, in verse 10, the **third** mistranslation occurs with the Greek phrase ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μεῖναι, which is rendered as "he must continue for a short space" (in KJV) or "he must continue for a short time" (in NKJ). After the sixth governmental stage, Imperial Rome, the historical records confirm a seventh stage, known as the Exarchate of Ravenna. The exarchate was the official imperial administrative structure in the waning Western Roman Empire, which endured 167 years, from 584 to 751. Uriah Smith recognized this phase but dismissed it prematurely; he miscalculated its duration by 100 years, estimating it to be 67 years, yet considered it inconsistent with the term "short." It is interesting to follow his reasoning:

The seven forms of government that have existed in the Roman empire are usually enumerated as follows: (1) kingly; (2) consular; (3) decemvirate; (4) dictatorial; (5) triumvirate; (6) imperial; and (7) papal. Kings, consuls, decemvirs, dictators, and triumvirs had passed away in John's days. He was living under the imperial form. Two more were to arise after his time. One was only to continue a short space and hence is not usually reckoned among the heads; while the last, which is usually denominated the seventh, is in reality the eighth. The head which was to succeed the imperial, and continue a short space, could not be the papal; for that has continued longer than all the rest put together. We understand, therefore, that the papal head is the eighth and that a head of short continuance intervened between the imperial and papal. In fulfillment of this, we read that after the imperial form had been abolished, there was a ruler who for about the space of sixty years governed Rome under the title of the "Exarch of Ravenna".<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Smith (1897), p. 659.3. [↗](#)

A close examination of the original Greek reveals that the terms "time" or "space" (*χρόνον*) are not present as they are in other Bible passages such as Acts 14:28 or "season" or opportunity (*καιρός*) in Revelation 12:12; or "people" (*ὄνόματα*) in Revelation 3:4. Careful analysis ensures a more accurate interpretation of the text. In Revelation 17:10, *ὀλίγον* is used as an adverb, as in 1 Peter 5:10 or 2 Peter 2:18, signifying something of small worth or insignificance. The Roman governing authority in Ravenna was weak and struggled to maintain control in administering the empire's interests against the Ostrogoths and Lombards. Thus, it is appropriate to translate the phrase as "when he comes, he is bound to remain little" regarding its lack of influence and strength during a turbulent political period. Smith and others overlook this mistranslation due to a lack of thorough historical study, resulting in an inaccurate outcome. The papacy eventually filled the governance void left by this final weak imperial authority. (Rev 17:11, 13).

In Revelation 17:11, a **fourth** mistranslation in Revelation 17 becomes apparent. Again, the angel identifies this eighth political stage as "was, was not, and yet is," indicating that it is the "eighth [...] of the seven," which underscores 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. Thus, the beast represents a continuation of Roman power, not a separate entity. The wording in the Greek text emphasizes the origin of the eighth king, reinforcing that it is part of the same lineage rather than simply "one of the seven," as inaccurately suggested by translations like the North American Standard Bible (NAS).<sup>126</sup> Stefanovic (2002) uses the NAS in his book, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. He argues: "We evidently live in the era of the seventh head for the eighth head with its united ten kingdoms has not yet ascended from the abyss but will appear on the worldwide scene in

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<sup>126</sup> The NAS translates Revelation 17:11 as: "*is one of the seven.*" However, the word 'one' is inserted.

the end."<sup>127</sup> When the final one is 'one of the seven,' the sum is seven. Likewise, Smith (1897): "While the last, which is usually denominated the seventh, is in reality the eighth."<sup>128</sup> Arguing, the seventh is the eighth. These explanations bypass the original Greek, historical records, and the historicist methodology of the Seventh-day Adventists' interpretation of time prophecies, while the text unambiguously reads: "The beast ... is the eighth and is of the seven." However, the political power the eighth king represents is directly connected to the earlier seven. This final stage of governance is not a new power but a continuation, which aligns with the imagery in Daniel 2:40-44 regarding the feet of clay and iron as a continuation of the legs of iron. Daniel portrays the fourth beast as distinct in its complexity and military strategies. The subsequent stage of power is equally unique, marked by its origins in the Roman Empire, claims of divinity, and a harsh stance toward dissenters. Stefanovic's work (2002) highlights how this mistranslation in the NAS can lead to a misinterpretation of the text. In his book, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, he argues:

Thus, in the eighth head, the seventh head reappears at the end of the age [...].

We evidently live in the era of the seventh head for the eighth head with its united ten kingdoms has not yet ascended from the abyss but will appear on the worldwide scene in the end. [...] We evidently live in the era of the seventh head for the eighth head with its united ten kingdoms has not yet ascended from the abyss but will appear on the worldwide scene in the end.<sup>129</sup>

Both interpretations, the one presented by Smith, who follows a historicist perspective, and the other given by Stefanovic, based on the NAS translation, are contradicted by

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<sup>127</sup> Stefanovic (2002), p. 516, quoting Desmond Ford (1982), p. 561.

<sup>128</sup> Smith (1897), p. 659.3, [↗](#)

<sup>129</sup> Stefanovic (2002), p. 516; quoting Desmond Ford (1982), p. 561: *"This end-time political power functions much like the previous seven in history as the oppressive power of the world in all ages."*



historical evidence. Smith's assertion that "the last, which is usually denominated the seventh, is, in reality, the eighth" and Stefanovic's reasoning that the eighth king is "one of the seven" and is yet to appear on the world's stage lack coherence. If the final entity is one of the seven or the seventh, the interpretation contradicts the angel's emphasis that there would be eight. Moreover, Roman history testifies to eight. In Revelation 17, the seven heads represent the ruling power of the beast they are part of, as in Daniel 7:6. Following the fall of the exarchate, the Roman Church exerted political influence over the remnants of the Western Roman Empire. Thus, the eighth king continued the Church-State relationship that originated "from the seven." It is historically identified as the Pontifical Roman Elective Absolute Monarchy of Vatican City State, which served as the government of the Papal States—the final stage of Roman Power.

**Revelation 17:12.** 12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

In Revelation 12:12, a **fifth** mistranslation surfaces. Many SDAs interpret this verse as meaning that an upcoming tumultuous period would last for one prophetic hour or fifteen literal days. However, reading the Greek in its context, portrays an undefined, divine-appointed season of unity (Rev 17:12: Gr.: μίαν ὥραν; Hebr.:  $\pi\eta\chi$  echad). Verses 13-14 also highlight this assertion. A European coalition will spearhead a season of great tribulation for God's people. Revelation 17:17 emphasizes that unknowingly, they will do God's will, powerfully reflecting his control over the affairs of men.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> The term "one hour" also appears in Revelation 18:10, 17, and 19. There, the allusion is to a sudden, swift situation change without suggesting a defined period.

**Revelation 17:13-14.** 13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. 14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful.

John also receives further details about a political alliance composed of the ten horns: Europe, the land beast (Revelation 13:11-17, representing the United States), and the sea beast (Revelation 13:1-2, representing the Holy See). Once more, these entities are expected to engage in a religious conflict against Christ and his chosen, namely his High Priestly role on their behalf (Rom 8:1) and in the freedom of conscience for his people. Those not included in the Book of the Living—whether believers or nonbelievers—will be surprised to see that from 756 to 1798, this political power was exceptionally influential. Although its power waned from 1798 to 1929, it re-emerged in 1929, mirroring Christ's death and resurrection. This beast's remarkable resurgence to global dominance astonishes the world.<sup>131</sup>

**Revelation 17:15-16.** 15 And he saith unto me, the waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. 16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

The concluding verses of the chapter encapsulate the angel's interpretation using complex symbolic language. While the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of these verses is mainly accurate, it misses significant historical nuances. The decline of Papal political power was a gradual process that unfolded over a millennium:

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<sup>131</sup> Monday, February 11, 1929. The Lateran Treaty consisted of three resolutions: (1) Vatican City State is the Pope's inviolable territory, guaranteeing his political independence; (2) a concordat concerning Church-State relations with the Italian government; (3) compensation for lost papal possessions. William Park (1906–1950), a Liverpool student at the *Venerabilis Collegii Anglorum de Urbe*, a Catholic seminary in Rome, recorded: "*The whole of Catholic Italy rose with one voice, forgetful for the moment of their political sentiments. The negotiations had been carried on with such secrecy and were shrouded in such mystery, that although the atmosphere was electric with rumour of every description, their publication could not but evoke a sudden outburst ...All the streets and particularly the Corso were fired with colour; only the Cancelleria and the other ecclesiastical palaces preserved their sombre gravity... Even the old carrozza-drivers gave vent to their feelings in the form of little Papal ribbons in the lamps or twisted round the horses' ears. [...] The cheering when the Holy Father appeared was stupendous – the more remarkable as there seemed to be scarcely room to breathe*" (The Venerabile, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 220-221; 285–286). [2](#)

**Rejection of Political Claims.** The Church insisted that European kings and emperors had to be crowned by the Pope or, with his approval, imitating former Byzantine practices. Ironically, tension arose with Charlemagne, who resisted the Roman Church's political claims over his reign. This friction spread across Europe, confiscating Church wealth and property in countries such as England, Spain, and France. During this feudalization and secularization period, two significant processes occurred at varied times in different regions:

**Ending and Reviving Political Power:** The gradual decline of the Church's political authority over the vast Holy Roman Empire (952-1806) was driven by various European revolutions. The people of Europe increasingly rejected the Roman Church's ecclesiastical claims over their civil governments, leading to the confiscation of much of the Church's wealth and territory. The friction with the "woman-beast system" reached a pivotal moment in 1798 when French troops under General Berthier exiled Pope Pius VI and incorporated his territory into the French Republic. The Congress of Vienna, held in 1814-15, aimed to restore political balance in Europe after the Napoleonic Wars, partially reinstating the Church's status as a religious and political entity and restoring some of its confiscated properties in Italy and France.<sup>132</sup> Nevertheless, the decline of Papal political power was ultimately inevitable. Following the significant political upheaval in 1798, King Victor Emmanuel of Italy assumed control of the remaining Papal States in 1870. Only in 1929, with the signing of the Lateran Treaties, was Vatican City's current territory of 0.44 hectares recognized as the inviolable territory of the independent Papal Monarchy, effectively healing its political wound.

**Decline of Ecclesiastical Authority:** Although the papacy's political influence was significantly diminished, Pope Pius VI maintained his papal title until he died in exile in 1799, and in 1801, a new Pope was consecrated. Despite the Church's ecclesiastical claims

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<sup>132</sup> Vick (2014), pp. 153-92.

remaining intact, she was left "desolate and naked" – symbolic language for denouncing ecclesiastical eminence, "eat her flesh" – symbolic language for abrogating political power,<sup>133</sup> and "burn her with fire" – symbolic language for the fire ignited by the Reformation led by figures such as Martin Luther. The rise of Protestantism directly challenged the ecclesiastical authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Revelation 17:16 alludes to Europe—symbolized by the ten horns—rejecting the political power of the Roman Church by seizing its territories and confiscating the woman's wealth, fulfilling divine will without their awareness.

**Revelation 17:17-18.** 17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. 18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

The closing verses of Revelation 17 hint that the Church-State system, reminiscent of the eighth phase of Rome, will resurface and demand total submission to its religious and political demands "until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (verse 17) and "until all will have been accomplished" (Dan 11:36). Jesus uses the word *γενέσθαι* in Revelation 1:19 and 4:1. During the Middle Ages, the Roman Church wielded the support of European nations to persecute dissenters. These practices are expected to be returned during the final events. This revival of the persecuting system is reminiscent of the Inquisition, as depicted in Revelation 13:13-14, which will see America, symbolized as the beast from the earth, creating a version of this oppressive regime. The world's inhabitants will be commanded to honor the beast from the sea and recognize its false mark of authority, facing persecution and death for dissent. This reinstated "image of the beast" foreshadows the final confrontation between good and evil, affecting believers and non-believers alike (Rev 12:11 and 17:14).

Crowns symbolize the authority of the ten kingdoms that were formed after the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire. Notably, Roman power evolved from and

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<sup>133</sup> Obviously, the flesh of a beast can only be eaten after the creature is slain.

ultimately returned to an absolute monarchy. In Revelation 13:1-2, the ten horns, representing authority across the kingdoms formed after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, are crowned. However, this is not the case in Revelation 17:3. The vision foretells that the kings of Europe are referred to as the ten horns or "many waters" in Revelation 17:1, and "many waters – peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (Rev 17:8 and 16) will grant their rulership to a confederate system during this phase of the fourth beast. This begs the question of whether this confederate refers to the European Union.<sup>134</sup> These nations will again conduct God's will (Rev 17:17). Revelations 13 and 17 are interconnected, helping us understand the two-front conflict the Saints will encounter against evil powers:

1. Revelation 13:15-18 indicates that the United States will demand honor for the Roman beast and its ecclesiastical claims. The Pilgrim Fathers, who sought refuge from persecution, now face a society where those not recorded in heaven will focus on earthly concerns, forced to navigate social and economic exclusion. They may comply ('mark on the forehead') or consent to requirements ('mark on the right hand,' Revelation 13:16-17). In contrast, those whose names are written in heaven will maintain their focus on the Lamb and their heavenly citizenship, marked on their foreheads (Revelation 7:3-4 and 14:1, 3-5). These individuals will recognize that social and economic exclusion and death are insignificant compared to the prospect of eternal salvation.
2. In Revelation 17:13-14, the European nations represented by the ten horns will again align with the Roman beast, agreeing to empower the Roman Church to persecute God's people (Revelation 17:13-14). This unholy alliance will create global terror for the saints.

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<sup>134</sup> McCormick (2002), p.33: *"The earliest proponents of unity were motivated in part by their belief that a united Christian Europe was essential for the revival of the Holy Roman Empire and by concern about Europe's insecurity in the face of gains by the Turks in Asia Minor; most of the proposals for unity were based on the argument that the supremacy of the papacy should be revived (Heater, 1992, p. 6). A notable example was the suggestion made in 1306 by the French lawyer and diplomat Pierre Dubois (b. 1255)."*

Ironically, the nation that once provided refuge from the Inquisition will adopt similar coercive tactics. On this, LaRondelle makes an interesting remark:

The city of Rome was not destroyed when the Goths captured it in A.D. 410, nor when the nations of Europe replaced the Roman Empire in A.D. 476. The prophecy of the utter destruction and eternal desolation of the harlot city in Revelation 17-18 was, therefore, not fulfilled in the fall of the ancient Roman Empire. Instead, the city became the new "Holy City" of Christendom, because of the "Holy See" or throne of the "holy father," who for many centuries has stood "in a more lofty eminence than had ever been attained by the Caesars." The judgment visions in Revelation 17-18 will find their fulfillment only in the future doom of the Babylonian Harlot, the final configuration of religious apostasy.<sup>135</sup>

The final confrontation will be new wine in old wineskins. Satan's strategy involves using political powers to achieve ecclesiastical goals. History has repeatedly shown this pattern, from the days of Queen Esther and Daniel's companions in Daniel 3 to the early Christian church in its infancy and through various historical persecutions. Ellen White expressed the Adventist perspective on prophecies in Daniel and Revelation as early as 1897:

We are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Many of the prophecies are about to be fulfilled in quick succession. Every element of power is about to be set to work. Past history will be repeated; old controversies will arouse to new life, and peril will beset God's people on every side. [...] The scenes of persecution enacted during Christ's life will be enacted by false religionists till the close of time. Men think that they have a right to take into their

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<sup>135</sup> LaRondelle in DARCOM, Vol 7, p. 171.

charge the consciences of men and work out their theories of apostasy and transgression. History will be repeated.<sup>136</sup>

Revelation 17 concludes with a message of hope and encouragement to God's people to stay faithful. A strong coalition of church-state powers, the European ten kings, and the earth beast of Revelation 13:11 will be allowed to wage war against those who remain loyal to God, referred to as the "remnant of her seed." This group follows God's commandments, abides by the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev 12:17), and is also called the Chosen (Rev 17:14). They will choose not to comply with the pressures of the coalition, standing firm in their faith with the true King of kings<sup>137</sup> beside them. The climactic events are depicted as a final struggle for the mind, highlighted in Revelation 16:12-21. This conflict is symbolized in Joel 3:13-14 as a valley of decisions. Zechariah 12:10-11 mentions that "they will look on me, the one they have pierced.," and the mourning will be as great as that in the plain (or valley) of Megiddo (see also John 19:37 and Rev 1:7). The ultimate clash is referred to as Har-Megiddon in Revelation 16:16, representing the Battle of the Mountains against God in this valley of final decisions. The term "Har" means mountain in Hebrew, which aligns with the Greek word *ὄρος* used in Revelation 17:9, symbolizing a kingdom. Although the nations will conspire against God, this overwhelming experience will not succeed in eradicating His people. Believers are reminded that this struggle will be temporary, while God's solutions are eternal, providing a solid foundation against fleeting trials. The strong confederation will be destroyed, as described in Daniel 2:35, where they are blown away like chaff in the wind. In God's view, the powerful are insignificant (Eccl 9:11; Mark 3:27). Christ will be the ultimate

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<sup>136</sup> White (1897), RH August 31, 1897, par 7 [↗](#); 12LtMs, Ms 111, 1897, par 41/ 12MR 413.3. [↗](#)

<sup>137</sup> The rulers of the previous world powers, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece, assumed the title of King of kings. Although Roman rulers did not, their titles of Augustus, Imperator, and Caesar reflect their desire for dominance. The papal tiara suggests the same by the Pope's title, "Father of kings." [↗](#)

Absolute Monarch, establishing his everlasting kingdom without human intervention (Dan 2:34, 45; Dan 7:9-14). The angel assures the readers and hearers of Revelation that the chosen and faithful will triumph with him (Rev 17:14, cf. Rev 12:11). Their loyalty, faithfulness, and testimony of faith are crucial to this victory. As the final earthly kingdom ends, the Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan will end, with Christ alone as King of the Universe. This outcome is a mighty encouragement to remain loyal to the God of heaven, expecting his imminent return as a mighty warrior to deliver his people (Rev 22:20-21).



## CONCLUSIONS

The Book of Revelation is a sequel to the Book of Daniel, revealed by the exact significant figures: 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 framework based on theoretical concepts 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 conflicting 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.<sup>138</sup>

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 aspires to offer insights beyond the Adventist community, delivering clear explanations for individuals seeking to understand the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) interpretation more thoroughly. The significance of this study is highlighted by its examination of key symbols in Revelation 12-18, which contribute to a broader understanding of Revelation 17, informed by four essential theoretical concepts. 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, specifically emphasizing 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 theoretical and conceptual ideas for interpreting Revelation: the prophetic context, the conception of Revelation as a singular vision, the timeframe of events, and the historical

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<sup>138</sup> White, CW (1946), p. 35.2-36.1/RH December 20, 1892, par 1.[↗](#)

context. This innovative methodology seeks to challenge traditional interpretations and foster new perspectives, positing that the oversight of these fundamental concepts has led to inconsistent understandings of the text.

Several issues merit further attention, particularly the insufficient consideration of theoretical concepts 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 accurate interpretation. 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 vital for ensuring a cohesive 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 instead of a singular, cohesive vision yields disconnected interpretations undermining 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. Ignoring 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 Revelation's historical context, 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 Roman Draco (or serpent) is meant in 12:3-4 as a symbol of Roman power. The prophetic term "Beast" is reserved for 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.
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. A mountain is a common biblical 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, symbol 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, 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): The climactic pre-millennium showdown event will shatter all the world's dominions.

**Perceived Mistranslations.** Additionally, the researcher perceived five probable mistranslations- or rather, misinterpretations of the Greek text that have surfaced, obscuring understanding of Revelation 17. These mistranslations are not strange, given that most Bible translators and commentators did not fully understand 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 a symbol. However, 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 government stages of the pagan Roman power. It is important to note that the pronoun *αὐτῇ* (they) in Greek would have been used to refer to the *κεφαλαὶ* (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 analysis ensures that *ὀλίγον* is used as an 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." The papacy eventually filled the governance void left by this final weak imperial authority, becoming the eighth.

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 part of 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 mistranslation surfaces in Revelation 17:12. Reading the Greek in its context, portrays a divinely appointed season of unity (Rev 17:12: Gr.: *μίαν ὥραν*; Hebr.: *תקף Echad*) instead of the communal belief that the confederation will last for 15 literal days. Verses 13-14 and Revelation 17:17 emphasize that they will unknowingly do God's will, powerfully highlighting his control over the affairs of men.

**Enhancing understanding of Revelation 17.** Answering the first research question: *Can a new framework based on theoretical concepts enhance the interpretation of Revelation 17?*,

is to be: **Yes.** The novel approach of theoretical conceptual ideas solidifies the interpretation and understanding of Revelation because it contextualizes the knowledge of a highly imaginary discourse. The seven concepts are foundational to the various contexts presented in the vision, which are to 21st-century readers as difficult as learning a new language. The advice of Jesus applies: "What is written; how readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). Utilizing the four proposed theoretical conceptual ideas, 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, creating a beautiful picture of the climatic events of Earth's history and the final operations of Earth's final kingdom, Rome, and its allies.

**Impacting Prevalent SDA Theology.** Answering the second research question: *How do established interpretations align with the findings presented in this research, and what implications arise from these comparisons?*, is less straightforward than the first. Yes, the research methodology of approaching the interpretation of Revelation 17 from the boundaries of foundational, theoretical, and conceptual ideas potentially impacts the field of academic biblical SDA interpretation and SDA communal understanding. The research demonstrates that several interpretations the Seventh-day Adventist Church has adhered to regarding some passages of Revelation's midsection are inconsistent with the indisputable interpretation of the symbols given by Jesus through his angel to Daniel and John. Additionally, some significant mistranslations of the Greek texts further complicate the interpretation of Revelation. These mistranslations have a firm foothold in general Biblical Theology. The research shows that the perceived issues with the texts prevent proper interpretation and understanding of the passages under scrutiny. The research outcome diverges on some crucial points from prevailing SDA academic work. While more study is needed, the researcher takes full credit for her stance and trust in a meaningful discussion at the 2025 Revelation 17



Conference. Seventh-day Adventists have always acquired knowledge through due process and have boldly addressed scriptural mistranslations from the standpoint that, through 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. Since consistency is a prerequisite for scrutiny, it is crucial to be humble to acknowledge when these prerequisites have not been met. 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.<sup>139</sup>

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

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<sup>139</sup> White, 5T, p. 707.1 [↗](#); LDE, p. 70.1 [↗](#)

searching, investigating, listening, reviewing, researching, and praying with the conviction that God may enlighten and enlarge its understanding of the salvation story."<sup>140</sup>

**Acknowledging the Researcher's Contribution.** The researcher draws courage from these open-minded perspectives because she firmly believes that the four theoretical concepts serve as solid theoretical boundaries 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 understandable 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 concepts 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, particularly regarding the prophetic messages of the Bible. This openness reflects the church's intellectual curiosity and readiness to adapt its understanding of divine revelations.
2. The interpretations of Daniel and Revelation are not formalized as fundamental beliefs within the SDA Church. The concept of Present Truth resists the codification of interpretation of apocalyptic and eschatological visions since, by definition, it is the ever-deepening understanding of the historical fulfillment of biblical time prophecies. In other words, our understanding of Daniel and Revelation is not based on theological scholarship but on understanding secular history, which challenges our understanding of God's authority (Deut 18:21-22, Isa 45:21, and Jer 28:9).

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<sup>140</sup> Knight (2000), p. 8.

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.<sup>141</sup> This record of overcoming obstacles instills confidence in navigating novel approaches to the Apocalypse.
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 role of the Spirit in guiding holy men and women. 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, one of the church's founders, made stern remarks regarding 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

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<sup>141</sup> Rosario (2020). [↗](#)

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 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.<sup>142</sup>

**Final Remarks.** In concluding observations regarding Bible prophecy, addressing the need for a thoughtful reconsideration 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 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 on a Hill. As attendees and presenters, we must uphold a stance of independence and continual learning.

While divine credibility rests upon the outcomes of time prophecy, it is crucial to recognize that proposed interpretations are merely 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 increased fidelity and

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<sup>142</sup> White, 1888 Materials, pp. 186.2, 188.1. [↗](#)

dedication to Jesus Christ and reconciliation with God. A fundamental principle remains paramount: the Bible is the sole authoritative interpreter of truth. Any alternative perspective must be rigorously aligned with Scripture, consistently and unwaveringly. The researcher encourages ongoing reflection and dialogue surrounding Bible prophecy to sustain an engaging and dynamic discussion within the community.

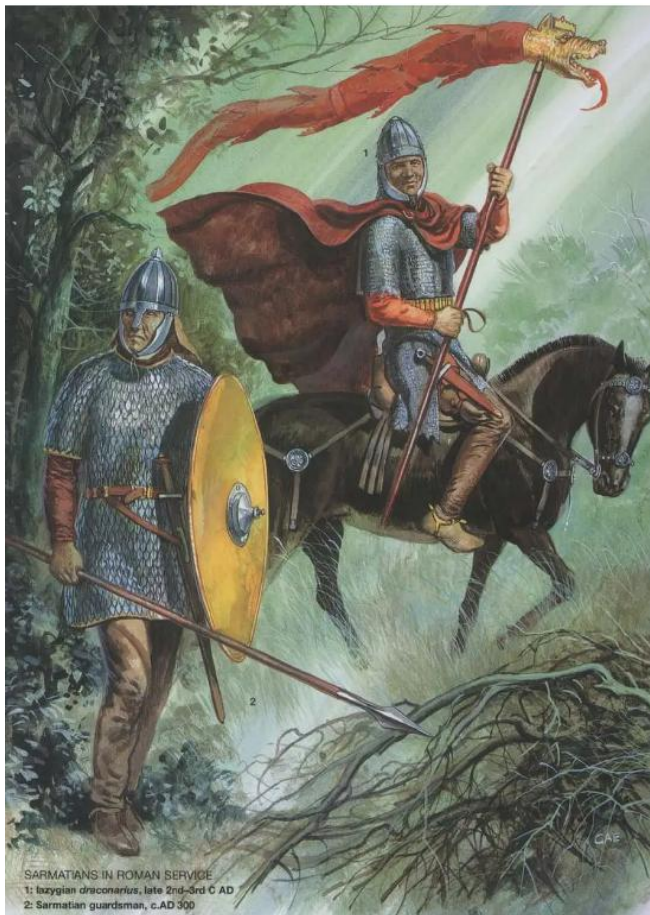
## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The research yielded significant insights into interpreting the midsection of Revelation, particularly chapter 17. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that limitations may have shaped its findings and interpretations. Acknowledging these biases and understanding why the results emerged as they did is not just a scholarly pursuit but a crucial step in furthering our understanding of prophecy and its role in shaping our beliefs and interpretations.

1. **Academic credibility of the researcher.** While the researcher is academically educated in biology, Biochemistry, Entomology, Environmental Studies, and higher education, she has embarked on a theological endeavor. This may be taken as a reason to disqualify the work. However, the SDA Church has always believed that the Lord qualifies who he calls and that he alone ascertains his instruments
2. **Potential impact on the trustworthiness of SDA beliefs.** Based on the results, the researcher recognizes that the potential implications for SDA academic theology and communal congregational beliefs warrant caution. However, the SDA Church has a record for doctrinal courage.
3. **Academic supervision is needed for further research.** A more in-depth review of the issues encountered is required to ascertain the arguments underlying the assertions to qualify for academic work of standard (Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD thesis). Also, a broad discussion of the impact of the prevalent Adventist interpretation is required before the SDA academics and community may accept the results. A committee of theologians, in which the researcher would like to be involved, should reevaluate the results.
4. **The Present Truth Principle.** SDA biblical teachings have always been at the forefront of understanding, keeping us in suspense as to whether the interpretation is accurate (e.g., Josiah Litch's prediction in 1838 that the Ottoman Empire would lose its independence in August 1840). Prophecy is only unambiguously established when history has happened. The final things will never be established, for time will not record history.

5. **Methodology.** While a more extensive literature review may be advisable for the three remaining concepts—ecclesiastical, political, and geographic—contextualizing theoretical concepts has proved to be a strong and innovative approach to interpreting Revelation. Further study may be needed to establish it as a research method in biblical studies.
6. **Paper limitations.** For example, the connection between the Holy See, "the ten kings," and the European Union to get more insight into what is meant by "the gathering of the kings of the earth [...] to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev 16:14); the typology of Armageddon, as proposed to mark the ending of the seventh plague in a pre-millennium context, and the application of theoretical conceptual ideas that have not been covered thoroughly—ecclesiastical, political, and geographical. These subjects will be covered in more detail in the book manuscript and may provide additional context.
7. **Style inconsistencies.** The paper is a work in progress. Inconsistencies in writing style may have occurred in references, footnotes, and the bibliography.

## APPENDIX I: THE ROMAN DRACO IMAGE



This image highlights an artist's impression of the Draco standard of the Roman cavalry, meticulously restored from the pedestal of Trajan's Column and enhanced with details from a standard head discovered in Niederbieber, Germany. The 'tail of the Draco' was crafted from lightweight materials, likely silk, with added hoops to help it maintain its impressive shape as the wind danced through it.

Arrian, in his influential work "Ars Tact." (35.3-4), vividly described the

Draco standard as a flying, hissing beast—an embodiment of power and ferocity. In the era of John, the serpent-like Draco, adorned in striking shades of yellow, purple, or scarlet, represented the indomitable strength of the Roman army. Believed to have Sarmatian origins, this iconic dragon standard played a crucial role in guiding horse archers by indicating the direction of the wind. This practical use significantly enhanced the effectiveness of the Roman cavalry. The vibrant red color of the Draco may well have emerged when Sarmatian equestrians joined the Roman forces as Iazygian draconian mercenaries around 34-35 AD. The Latin term 'draco' aptly translates to 'huge serpent,' emphasizing its significance and grandeur and coinciding with the symbolism in Revelation 12:3. See Coulston in footnote 105.



## APPENDIX II: GREAT CYCLES OF SEVEN

According to theological academics, the seven local churches in Asia Minor stood as models for seven Christological periods from the inception of Christianity until the second coming of Jesus. The messages of the seven churches reveal the spiritual state and challenges that God's people encountered in different historical periods.<sup>143</sup>



**Chart 1:** Situation of the seven literal churches in Asia Minor

**The Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3).** Although there were more congregations in the year 95, it is improbable that the Revelation was intended exclusively for the seven churches in Asia Minor. The mention of these seven churches within a prophetic context has led scholars to interpret them as symbols of broader themes. Historical analyses suggest that the spiritual conditions and challenges these seven literal churches faced aligned with the spiritual issues encountered by the Christian Church throughout its historical epochs.

<sup>143</sup> Smith (1897), pp. 402-34 [↗](#) and 452-87 [↗](#). An Exposition of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation VIII and IX, (Battle Creek, MI, Stem Press, 1866). Lib AU, retrieved from Scribd on January 1, 2025.

Just as the apocalyptic visions in the Book of Daniel begin with a broad overview in Daniel 2 and are further elaborated upon in Daniel 7-12, the seven messages presented at the outset of Revelation function as an overarching summary of Christianity from the first century until the second coming of Christ. Within this framework, Jesus employs a narrative style like that found in Daniel, establishing a connection between the two biblical texts. According to Seventh-day Adventist theology, the seven seals detailed in Revelation 6 and the seven trumpets described in Revelation 8 and 9 augment the initial overview of the seven churches. The seals illustrate the Gospel's challenges from internal dynamics and external adversities. In contrast, the trumpets symbolize the gradual dismantling of Pagan Roman authority, first in the West through the movements of Germanic tribes and subsequently in the East through Islamic incursions—events of considerable historical significance.

**The Seven Seals (Revelation 6).** The evolution of the Gospel message is revealed in the scene of the seven seals and a captivating parable of four horses and three woes. The plan of God is sealed with seven seals. The application is straightforward: the first four seals' horses marching through time correspond to the first four Church eras in Revelation 2. The colors of the horses indicate the purity of the Church era:

1. White – the total committed Ephesus era: 33-100
2. Red – the persecuted Smyrna era that suffered from the Pagan Roman oppressors: 100-313.
3. Chlorotic – the anemic Pergamum era of Christianized paganism, when the emperors assumed Christianity, making the Christian Church part of their Church-State system: 313-538.

4. Black is the dark medieval period of the Roman Catholic Church, the Thyatira era, when the Catholic Church ruled the former Western Roman Empire, which would become Europe, until the start of the Reformation: 538-1565.

What followed were three woes, emphasizing that the hope of restoration to loyalty towards God got lost due to politics and the ignorance of its people:

5. The Sardes era – when the Reformation lost all its leverage against the Catholic Church because it adopted many false doctrines: 1565-1740.
6. The Philadelphia Revival era: A Return to the Book – The Expectant Church: 1740-1844.
7. The final phase, corresponding to the Laodicea era, saw the complacent Church judged for negligence, not for false doctrines: 1844—the second coming.

**The Seven Trumpets (Revelation 8-9).** The prophecy of the dismantling of the Pagan Roman Empire is remarkably detailed. While most of Revelation focuses on the Western Empire, the trumpets span the entire duration of the fourth beast. In biblical tradition, the trumpet signifies a call to arms. Historical documentation reflects the conflicts with Germanic tribes in the Western territories and the confrontations with the Saracens and Ottomans in the Eastern regions, all of which contributed to the decline of the Pagan Roman power. The level of detail within the prophecy, encompassing various territories and the nature of the conflicts, is awe-inspiring. Ultimately, Western Roman power transitioned to the Holy Roman Empire around 800, with the Eastern territories succumbing to Islamic influence by the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

**Historical Timeline of the Fall of the Roman Empire Related to the Seven Trumpets.** The following timeline outlines momentous events and figures associated with the decline of the Roman Empire, contextualized within the biblical prophecy of the seven trumpets in Revelation 8 and 9:

1. Visigoths/Alaric (395-410): Alaric, leader of the Visigoths, led the sack of Rome in 410.
2. Vandals/Genseric (428-468): Under the leadership of Genseric, the Vandals operated during this period, sacking Rome in 455.
3. Huns/Attila (451-469): Attila the Hun led numerous European invasions.
4. Odoacer and Theodoric (476-526): Odoacer deposed the last Western Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustulus, in 476, while Theodoric the Ostrogoth governed Italy from 493 to 526. The actions of these conquerors are symbolically echoed in the prophecy; for instance, Odoacer's deposition of the emperor can be understood in terms of the 'sun' symbol within the prophecy.

Byzantine Reconquest (538-565): Under the leadership of Justinian I, the Byzantine Empire reconquered portions of the Western Roman Empire, beginning in 538, thereby solidifying the authority of the Pope over the Christian Church through the issuance of the Codex Justinianus in 529. This authority was further crystallized as the Lombards occupied Rome, effectively ending the consulship in 541 (symbolized by the "moon" in the prophecy) and the Senate in 552 (represented by the "stars" in the prophecy). The Byzantine general Narses also played a pivotal role during this period, a testament to the significant role of the Byzantine Empire in this historical context.

Exarchate of Ravenna (584-751): The Byzantine administration in Ravenna governed Rome, its aristocracy (including the Pope), and other reconquered duchies in Italy from 584 to 751 and marked the seventh phase of Roman governance in the Western territories. In 751, the Lombards terminated Byzantine influence within the Western regions, seizing substantial portions of papal lands in Italy. In a strategic maneuver, the Popes sought assistance from the Franks, who recaptured the papal lands from the Lombards in 752. This highlights the political acumen and strategic maneuvering

exercised by the Popes during these tumultuous times, a fascinating aspect of this historical period.

Papal Rome (from 756 to 1798, and from 1929 to the end): Constantine the Great incorporated the preference of Christianity into his State model; Justinian I chiseled Catholicism into law through his Justinian Code in 533, and the bishops of Rome began to exert ecclesiastical hegemony after Clovis defeated the Arian Visigoths in 507.

Clovis was the first Germanic king to convert to Catholicism. In 508, he set the stage for the papacy's march to political power. His Merovingian Frankish kingdom became a stout defender of the Catholic faith, protector of the Papacy, and campaigner against the Arian heresy. His support helped to establish papal political power, which took effect in 756, when Pepin the Short, king of the Frankish Carolingian kingdom, donated significant portions of Italy to the Pope, heralding the eighth Roman governmental phase in the Western territories.<sup>144</sup>

5. Saracens/Mohammed (622-1299): This period refers to the rise of Islam and its subsequent expansion within the Byzantine Empire.
6. Turks/Othman (1299-1449): This phase encompasses the emergence of the Ottoman Turks and their subsequent influence over Christendom, culminating in the definitive fall of Constantinople in 1453.

The fifth and sixth trumpets are depicted in the prophecy in considerable detail (Rev 9:14-21). The fulfillment is thus, July 12, 1299, to July 27, 1449: 150 years or five prophetic months, according to Revelation 9:5. From July 27, 1449, to August 11, 1840, Islam ruled over Christendom: 390 years and 15 days, according to Revelation 9:14-15. The seventh trumpet heralds in Revelation 11:15. The scenes depicted in Revelation 11:1-12 allude to the

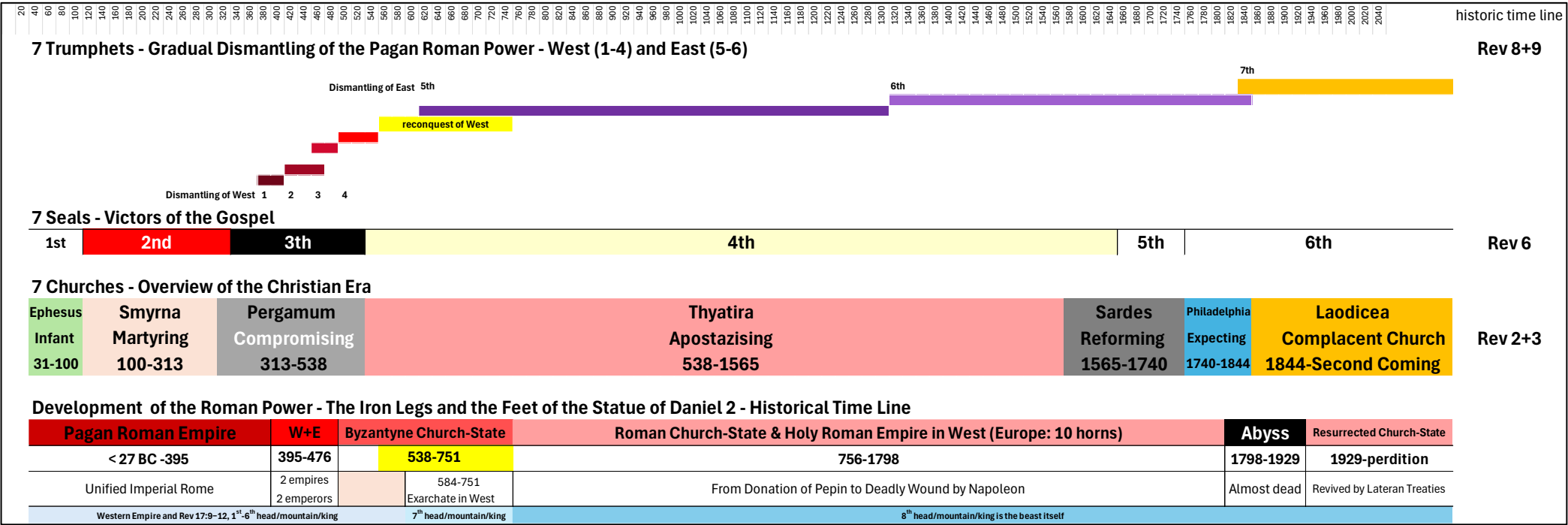
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<sup>144</sup> Mitchell (2025) [2](#); and Drinkwater (2025) [2](#).

atrocities of the French Revolution and the Endtime message. With the sounding of the seventh trumpet, probation closes.

The chart on the next page illustrates the alignment of the rise and fall of the Pagan Roman power and the rise of the Papal Roman power with the three cycles of seven in Revelation. These cycles, which include the seven churches, the seven seals, and the seven trumpets, are a recurring motif in the book, each offering a unique perspective on the unfolding of history. The seven plagues in Revelation 16 are different. They do not portray the evolution of the Christian Church through the ages. They start when probation ends and are God's wrath over those who are not saved.

**Chart 2:** The three Cycles of Seven, alongside the historical periods of the fourth kingdom, Rome



(Sources: Smith (1897), pp. 402-34 [↗](#) and 452-87 [↗](#). An Exposition of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation VIII and IX, (Battle Creek, MI, Stem Press, 1866). Lib AU, retrieved from Scribd on January 1, 2025)

### APPENDIX III: THE TRIAS POLITICA JUDAEAN GOVERNMENT STYLE

From the nation's inception until the Babylonian exile, Israel and later Judah had a two-part rulership: 1) The King, the national leader and head of the nation. The House of David was supposed to provide for the kings in Judah. 2) The High Priest was the religious leader, head of all the temple ceremonies, and judge. As a Judicial Court, the Sanhedrin was introduced after the Babylonian exile.

#### **The King**

**Davidian Dynasty (1004-605 BC).** David was Israel's second king after Saul (1024-1004 BC). He became a type of Christ in the Old Testament. He was a shepherd, a king, and a man after God's heart, and he was promised that his kingdom would last forever through the Messiah from his loins. He became king of Judah and, in 1004 BC, extended his reign over both Judah and Israel, lasting until 971 BC. After the reign of his son Salomon (971-931 BC), the kingdom of Israel was divided in Judah, consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin under Salomon's son Rehoboam, and the ten other tribes became the kingdom of Israel under the command of Jeroboam (931-910 BC),<sup>145</sup> an officer of Solomon from the house of Ephraim. Eventually, Israel was conquered by Assyria and went into exile in 722 BC. This event marked the end of the kingdom of Israel (2 Kgs 17:10).

Judah was conquered by Babylon and carried away into exile in three phases, from 609 to 587 BC.<sup>146</sup> Judah survived the Babylonian Exile but could never reclaim its independent kingship role. In the year 538 BC, during the reign of Cyrus, the Jews were permitted to return to their homeland. Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:8), son of Shealtiel, led the first group of returnees and ruled Judea for two years. He was from the line of David. After Zerubbabel, Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem in 445 BC and was appointed governor of Judah by

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<sup>145</sup> Thiele (1994), p.10.

<sup>146</sup> Kohlberg (2010), pp. 44-50.



Artaxerxes. After Nehemiah, Hananiah (Nehemiah 7:2) became governor. Historical records portray the 'kings of Judah' as vassals and governors of the Persian, Greek, and Roman authorities rather than as descendants of the House of David.

**Hasmonean Dynasty (168-37 BC).** The Hasmonean dynasty ruled from 168 to 37 BC, reasserting Jewish religious authority. The high priest was the supreme authority. During this period, there were 11 kings, one queen, and appointed Ethnarchs, the governors of ethnic districts or leaders of homogeneous ethnic groups. Nine kings also assumed the role of High Priest, in addition to their role as Judge. During the reign of Aristobulus II (66-63 BC), Judea lost its independence to Rome in 63 BC. Hyrcanus II, his brother, was reinstalled as High Priest from about 79-40 BC.<sup>147</sup> In 47 BC, Julius Caesar restored some political authority to Hyrcanus, appointing him to the dual role of ethnarch, client king,<sup>148</sup> and high priest. This, however, had little practical effect since Hyrcanus yielded to Antipater in all matters. The second triumvirate leader, Marcus Antonius (43-33 BC), discarded the kingship of Judah and appointed Antipater I the Idumaeen (113-43 BC), the founder of the Herodian Dynasty and the father of Herod the Great, to represent the Roman interests. The fall of the Hasmonean Kingdom to the Romans marked the end of Jewish self-governance.

**The Herodian Dynasty (37 BC-44 AD).** After the decline of the Hasmonean dynasty, Antipater I established the Herodian Dynasty. He was a close friend of the Roman general and dictator Julius Caesar, who entrusted him with the public affairs of Judea. His son, Herod the Great (37-4 BC),<sup>149</sup> was appointed tetrarch in 40 BC by Mark Antony, a tribune. After an

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<sup>147</sup> John Hyrcanus II (*Yohanan Hurqanos*) (died 30 BC), a member of the Hasmonean dynasty, was a Jewish High Priest in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. He was also briefly King of Judea 67–66 BC and then the ethnarch (ethnic ruler) of Judea, probably over the period 47–40 BC. [↗](#)

<sup>148</sup> Client or Vassal kings were quasi-monarchs of non-Roman descent who enjoyed the protection of the Roman Senate. Client kingdoms were usually located at the margins of the Roman Empire in areas that Rome would find difficult and expensive to administer directly. In return, client kings expected Rome to ensure their positions locally. Often, Ethnarchs and Tetrarchs served as client kings. (Oxford Reference, accessed on December 3, 2024). [↗](#)

<sup>149</sup> He is the Herod who ordered the massacre of the children of Bethlehem (Matt 2:16).

attempted power coup by his nephew of Hyrcanus II, the Roman Senate unexpectedly granted him the title "King of the Jews" in 39 or 40 BC.<sup>150</sup> The Romans never again awarded the title King of the Jews to the extent they did with Herod the Great. His sons were client kings, ethnarchs, or tetrarchs— ethnic rulers over a quarter of the nation.

After the death of Herod the Great, the Romans divided his kingdom among his three sons and his sister:

1. Herod Archelaus (4 BC-6 AD). He is mentioned in Matthew 2:13-23.
2. Herod Antipas (4 BC-39 AD). He is referred to as "Herod the Tetrarch" in Matthew 14:1-12 and "King Herod" in Mark 6:14-29 and participated in the trial of Jesus (Luke 23:7). The Jews were aware that there was no formal Judean king (see John 19:15 and Acts 1:6).
3. Herod Philip II (4 BC-34 AD). Luke mentions him in Luke 3:1; and
4. Salome I (4 BC-10 AD). Her daughter Berenice was the mother of famous royals mentioned in the Bible:
  - a. Herodias, who was instrumental in the beheading of John the Baptist.
  - b. Herod Agrippa I (41-44 AD), king of Judea, also known as Herod II or Agrippa I.) He was the last Jewish ethnarch over Judaea. He was Herod the Great's grandson and Herod Agrippa II's father, the final client king of the Herodian dynasty. He died in 44 AD. He is King Herod, whose death is reported in Acts 12:20-23.
  - c. In 41 AD, Herod Agrippa I requested that Emperor Claudius grant his brother, Herod of Chalcis (r. 41-48 AD), rule over Chalcis, a territory located north of Judea, with the title of client king. After the death of Agrippa I in 44, the rule

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<sup>150</sup> Flavius Josephus in The Wars of the Jews, book 1, chapter 14.4. On EarlyJewishWritings.com. [Z](#)

over Chalcis was given to Agrippa II (53-100), son of Herod Agrippa, but only as a tetrarchy. Thus, the kingship of Judah officially ended in 44 with the death of Herod Agrippa I.<sup>151</sup>

### **The High Priest**

The first mention of a priesthood in Israel appears in Exodus 40:15. Among these priests, a High Priest was anointed (Leviticus 21:10) to perform unique functions, such as entering the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. The High Priests and the priests belonged to the Aaronic line.<sup>152</sup> The Bible mentions almost all the high priests before the Babylonian captivity, but does not provide a comprehensive list of officeholders after the Exile. During periods of non-Jewish occupation, high priests were appointed and removed by the occupying authority. According to the Jewish Historian Flavius Josephus, there were 55 officiating high priests from the founding of the Israelite nation under Moses and Aaron until the time of Herod the Great. And another 28 until the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD.<sup>153</sup> Because the office of the High Priest was closely tied to the temple ceremonies, the office of the High Priest also ended.

### **The Sanhedrin**

During the reign of Herod the Great, the Sanhedrin, founded by Ezra, became the sole governing body of the Jewish people in Judea, assuming a combined role as both political leaders and presided over by the High Priests. He appointed Hillel the Elder in 20 BC, along with his son Shimon and his grandson Gamaliel I (Acts 5:34; 22:3). The rule of Gamaliel I

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<sup>151</sup> Haskell (1905), p. 214.2: "Herod sat as king, but only by consent of the emperor, to whom he paid tribute. Herod was the last king who ruled over the Jews." [↗](#)

<sup>152</sup> At its inception, the offices of the king and high priest were strictly separated. Kings were from the house of David; priests were from the house of Aaron. It was explicitly stated that the king should not officiate in religious ceremonies (2 Chr 26:16-21).

<sup>153</sup> According to historians (for example, Van Kooten, 2011, p. 419), the destruction of Jerusalem happened in 70 AD. [↗](#).

extended into the reign of the last king of the Jews, Herod Agrippa I (41-44 AD). Initially, the High Priest was from the Aaronic line; however, because they had gained too much power, the Romans took it upon themselves to appoint new High Priests. The Roman authority regarded the president of the Sanhedrin as merely a paid government official. The Romans confirmed the authority of the Sanhedrin in matters of religion. With the help of the Sanhedrin, Rome persecuted what they called sectarian groups, such as the Sadducees and the Christians. The last president of the Sanhedrin, Gamaliel VI (400-425 AD), was deposed by an edict issued by the Emperors Honorius and Theodosius II. Theodosius did not allow the appointment of a successor and terminated the Jewish institution in 429 AD.

Thus, the three-fold Jewish government, established after the Judean Exile, ended,  
Kingship – political authority – in 44 AD.

High Priest – religious authority – in 70 AD.

Sanhedrin – judicial authority – in 429 AD.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Note: The Roman government also had a Trias Politica structure: the Emperor, the Consuls, and the Senate. Revelation 9:12 refers to them as the Sun, Moon, and Stars.

## APPENDIX IV: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ROMAN POWER

The prophecy articulated in the Book of Daniel delineates a succession of four earthly kingdoms that would govern the world, profoundly affecting God's people, beginning in 604 BC. These kingdoms are called Babylon, the Medo-Persian Empire, Greece, and Rome. Following the dominion of these empires, it is prophesied that God will end the overarching Conflict of the Ages. The Book of Daniel offers a comprehensive overview of this historical trajectory and detailed accounts of the first three kingdoms. In contrast, the Book of Revelation continues this narrative by focusing on the Christian era in the context of the Roman period – the fourth kingdom. It commences with an overview in the first three chapters, progressing to noteworthy events from the Ascension of Christ and culminating in a vision of a newly recreated heaven and earth, wherein God will establish His presence. All of this unfolds against the Roman Empire's multiple transitions.

While Nebuchadnezzar is frequently recognized as a significant figure in the Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) Empire, which lasted from 625 to 538 BC, he was not the Empire's founding ruler. Before he campaigned against Egypt and other neighboring nations,<sup>155</sup> the Empire possessed a rich and complex history. Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Judah marks the commencement of the time prophecies detailed in the Book of Daniel. These same principles apply to Rome. By the time Rome engaged in conflicts with Greece, designated as the third kingdom in the visions presented in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, Greece had already been established for several centuries. Numerous wars ensued between the two powers, culminating in the Third Macedonian War (171-168 BC), which concluded with the decisive Battle of Pydna, resulting in Greece's defeat. Roman control over Jerusalem was asserted in 63 BC, following Roman general Pompey's capture of the city.<sup>156</sup> At this juncture, Rome was on the verge of transitioning from a Republic to an Empire. The Roman Imperial period provides historical context for the Book of Revelation.

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<sup>155</sup> Saggs, Henry W.F., "Babylon". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 18, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Babylon-ancient-city-Mesopotamia-Asia>. Accessed October 3, 2024.

<sup>156</sup> Wasserstein, Bernard; Prawer, Joshua; Gordon, Buzzy; Perowne, Stewart Henry, and Dumper, Michael. "Jerusalem". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 2, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Jerusalem>. Accessed October 2, 2024.

The origins of Roman world power can be traced back to an absolute monarchy established approximately one hundred years before the New Babylonian Empire, with its founding traditionally dated April 21, 753 BC. By approximately 230 BC, Rome had begun to ascend as the imperial capital. Consequently, Roman influence and governance in the region persisted for nearly 600 years before conflict arose with Macedonian Greece. Historical consensus<sup>157</sup> aligns Rome with the fourth kingdom in the Book of Daniel, which signifies a transition from an elective absolute monarchy to a classical republic. This republic progressed through five phases characterized by autocratic military dictatorships, culminating in the imperial period at the end of the pre-Christian era. The vision articulated in Revelation primarily emphasizes the Western territories of the sixth imperial phase. During the final two centuries, the governing body in the Western regions, representing a seventh phase, existed before it transitioned into an eighth phase, denoted by the elective absolute monarchy of the Vatican City State. Thus, Roman power evolved from one elective absolute monarchy to another. In the following paragraphs, the Evolution of Rome is traced through the ages as an essential concept for interpreting Revelation.

### **The transitions from Roman Monarchy to Roman Empire**

Historical records illustrate that Roman power evolved from an elective absolute monarchy to a classical republic. This republic underwent four stages of rulership before transitioning to the imperial period at the end of the pre-Christian era. The Roman historian Titus Livius (59 BC – 17 AD) identified the critical stages of Rome's governance in Book 6 of his influential work, *Ab Urbe Condita*, or "*The History of Rome*." Written between 27 BC and 9 BC during the reign of Emperor Augustus (Octavian), Livius states, "*The transactions of the Romans, from the building of the city of Rome to the capture of the same city, first*

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<sup>157</sup> Bryans (1908), pp. 72, 95, 100.

*under kings, then under consuls, and dictators, and decemvirs, and consular tribunes, their wars abroad, their dissensions at home [...].*"<sup>158</sup> This reflection highlights the evolution of Roman governance and underscores the tumultuous yet transformative journey of a city that shaped the course of history. Another Roman historian, Tacitus (56-120 AD), a contemporary of John, documented the progression of the Roman governmental structure in his work "Annals," written between 110 and 120 AD:

*ROME at the beginning was ruled by kings. Freedom and the consulship were established by Lucius Brutus. Dictatorships were held for a temporary crisis. The power of the decemvirs did not last beyond two years, nor was the consular jurisdiction of the military tribunes of long duration. The despotisms of Cinna and Sulla were brief; the rule of Pompeius and of Crassus soon yielded before Cæsar; the arms of Lepidus and Antonius before Augustus; who, when the world was wearied by civil strife, subjected it to empire under the title of "Prince." But the successes and reverses of the old Roman people have been recorded by famous historians; and fine intellects were not wanting to describe the times of Augustus, till growing sycophancy scared them away. The histories of Tiberius, Caius, Claudius, and Nero, while they were in power, were falsified through terror, and after their death, were written under the irritation of a recent hatred. Hence my purpose is to relate a few facts about Augustus—more particularly his last acts, then the reign of Tiberius, and all which follows, without either bitterness or partiality, from any motives to which I am far removed.*<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Titus Livius (Livy), Liv. 6 1 [↗](#).

<sup>159</sup> Cornelius Tacitus, Tac. Ann, 1.1. [↗](#).

Thus, Roman historians noted the transition through five forms of Roman government. Tacitus lived under the sixth form and echoed the prophecy John received a decade earlier about the Western Empire in Revelation 17:10: "Five have fallen, one is."

**Five have fallen.** Thus, Tacitus, without explicit knowledge of the prophecy, acknowledged that the evolution of Roman power from its inception until his time went through six stages:

1. Monarchy (753–509 BC): This era began with Romulus and ended with Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, the last monarch.<sup>160</sup>

Republic:

2. Consulate (509-451 BC): Two consuls were elected annually and had supreme authority in civil and military matters. They commanded armies, presided over the Senate and assemblies, and enforced laws.<sup>161</sup>
3. Decemvirs (451-449 BC): A commission of ten men holding consular power that could not be appealed. Appointed for one year, the first group aimed to mitigate power struggles between patricians and plebeians, while the second group abused its powers.<sup>162</sup>
4. Dictators (449-59 BC): During governmental reforms to reduce social inequality, dictators were granted extraordinary powers for a fixed term to address emergencies. They did not hold the autocratic head of state position, but many exceeded their mandated authority.<sup>163</sup>
5. Triumvirs (59-27 BC): The second Triumvirate, established in 43 BC, included Octavian (later Augustus), Mark Antony, and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus. They

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<sup>160</sup> Bradley (1888), pp.109-10.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., pp. 131, 366

<sup>162</sup> Smithsonian Timelines of History, p. 52.

<sup>163</sup> Bryans (1908), pp. 62-75; 223-41.



wielded absolute power to restore the state and could enact or annul the laws without consulting the Senate.<sup>164</sup>

6. **One is — Imperial Rome:**<sup>165</sup>

- a. (27 BC- 395): A unified empire from Octavian to Theodosius I.<sup>166</sup>
- b. (395-476): The empire was divided into Eastern and Western sections, each led by its emperor. In the West, rulers included Honorius.<sup>167</sup>
- c. (476-533): The Western Empire fell due to Odoacer's coup, which abdicated the emperor (sun) in the West, who declared that the Roman power did not need two emperors. The Ostrogoths' conquests followed.<sup>168</sup>  
  
Both Odoacer and the Ostrogoths recognized, to some extent, the hegemony of the Byzantine emperor and retained the Roman structure, with consuls (moons) and a senate (stars).
- d. (533-584): Byzantine Emperor Justinian's generals endeavored to reconquer parts of the western territories and installed a stronghold administration in Ravenna.

**The transition from Pagan Rome to Papal Rome**

In 324, Constantine I (reigning from 312 to 337) relocated the Roman throne to Byzantium, which was officially designated as Constantinople in 330, establishing it as the New Rome of a unified Roman Empire. Both Constantine and his predecessor, Diocletian,

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<sup>164</sup> Bryans (1908), p. 70; Pelling (1996), pp. 1-69.

<sup>165</sup> The Eastern Empire collapsed in 1449 AD. Smith (1897), pp. 402-34; 452-87 [↗](#); An Exposition of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation VIII and IX, (Battle Creek, MI, Stem Press, 1866). Lib AU, retrieved from Scribd on January 1, 2025.

<sup>166</sup> Bryans (1908), p. 72.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

maintained that the stability of the government relied on proper divine worship, with the Sun regarded as the supreme deity of Rome. Constantine I integrated the Christian Church into the Roman State through his Edict of Milan in 313, which granted religious freedom. In 321, Constantine instituted the first Sunday Law. Additionally, Constantine convened the Nicene Council in 325, which rejected the teachings of Arius, who claimed that Jesus was not of the same substance as God the Father.<sup>169</sup> This council is recognized as the beginning of the development of Christian doctrine, laying the foundation for principles that would later define Roman Catholicism. From 325 until the end of the Imperial phase of Rome, state affairs were significantly intertwined with the Roman Church.

Theodosius I, who ascended to the imperial throne in 379, is recognized as the last emperor to govern both the Eastern and Western segments of the Roman Empire. His reign is particularly notable for formally establishing Christianity as the state religion. In his Edict of Thessalonica of 380, he ordered Catholicism to have precedence over Arianism. In the early fifth century, he relocated the capital of the Western Roman Empire to Ravenna because that city was strategically situated, surrounded by marshland, making it a natural fortress and a more ideal location than Rome.<sup>170</sup> He left Rome to be the seat of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. In the literature, the following citations about Ravenna are found:

Ravenna was the capital of the Western Roman Empire until its dissolution in 476. As the capital of the Exarchate of Ravenna, the city was the administrative center of Byzantine government in Italy. [...] In about 751, Ravenna fell to the

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<sup>169</sup> Petit, Paul; Vermeule, Emily D. Townsend; Hornblower, Simon; Ferguson, John; Saller, Richard P.; MacMullen, Ramsay; Forsythe, Gary Edward; Badian, E.; Grummond, Nancy Thomson de; and Salmon, Edward Togo. "Ancient Rome". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 11, 2025. Accessed January 20, 2025. [Z](#)  
Teall, John L. and Nicol, Donald MacGillivray. "Byzantine Empire". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 15, 2024, Accessed January 22, 2025. [Z](#).

<sup>170</sup> Footnote 1 in chapter 6 on p. 122, B. Aguilera-Barchet (2015): "*Ravenna was the late Roman imperial seat, maintained by the Ostrogoths and thereafter by the Byzantine governor (exarch), which explains why the region was called the Exarchate.*"

Lombards, who lost it to the Franks in 754 under the leadership of Pippin III the Short. He gave Ravenna to the pope in 757.<sup>171</sup>

They chose the city of Ravenna [ as Imperial Capital] partly because it was considered impregnable and partly because of its large port at Classis. The city was well served by river connections to the wide valley of the Po, rich in agricultural produce that could be stored inside the city if it was ever besieged, yet protected by treacherous marshes and lakes.<sup>172</sup>

After Theodosius died in 395, the Roman Empire was divided into Eastern and Western factions under the authority of his sons, Arcadius and Honorius. This division allowed various Germanic kingdoms to exploit the Empire's vulnerabilities, thereby exacerbating the challenges faced by the Western Roman Empire. He attempted to integrate barbarian groups into the Empire, contingent upon their acceptance of Christianity. In 380, he issued the Edict of Thessalonica, which asserted that only those individuals who acknowledged the co-equal Trinity of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit should be recognized as Catholic Christians. This edict is significant as it represents the first official instance of the term "Catholic."<sup>173</sup> Although Theodosius aimed to protect what he perceived as 'true faith,' he did not intend for the enforcement of this edict to be excessively rigorous.<sup>174</sup>

In the Western Roman Empire, the Popes, appointed and supported by the emperors, held the highest ecclesiastical authority and exerted considerable influence over the Germanic

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<sup>171</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Ravenna". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 27, 2024. Accessed January 25, 2025. [Z](#)

<sup>172</sup> Herring (2020), p. 10-13.

<sup>173</sup> The term Catholic originally referred to the Christian Church in the Western Roman Empire and its continuation in what became Europe. In the East, Christianity was primarily represented by the Orthodox Eastern Church, with Arianism having a significant influence. [Z](#)

<sup>174</sup> Lippold, Adolf. "Theodosius I". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 13, 2025. Accessed January 22, 2025. [Z](#).

tribes seeking to establish themselves in the region. This influence enabled the Roman Church to play a pivotal role in reuniting a fragmented Empire by advocating for universal Roman Catholic doctrines. Notably, tribes adhering to Arianism encountered difficulties establishing a foothold within the Western Roman Empire, further solidifying the dominance of Catholicism in that region.

### **Decline of the Western Roman Empire: 395-493**

The decline of the Western Roman Empire was characterized by significant military assaults and political upheavals, primarily targeting Rome.<sup>175</sup>

- The first significant incursion occurred in 410 when Alaric the Visigoth led his forces into the city.
- A subsequent significant threat emerged in 451, when Attila the Hun invaded Gaul, culminating in the decisive Battle of the Catalaunian Plains.<sup>176</sup>
- In 455, a third notable attack was executed by Genseric, the King of the Vandals, who successfully captured Gaul and plundered the city for two weeks, resulting in extensive destruction and the looting of numerous valuables and citizens.
- The final blow to the Western Roman Empire occurred in 476 when a coup, orchestrated by Odoacer, a Sciri mercenary in the Roman army, compelled Romulus Augustulus, the last Western Roman Emperor, to abdicate. Odoacer subsequently recognized the Byzantine Emperor Zeno as the sole imperial ruler, who acknowledged Odoacer as the King of Italy.<sup>177</sup> Odoacer established his

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<sup>175</sup> The fall of the Western Roman Empire is symbolized by the first four trumpets in Revelation 8. See: U. Smith, Daniel and the Revelation, pp. 452-87 [↗](#); An Exposition of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation VIII and IX (Battle Creek, MI, Stem Press, 1866). Lib AU, retrieved from Scribd on January 1, 2025.

<sup>176</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Battle of the Catalaunian Plains". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 24, 2024. Accessed January 23, 2025. [↗](#).

<sup>177</sup> Reynolds (1946), p. 41.

residence in Ravenna and dissolved the imperial court in Rome, marking the definitive end of the Western Roman Empire.

In response to this unfolding situation, the Byzantine Emperor Zeno employed a divide-and-conquer strategy by dispatching Theodoric the Great of the Ostrogoths to Italy to replace Odoacer. Theodoric defeated Odoacer in 493 and founded the Ostrogothic Kingdom based in Ravenna. Thus, Rome was left to the rulers of the duchy, the aristocracy, and the Bishop of Rome. As adherents of Arian Christianity, the Ostrogothic monarchs exerted substantial influence over Catholic bishops in Rome, often intervening in the selection and consecration of popes. Though they generally refrained from interfering in religious affairs, this dynamic created significant tension with the Roman aristocracy.<sup>178</sup> Theodoric strongly opposed the assertion of authority by the Bishop of Rome over the Roman Church and articulated his dissent against Emperor Justin's decree on Arianism, emphasizing that sovereign power should be confined to political governance and that rulers should not impose their beliefs upon their subjects:<sup>179</sup>

To pretend to a dominion over the conscience is to usurp the prerogative of God: by the nature of things the power of sovereigns is confined to political government; they have no right of punishment but over those who disturb the public peace; the most dangerous heresy is that of a sovereign who separates himself from part of his subjects because they believe not according to his belief.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Noble (1984), p. xxi.

<sup>179</sup> Emperor Justin I, the predecessor and uncle of Justinian I, issued a decree against Arianism in 518, reaffirming the decisions of the Council of Nicaea condemning Arianism as heresy.

<sup>180</sup> Bell (1921), p. 80.

Bell follows:

Theodoric the Ostrogoth is among the wisest and best rulers that Italy has ever known. Great in his aims—the unification of Italy under the dynasty of the Amal—great in his achievements, the revival of law and order in his distracted dominion, he stands out as the first of the founders of modern Italy, and his failure to establish an enduring unity cannot be taken as the measure of his success. His attempt was in one sense premature, for Italy had not yet realised her need; in another sense, it was too late, for it required as the imperative condition of its success the co-operation of the Papacy, and the Popes had already learnt that their personal autocracy was best assured in the absence of any effective civil authority, independent of, or superior to their own.<sup>181</sup>

### **Attempts of Reconquering Italy: 533-584<sup>182</sup>**

In 533, Byzantine Emperor Justinian I, who reigned from 527 to 565, initiated a military campaign to reconquer the western provinces from the Arian Ostrogoths. As part of this initiative, he established the Justinian Civil Code (529-534), which enshrined the principle of Caesaropapism, asserting the emperor's authority over secular and ecclesiastical matters. Justinian regarded it as his duty to regulate religious worship, enforce Church discipline, and influence theological doctrines within the Roman Church. The codex identified the Bishop of Rome as the leader of the Roman Church and mandated that all Catholic churches worldwide be governed by bishops who adhered to the Nicene Creed.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 81. Text errors are not corrected.

<sup>182</sup> The information for this and the following paragraphs, including the timeline, is obtained from B. Aguilera-Barchet (2015).

<sup>183</sup> *"We direct that all Catholic churches throughout the world shall be placed under the control of the orthodox bishops who have embraced the Nicene Creed."* Codex Justinianus, book 1, Titles 1 to 16, in Scott (1932). [↗](#) The Nicene Creed pertains to the First Council of Nicaea (325), the first ecumenical council of the Christian Church, held in ancient Nicaea (now İznik, Turkey). It was convened by Emperor Constantine I, who

This action reinforced the Byzantine Empire's control over Rome and its surrounding territories, effectively subordinating the Papacy to the emperor and his officials.

Nevertheless, Justinian encountered significant challenges due to the invasion of the Lombards, who had captured substantial territories in Italy by 568. Consequently, the territorial gains achieved against the Ostrogoths were reversed, leaving only Rome under Byzantine control. By 584, the emperor sought to enhance administrative authority and military presence in Ravenna and the western regions. At this point, it was noted that two-thirds of Italy had come under Lombard authority, and the Exarch, responsible for military and civil governance, had replaced the position previously held by the Byzantine Emperor. Despite restoring authority in the Western regions, the circumstances for the Roman aristocracy remained challenging, as they were required to contend with what they saw as Greek foreigners in Ravenna. By the end of the sixth century, with only Rome under Byzantine control, the Roman Church had become increasingly entwined with the imperial government.

What Tacitus could not foresee was that the future of Roman power was already chronicled within Scripture: there would be a seventh phase of Roman authority: "The other is not yet come" — the Dukedom (584-751). The Byzantine Emperor Justinian established a pivotal stronghold in Ravenna to manage his interests in the West during this period, which is historically recognized as the Dukedom, the seventh form of governance in the Western Roman Empire. The imperial administration encountered numerous challenges, particularly from the incursions of Germanic tribes, accurately reflecting the vision articulated in historical records: "When he comes, he is bound to remain weak and unimportant." This

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presided over the opening session and participated in the discussions. He hoped that a general council of the church would resolve the problem of Arianism, a heresy first proposed by Arius of Alexandria, which holds that Christ is not divine but a created being. [2](#).

phase was succeeded by the Frankish–Lombardian Kingdom, which evolved into the Holy Roman Empire under the auspices of the Papacy, thus marking the eighth phase.

### **Augmenting Temporal Authority 584-756**

The period from 537 to 751, commonly called the Byzantine Papacy, represents a pivotal chapter in the relationship between the Church and the State in Roman history. During this era, Byzantine emperors and their representatives in Ravenna played a critical role in appointing and consecrating popes. In the context of ongoing conflicts with the Lombards to the north, the Ostrogoths remnants to the east, and the Byzantine emperor to the south, the popes navigated a complex political landscape. The historian Noble recounts:

It seems that the exarchs were originally officers with an essentially military mandate, but rather soon they began to combine both civil and military functions. They were always sent to Italy from Constantinople and rarely had served in any capacity in Italy before being named exarch. Usually, in fact, they were selected from among the high officers of the palace administration. The exarch was the emperor's direct representative in Italy, and in theory he had a very narrow scope for personal initiative. Only on rare occasions did his term of office exceed six or seven years. His duty was to lead the *exerdtus Italicus*, administer the province during the pleasure of his imperial master, publish laws and canons of church councils, and appoint most subordinate officials. [...] Within Italy itself the Exarchate was a fragile creation that owed more to military exigencies than to a coherent historical development. It threatened to split apart at any moment.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Noble (1984), pp. 3-4.



Despite restoring imperial authority in Rome, Ravenna, and Venice, popes such as Gregory III and Zacharias advocated for the ecclesiastical independence of the Church from the Byzantine Empire. The bishops of Rome played a crucial role in maintaining stability in the Christianized Western territories, wielding substantial ecclesiastical authority and employing rhetorical strategies that promised salvation to the obedient and threatened punishment to those who defied them. Starting in the latter years of the seventh century, a strategic and collaborative effort between the shrewd popes and the local Roman nobility led to the liberation of central Italy from Byzantine dominion. This alliance was crucial in establishing the Papal States, a substantial territorial entity. In the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century, the popes actively sought military protection for their emerging state from the Carolingian monarchy. This move was favorably received and provided critical support for the Papacy's ongoing viability.<sup>185</sup>

Following the death of the Lombard king Liutprand in 744, and with Byzantium appearing to neglect Italian affairs, the popes sought to forge alliances with influential Frankish kings to enhance their authority. Pope Zacharias aligned with King Pepin the Short when Pepin requested papal consecration for his dynasty. Zacharias instructed Archbishop Boniface to anoint Pepin as King of the Franks in 751, establishing the Carolingian Dynasty under papal control. This engagement with the Roman Church set an important precedent, leading future rulers to pursue papal approval and acknowledge the Pope's authority to legitimize their reigns. At that time, the Byzantine province of Italy comprised the Exarchate of Ravenna and several duchies in Central Italy, including Istria, Venetia, Ferrara, the Pentapolis, Rome, Perugia, Naples, and Calabria. As the emperor's direct representative in Italy, the exarch had limited autonomy, which restricted his capacity for personal initiative.

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<sup>185</sup> Noble (1984), p. xxii.

Throughout the seventh century, the territory under the exarchs' governance was diverse and continually challenged by separatist sentiments. The Exarchate, a fragile construct that primarily responded to military needs, could not maintain cohesiveness. Duchesne pointedly characterized its position against the Lombards' invasion as "boundless unconquerable, impotent hopefulness." Ravenna's authority was ever on the verge of collapsing, testifying to the prophecy: "When it comes, it is bound to remain small" (Rev 17:10).

Pepin the Short reinforced the alliance between the Frankish monarchy and the Papacy by supporting Pope Stephen II against the Lombard king Aistulf. The Frankish victory over the Lombards led to an initial peace agreement in 754, which stipulated the restoration of territories captured by the Ostrogoths and recaptured by the Lombards to the Papacy. The Lombards, however, did not honor the agreement, and two years later, in 756, Pepin formalized the arrangement through what is known as the Second Donation of Pepin, restoring the Exarchate of Ravenna and the Pentapolis to Pope Stephen II. The second treaty document states the cities of which the keys the king of the Lombards had to hand over to the Pope: Ravenna, Rimini, Pesaro, Conca (or La Cattolica), Fano, Cesena, Sinigaglia, Jesi, Forlimpopoli, Forli (with Sussubio), Montefeltro (or San Leo), Arcevia, Mons Lucatium (a site near Cesena), Serra dei Conti, San Marino, Sarsina, Urbino, Cagli, Cantiano, Gubbio, Comacchio, Narni. Pepin sent his commander to each city to collect the keys. Come to think of it, Pepin donated what was not his to give. Rome and the popes were subject to a Byzantine emperor, and technically speaking, the Lombards had conquered territories from the Byzantines, which Pepin reconquered as part of a complex diplomatic mission led by Pope Stephen II. So, when Byzantine officials appeared in Rome on behalf of the emperor to reclaim the territories of Ravenna, the remains of the Western Roman Empire, Pope Stephen II, having set eyes on Ravenna for decades, referred them to Pepin. Pepin left them stunned by replying that his actions had been undertaken not for earthly reward but for the love of St.

Peter and the remission of his sins in the hereafter. He added that because Byzantium failed to protect Italy against the Lombards, his actions gave him the right to set the stipulations, not the emperor. Thus, the Popes utilized the Franks to reclaim the Western Roman Empire from the Byzantines, doing so shrewdly.<sup>186</sup>

The alliance between the Papacy and the Franks consolidated the power of the Frankish monarchy. It enabled the Pope to assert temporal authority, paving the way for the establishment of the Papal States. Pepin's recognition of the Pope as the head of the Roman Church and sovereign in Rome signified a transformation in the governance of the former Western Empire. It foreshadowed the future dynamics between religious and secular influences across Europe. Thus, the Vatican City State's sovereignty became the Roman power's inheritor. Again, Scripture affirms: "The beast, even he is the eighth [...], and he is from the seven" (Rev 17:11). Starting in 756, the Papacy asserted temporal power alongside its ecclesiastical authority. This transition represented the continuation of the union of Church and State established by the Justinian Code in 533. From 756 onward, the Pope emerged with substantial temporal authority, reigning over a considerable territory in Italy that extended from south of Rome to Ravenna to the northeast.<sup>187</sup> This critical development redefined the Church as a unique Church–State entity and significantly expanded its influence across the remnants of the Western Roman Empire. The prophecy is exact: "And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify *himself* in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many" (Dan 8:24-25). The status of a State is achieved by a desire for freedom and independence to govern a people, along with territorial claims within recognized

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<sup>186</sup> Noble (1984), pp. 90-95.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. xx.

borders. Additionally, establishing and enhancing institutional frameworks to effectively oversee and administer all vital aspects is crucial. To fulfill this desire as broadly as possible is a key characteristic of the Roman Church. By the end of the eighth century, the Papacy had confidently fulfilled all these criteria, and by the middle of the ninth century, the endeavor had undoubtedly been accomplished. Daniel 8:12 affirms: "And it practised, and prospered."<sup>188</sup>

### **Controlling the Lombardian Kingdom**

The conquest of Lombardy by the Franks led to the transformation of the region into the Frankish Kingdom of Italy, initiated by Pepin the Short. His son, Charlemagne, ascended as King of Lombardy in 774 following his victory over the Lombard king Desiderius. Charlemagne's influence extended throughout central Italy, culminating in his coronation as Emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III in the year 800. However, this papal coronation implied a degree of subordination to the Papacy, which presented challenges for Charlemagne, who deemed his power intricately tied to the territories under his governance. Managing such a vast and diverse empire necessitated collaboration with local rulers and administrators.

### **Controlling the Holy Roman Empire**

The concept of the Holy Roman Empire, although lacking a strong political union, emerged from a complex amalgamation of duchies across Europe, including those in Germany, Italy, and Bohemia. The intricate relationships within this empire led to significant conflicts, such as the deposition of Pope John XII and the subsequent appointment of Leo VIII by Otto I. This scenario enabled Otto to exert imperial control over the Roman Church,

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<sup>188</sup> Noble (1984), p. xxvi.

reflecting the influence previously held by Byzantine emperors. During the medieval period, papal authority significantly influenced every aspect of civil governance—political, cultural, economic, religious, and mediatory—thereby granting the Pope substantial political leverage over secular rulers. Modern scholars have termed this phenomenon "Caesaropapism," a secular ruler or government exercising supreme authority over ecclesiastical matters, thereby subordinating the church to the state or a secular ruler.<sup>189</sup>

The origins of this complex Church-State system can be traced back to the Carolingian Empire in France, initiated by Pepin in 751, and expanded its influence to its zenith during Charlemagne's reign from 800 to 814. By 843, although the imperial title had become ceremonial, the concept of a unified empire remained relevant. A notable development occurred in 936 with the election of Otto I as King of Germany. He expanded his realm by defeating the Hungarians and subjugating the Slavs from Bohemia. To legitimize his authority, Otto sought a papal coronation, which he secured in 962 following his invasion of Italy, establishing the Holy Roman Empire. This pivotal event marked the beginning of the "Time of the Emperors," a significant epoch that lasted three hundred years and profoundly shaped the political landscape of medieval Europe. The Holy Roman Empire sought to establish a universal Christian State. However, its structure was characterized by fragmentation and decentralization, rendering it politically fragile. The requirement for papal coronation to legitimize the title "King of the Romans" underscored the Papacy's crucial role in the Empire's political landscape. After the death of Emperor Frederick II in 1250, the Holy Roman Empire entered a period of decline known as the Great Interregnum, marking the end of the powerful Hohenstaufen dynasty. This decline led to increased political fragmentation and a weakening of central authority.

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<sup>189</sup> Meriam-Webster. [Z](#).

## **Ecclesiastical Decline**

During the early Middle Ages, the Church held theoretical supremacy over civil power, especially following the coronations of Charlemagne in 800 and Otto I in 962. However, this influence waned during the ninth and tenth centuries as popes faced challenges from powerful monarchs such as Louis II. This time also witnessed the broader process of feudalization, which undermined the Church's authority. Feudalization led to ecclesiastical entities controlled by local secular lords, establishing proprietary churches known as *Eigenkirchen*. In these churches, secular landowners had the right to appoint individuals to clerical positions in exchange for financial benefits, thereby fragmenting ecclesiastical power within the Holy Roman Empire and diminishing the influence of the Roman Church.<sup>190</sup>

Pope Gregory VII sought to reestablish the Catholic Church's independence from civil authorities. He actively campaigned against the system of proprietary churches and prohibited the sale of ecclesiastical positions. In 1075, he issued the *Dictatus Papae*, asserting the Pope's authority over the Western Christian Empire, including the power to exempt subjects from obeying unjust rulers. His most notable opponent was German Emperor Henry IV, especially regarding the appointment of church officials. In 1076, Gregory VII excommunicated Henry IV, who later sought reconciliation in 1077, enduring the humiliation at Canossa to achieve absolution. This event symbolized the medieval power struggle between the Roman Church and civil authorities. Despite the reconciliation, conflicts persisted, culminating in Henry's military campaign against Rome, leading to the Pope's capture and his eventual death in exile in 1085. The Concordat of Worms, an agreement between Emperor Henry V and Pope Calixtus II in 1122, ended a significant conflict between the Church and the European nations. This agreement clarified the distinction between spiritual and temporal authority,

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<sup>190</sup> The decline in ecclesiastical power is alluded to in Revelation 17:16-17.

allowing bishops and abbots to receive their spiritual symbols from the Pope while the king provided the temporal symbols.

The following centuries witnessed the emergence of an absolute papal monarchy, particularly during the reigns of Popes Innocent III and Innocent IV from 1198 to 1254. During this time, the Pope was regarded as the highest authority in the Western world. However, this golden age of the papacy ended when Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303) encountered strong opposition from King Philip IV of France, who argued that royal authority was independent of papal influence. In 1302, the conflict escalated when Philip IV, backed by the French Estates General, captured and imprisoned Boniface VIII, leading to the relocation of the Papacy to Avignon.

### **Temporal Decline**

The Avignon Papacy led to a substantial decline in papal prestige, primarily due to the Western Schism, which fragmented Europe into numerous independent political entities. This transition facilitated a move away from Christian universalism towards an era defined by sovereign states. The Reformation further ignited 'the fire to the flesh' (of the authority) of the Church (Rev 17:16), leading numerous independent states to appropriate ecclesiastical wealth. This pursuit of autonomy was particularly pronounced in England during the reign of King Henry VIII, whose establishment of the Church of England resulted in the Papacy's loss of properties within the country. In France, anti-clerical sentiment peaked in 1793, culminating in Napoleon's conquest of Rome in 1798 and the subsequent dissolution of the Papal States. Similar secularization movements and expropriation of papal lands occurred in France during the Revolution (1789-1799). Despite these challenges, the weakened Holy Roman Empire persisted until Francis II formally dissolved it in 1806, following his defeat

by Napoleon at the Battle of Austerlitz.<sup>191</sup> Further confiscations occurred in Spain during the land reforms of 1836 and in Italy by the unification uprisals led by Garibaldi (1848). Victor Emmanuel established Italy as an independent monarchy in 1870, annexing all papal lands except the Vatican palace. These wars and the political settlements of the Risorgimento in the nineteenth century led to the end of the Papal States. Still, the Church never definitively relinquished its claims to them.<sup>192</sup> The Apocalypse affirms that this Roman phase, emerging from the preceding seven forms of governance, would, with a brief interruption when it would seem ended and never to rise again,<sup>193</sup> maintain influence over the politics of Europe (the former Western Roman Empire) until the end of time (Rev 13:3, 17:8 and 11). The remarkable fulfillment came in 1929 when the Vatican signed an accord with Mussolini's government, and the Pope revived as sovereign over the smallest state on earth, covering only 0.44 hectares. An independent city-state enclaved within Rome, Italy, the Roman Catholic Church's spiritual center, and its state entity's administration.<sup>194</sup>

### **Upholding the Imperial Idea**

The aspiration to restore the Western Roman Empire has persisted throughout history. Despite possessing limited political authority, Medieval emperors played a crucial role in the legal sphere by reviving and implementing imperial Roman Law, notably through the Codex

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<sup>191</sup> The decline in temporal power is alluded to in Revelation 13:3 and 17:8.

<sup>192</sup> Noble (1984), pp. x, xx.).

<sup>193</sup> See footnote 52.

<sup>194</sup> From its government website: "Vatican City State was created by the Lateran Treaty stipulated between the Holy See and Italy on 11 February 1929 and ratified on 7 June 1929. Its personality as a Sovereign entity under International Law, separate from the Holy See, is universally recognized. [...] its central government, constituted by the Pope and by the Bodies that assist him in his responsibility to the universal Church (designated with the name Apostolic See or Holy See). The Supreme Pontiff resides in Vatican City State, where some of the Bodies mentioned are also located. [...] The State thus has the unique characteristic of being an instrument of the Holy See [...]." [↗](#). "The Governorate exercises its power and functions, attributed to ensure the absolute and visible independence of the Holy See, including in the international arena, in fulfilling the universal and pastoral mission of the Supreme Pontiff." [↗](#). "The form of government is an absolute monarchy. The Sovereign of the State is the Supreme Pontiff who has full legislative, executive and legislative power." [↗](#) Accessed 4 October 2024.



Justinianus, which significantly influenced European jurisprudence. Legal reforms and edicts from this period became integral components of institutions such as the German Reichskammergericht. These legal traditions served as a unifying framework across diverse political entities and continued to shape German law until the introduction of the Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch (the German Civil Code) in 1900.

Even after the decline of Roman Catholic universalism, the concept of empire remained influential within Europe:

- In Germany, Charles V sought to establish a universal monarchy from 1519 to 1558, referred to as the German First Reich. This monarchy endured until 1806, when Francis II dissolved the Holy Roman Empire under pressure from Napoleon, who declared himself "Emperor of the French" in 1804. The political landscape subsequently transitioned toward power-based imperialism, with the imperial concept re-emerging during the era of Napoleon III from 1852 to 1870.
- In Italy, the Papal States were incorporated into the unified nation following King Victor Emmanuel's capture of Rome in 1870.
- In Germany, imperial authority resurfaced following the Congress of Vienna in 1815, culminating in Otto von Bismarck's establishment of the Second Reich in 1871, which lasted until 1918.
- The Papacy's political influence experienced a revival with the establishment of the Vatican State—Church Monarchy under the Lateran Treaties in 1929.
- Adolf Hitler's Third Reich, which persisted from 1933 to 1945, aimed to create a European empire; however, this ambition ultimately disintegrated due to World War II.

- In contemporary discourse, the European Union is sometimes characterized as an effort to establish a cohesive European entity, occasionally referred to as the Fourth Reich. Although concerns exist regarding political and economic integration within Europe, it is essential to recognize the profound differences in context and intent between the historical Third Reich and the contemporary European Union.<sup>195</sup>

### ***The evolution of the Western Roman Empire from Pagan to Papal***<sup>196</sup>

#### ***Christianity becomes the Roman State Church***

- \*313 *Edict of Milan: Constantine I's proclamation of religious freedom in the empire.*
- \*321 *Edict of Constantine, the first Sunday Law.*
- \*324 *Constantine I transferred the Roman throne to the site of Byzantium. In 330, the city was dedicated to Constantinople, the city of Constantine, the New Rome of the unified Roman Empire.*
- \*325 *First Christian Council in Nicaea, which condemned the teachings of Arius, claiming that Jesus was not "of one substance" with God the Father. This Council marked the birth of the Roman Church.*

#### ***Dividing the Empire***

- \*379 *Theodosius I was the last emperor to rule the unified Roman Empire. His reign marked the enforcement of Christianity as the State Religion.*

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<sup>195</sup> Revelation 17:13-14 alludes to a final attempt to bring European states again under papal political supremacy.

<sup>196</sup> Sections and lines marked with an asterisk in Italics are from the researcher of this paper. Sections in the straight text are from the timeline in B. Aguilera-Barchet's A History of Western Public Law, Chapter 6: "Pope vs. Emperor: The Rise and Fall of Papal Power." Text and grammar errors are not corrected.

- \*395                      *Theodosius died, and the Roman Empire was divided into an Eastern Empire ruled by his son Arcadius as Emperor and a Western Empire ruled by his son Honorius. There were, in fact, two Roman Empires.*

### ***Decline of the Western Roman Empire***

- \*410                      *Assaults on Rome by Alaric the Visigoth.*
- \*451                      *Atilla the Hun attacked Rome and other regions of the Empire.*
- \*455                      *Assaults on the Empire by Genseric, the king of the Vandals.*
- \*476                      *Odoacer, a Sciri mercenary in the Roman army, forced Romulus Augustulus, the last Western Roman Emperor, to abdicate and made himself King of Italy, residing in Ravenna.*
- \*493                      *Theodoric the Ostrogoth murdered Odoacer and took the imperial position in Ravenna.*
- \*533-534                *The Vandals were defeated by the Byzantine general in North Africa and ceased to exist as a separate kingdom.*
- \*508                      *Justinian incorporated the Heruli into the Byzantine Empire and persuaded them to become Christians. Clovis pledged Frankish alliance to the Papacy.*

### **Ostrogoths, Byzantines, and Lombards**

- 493–526                *Reign of Theodoric the Great, the peak of the Ostrogoths' presence in Italy.*
- 527–565                *Byzantine Emperor Justinian*
- \*529-534                *Justinian enacted the Justinian Civil Code. It contained specific codes related to church law, known as the Novellae Constitutiones, in the fourth part of the Corpus Juris Civilis (Body of Civil Law). These*

*Nouvelles were added to the original Codex Justinianus and enacted in 534.*

- \*533 *In 533, Justinian issued the "Novellae Constitutiones" (New Constitutions), which included reforms that supported the papacy's authority over the Christian Church.<sup>197</sup> These reforms were part of Justinian's broader efforts to unify the empire under civil and ecclesiastical authority, often called Caesaropapism.*
- \*538 *The Byzantines, under the command of Belisarius, successfully defended Rome from the Ostrogoths during the Siege of Rome (537-538). This siege was a significant part of the Gothic War (535-554).*
- \*552 *The Byzantines reoccupied Italy following a devastating final Battle of Mons Lactarius against the Ostrogoths, which led to the annihilation of their kingdom.*
- 568 The Lombards, led by Alboin, invaded Italy.
- 572 The Byzantines lost control of Northern Italy (Lombardy), where the Lombards found a kingdom with its capital at Pavia.
- \*584 *The Byzantine Emperor Maurice established the Exarchate of Ravenna to strengthen the Byzantine hold on Italy and to provide a unified military and civil leadership after the reconquest of Italy from the Lombards.*
- 590–604 The Pontificate of Gregory I.

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<sup>197</sup> Waldorf (1935), p.7. [↗](#).

### **The Popes vs. the Byzantine Emperors**

- 653                      Byzantine Emperor Constans II orders the arrest of Pope Martin I, who dies in exile.
- 681                      Emperor Constantine IV condemns Monothelitism (third council of Constantinople, Sixth Ecumenical) to reconcile with Rome.
- 695                      An anti-Byzantine rebellion breaks out in Ravenna.
- 715–731                Pontificate of Gregory II, who condemns the iconoclasts and confronts Emperor Leo III the Isaurian and all Byzantium.

### **The Papacy's Alliance with the Frankish Monarchy**

- 732                      Charles Martel defeats the Muslims at Poitiers and wields de facto power in the kingdom of the Franks.
- 741–752                The papacy of Zacharias, who signs a truce with the Lombard king Liutprand.
- 751                      Pope Zacharias authorizes St. Boniface to crown Pepin the Short (Charles Martel's son) as the King of the Franks at Soissons, which means dethroning Childeric III, the last Merovingian king.
- 754                      Promissio carisiaca. Under this treaty, Pope Stephen II commits to anointing Pepin the Short as the king of the Franks and "Patrician of the Romans." The Frankish monarch recognizes the Pope's territorial domain over the Duchy of Rome, Exarchate, and Pentapolis—the legal/territorial title making possible the emergence of the Papal States.
- 774                      Charlemagne (son of Pepin the Short), King of the Franks since 768, after defeating the Lombard king Desiderius and occupying Pavia, is acknowledged as King of the Lombards. The Kingdom of Italy appears.

### **The Empire of Charlemagne**

800	September 24. Charlemagne is crowned emperor by Pope Leo III.
814–840	After Charlemagne's death he is succeeded by his son Louis the Pious.
841, June 25	The Battle of Fontenoy in Puisaye. The defeat of Lothair, the eldest son of Louis the Pious, by his brothers Charles and Louis.
843	Treaty of Verdun. The Empire of Charlemagne is divided.
875	Charles the Bald is crowned emperor by Pope John VIII in exchange for relinquishing imperial authority over Rome and part of southern Italy, in favor of the papacy.
911	Conrad I is elected the first king of Germany.
923	Dethronement of the Carolingian king Charles the Simple by Hugo the Great.

### **Foundation of the German Holy Roman Empire**

962	Otto I, Duke of Saxony, is crowned Emperor. He is the founder of the German Holy Roman Empire (First Reich), which would last until 1806.
987–996	Hugh Capet succeeds in leaving his throne to his son. Consolidation of the hereditary dynasty in the Kingdom of the Franks and separation from of the Empire.
1054, July 16	The Eastern Schism. Michael Cerularius and Pope Leo IX excommunicate each other. Separation of the Orthodox and Roman Churches.

### **The Era of Papal Theocracy**

1075	Gregory VII (1073–1085) promulgates the Dictatus Papae, 27 statements in which he asserts the pope's supremacy over secular authorities. This
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document was not published in the German Holy Roman Empire, in the Iberian kingdoms, or in England.

- 1077 Henry IV humbles himself before Gregory VII at Canossa.
- 1083 Emperor Henry IV conquers Rome.
- 1093 Pope Urban II retakes Rome.
- 1096–1099 First Crusade.
- 1122 Concordat of Worms. End of the Investiture Controversy.
- 1155–1190 Reign of Frederick I Barbarossa.
- 1198–1216 Papacy of Innocent III, the chief exponent of papal theocracy.
- 1220–1250 Reign of Frederick II Hohenstaufen.
- 1291–1293 Reign of Rudolph I of Habsburg.
- 1274 Death of Thomas Aquinas (b. 1224).

### **The Decline of the Papacy**

- 1303, September 7 The attack at Anagni. Philip IV of France's troops seize Pope Boniface VII.
- 1309–1377 The Avignon Papacy. The popes reside outside Rome, in Avignon.
- 1378–1417 The Western Schism. Multiple popes vie for St. Peter's throne.

### **Reformation and Counterreformation**

- 1519 Charles V is elected Emperor.
- 1521 Diet of Worms. Luther explains the principles of the "Reformation" to Charles V.
- 1527, May 6 The troops of Charles V, sharply at odds with Clement VII, occupy and sack Rome (Sacco di Roma). The popes will never again meddle in civil political affairs.

- 1529                      Diet of Spires. The Lutheran princes "protest" against Charles V's request for them to submit to the Pope's authority. They come to call themselves "Protestants".
- 1536                      Henry VIII breaks with Rome when Clement VII refuses to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon (Ferdinand and Isabella's daughter). The king declares himself the head of the Church of England. The Anglican Church is born.
- 1540, September 27   Pope Paul III accepts the creation of the Society of Jesus, founded by Ignatius of Loyola. The Jesuits become Catholicism's quintessential advocates and defenders.
- 1545                      The Council of Trent begins. It would not close until 1563 (Counterreformation).
- 1555                      Peace of Augsburg. Each German prince may profess the religion he desires and has the right to impose it upon his subjects (*cuius regio eius religio*).
- 1572, August 24       Massacre of Protestants in Paris (St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre). The most dramatic episode of France's Wars of Religion (1562–1598).
- 1618–1648              Thirty Years War. At its close Europe is divided into Catholic and Protestant kingdoms.

### **Papacy and Empire: From the French Revolution to the Third Reich**

- 1790, July 12           Civil constitution of the clergy. The French revolutionaries seek to convert the Catholic priests into government officials of the new French state, prompting a break with Rome.



1793, October	Publication of the French revolutionary calendar, with no reference to the traditional church calendar (Gregorian).
1794, June 8	Robespierre celebrates the Festival of the Supreme Being.
*1798	<i>Napoleon's general Berthier annexed Rome to the French Republic and led the Pope into exile to France. France had been the most loyal ally to the Roman Church for 1,290 years (508-1798), fulfilling the prophecy of Daniel 12:11.</i>
1801	Napoleon signs a Concordat with the Pope and reconciles with French Catholics.
1804, December 2	Napoleon is crowned Emperor of the French in the presence of Pope Pius VII in the Cathedral of Notre Dame (Paris).
1806	Napoleon abolishes the German Holy Roman Empire.
1852–1870	Second French Empire (Napoleon III).
1870, September 20	Rome becomes the capital of the Kingdom of Italy, after its military occupation. After the demise of the Papal States, dating back to 754, Pope Pius IX describes himself as a prisoner of the Italian State.
1871–1918	Second German Reich.
1905	French Law of separation of the Church and the State (Loi de separation des E'glises et de l'E'tat).
1929, February 11	Lateran Pacts. Mussolini and Pius XI agree to the founding of the Vatican State.
1933–1945	Hitler's Third Reich.

**European integration and cooperation after 1945<sup>198, 199</sup>**

The treaties that played crucial roles in the EU's evolution, laying the foundation for the European Union, and shaped the EU's policies and its role on the global stage as we know it today:

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 1951 | The Treaty of Paris established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which aimed to integrate the coal and steel industries of six European countries.   |
| 1957 | Treaties of Rome, on creating the European Economic Community (EEC) to establish a common market and promote economic integration, and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM).  |
| 1965 | The Merger Treaty merged the executive bodies of the ECSC, EEC, and EURATOM into a single institutional framework.  |
| 1979 | The first elections using direct universal suffrage were held for the third European institution, the European Parliament. Members of the European Parliament were not elected as members of their national parliament but rather as representatives directly elected by European elections held every five years in the Member States. |
| 1986 | : The Single European Act aimed to create a single market within the European Community by 1992, remove trade barriers, and enhance economic cooperation.   |
| 1992 | The Treaty of Maastricht marks the start of the European Union: The Fourth Empire. It officially established the European Union (EU) and introduced new forms of cooperation and standard foreign and security  |

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<sup>198</sup> From the website of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. [Z](#).

<sup>199</sup> This and next paragraph are added by researcher of this Paper.

policies. Maastricht also included the establishment of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), which included the creation of a single currency, the euro. The euro was introduced to financial markets as an accounting currency in 1999 and launched as physical coins and banknotes in 2002.

- 1997      The Treaty of Amsterdam, enforced in 1999, aimed to reform EU institutions in preparation for future member countries and enhance transparency in decision-making.
- 2001      The Treaty of Nice focused on institutional reforms to enable the EU to function efficiently after expanding to 25 member countries.
- 2004      Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe. Although it was signed, it was never ratified.
- 2007      Treaty of Lisbon, enforced in 2009, made the EU more democratic, efficient, and better equipped to address global issues. It introduced changes, including increased power for the European Parliament and the establishment of a permanent president of the European Council.
- 2009      The Lisbon Treaty came into force in 2009, enhancing the EU's democracy, efficiency, and capacity to address global challenges.
- 2016      Brexit: The United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union, which led to complex negotiations and the eventual withdrawal of the UK from the EU in 2020.
- 2021      Climate Goals: The EU set ambitious climate goals, including those outlined in the European Green Deal, aiming for climate neutrality by 2050.

## **Fall of the Byzantine Empire**

The Byzantine Empire, a pivotal historical entity, faced two significant assaults that profoundly altered its trajectory. The first series of invasions was conducted by the Saracens under the leadership of Mohammed, occurring between the years 622 and 1299. Following these events, the Turkish conquests led by Osman transpired from July 12, 1299, to July 27, 1449. The Ottoman Empire effectively dismantled the Byzantine Empire over approximately 150 years. This transformation facilitated the rise of Islamic dominance over Christian Europe, which persisted until August 11, 1840, lasting 390 years and 15 days as prophesied.<sup>200</sup>

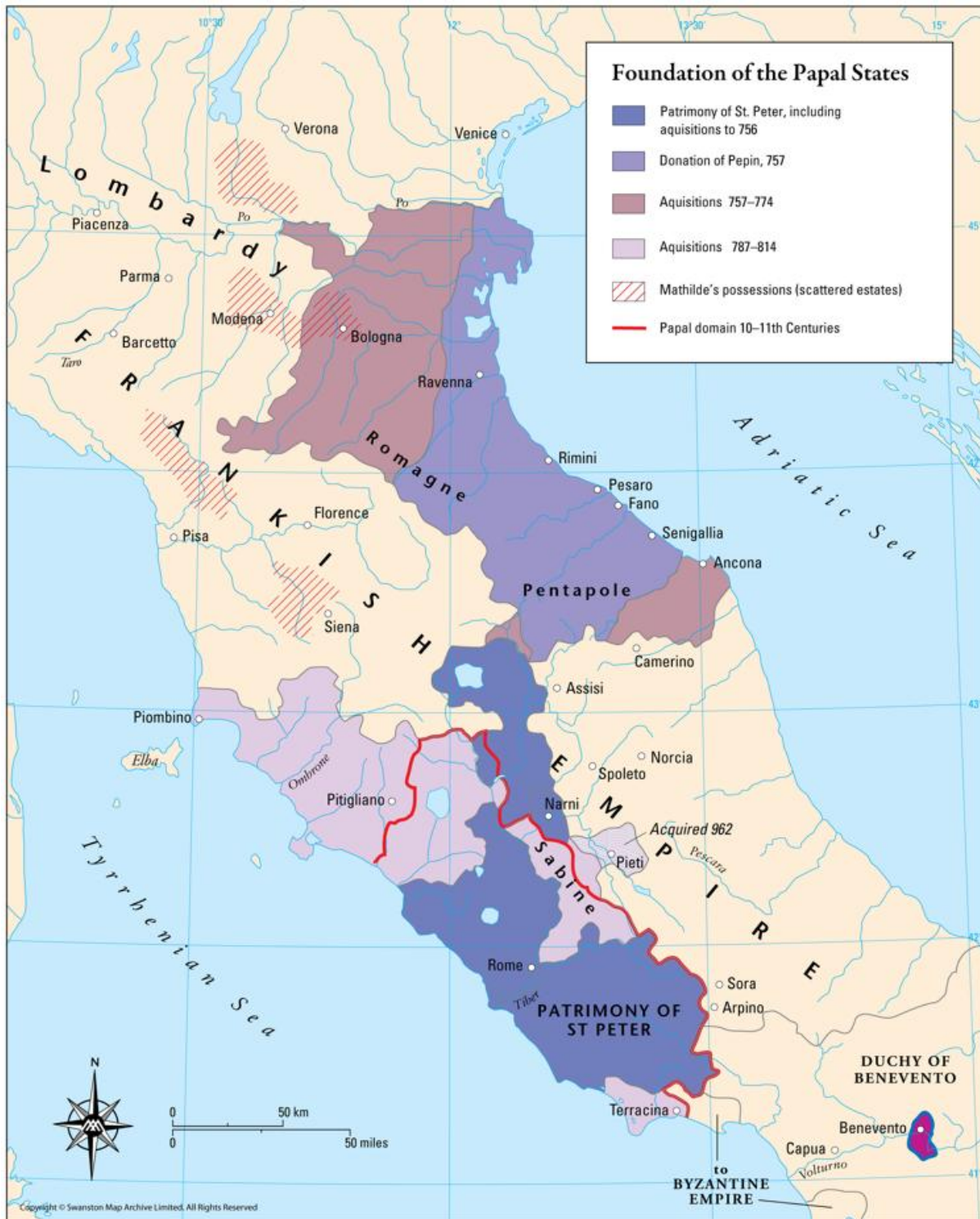
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<sup>200</sup> The fall of the Western Roman Empire is prophesied under the first four trumpets in Revelation 8. The fall of the Eastern Roman Empire is prophesied in Revelation 9. See, for a comprehensive explanation: U. Smith, Daniel and the Revelation, pp. 402-34 [Z](#); 452-87 [Z](#); An Exposition of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation VIII and IX (Battle Creek, MI, Stem Press, 1866). Lib AU, retrieved from Scribd on January 1, 2025.



**Chart 3:** The Roman Empire, under Theodosius

After he died in 395, the unified Empire was divided into an Eastern and Western part, with his two sons ruling each.



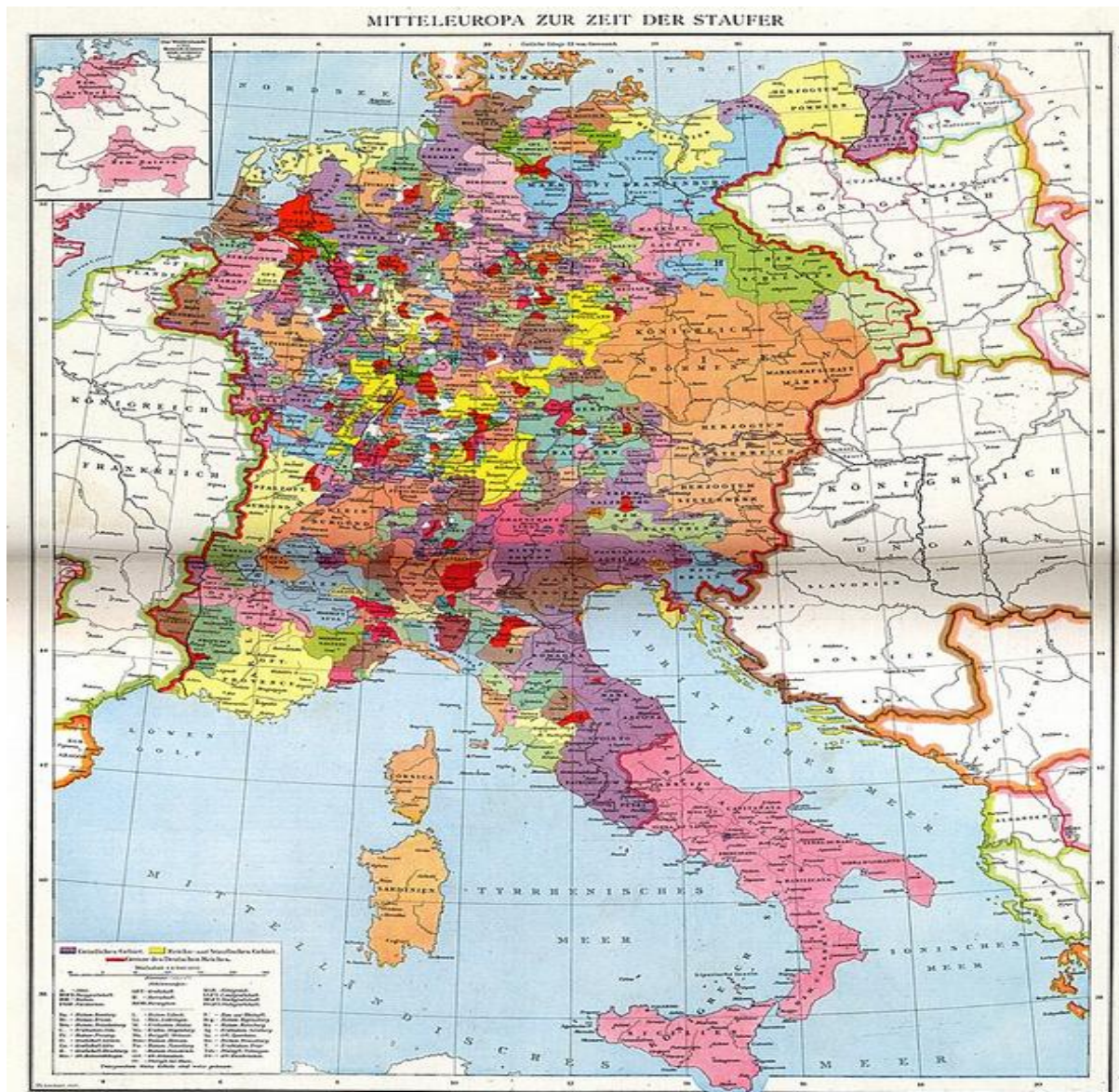
**Chart 4:** Map of the Papal States at their foundation in 756

With the Second Donation, Pepin forced the Lombardian king Aistulf to give back to the Papacy certain cities that he and his predecessors had captured from the Exarchate of Ravenna. Also shown are the gradual expansions up to 814. (Purchased map from: The Map Archive).





**Chart 5:** The Holy Roman Empire under Charlemagne in 800.



**Chart 6:** The Holy Roman Empire under Frederick II, around 1200

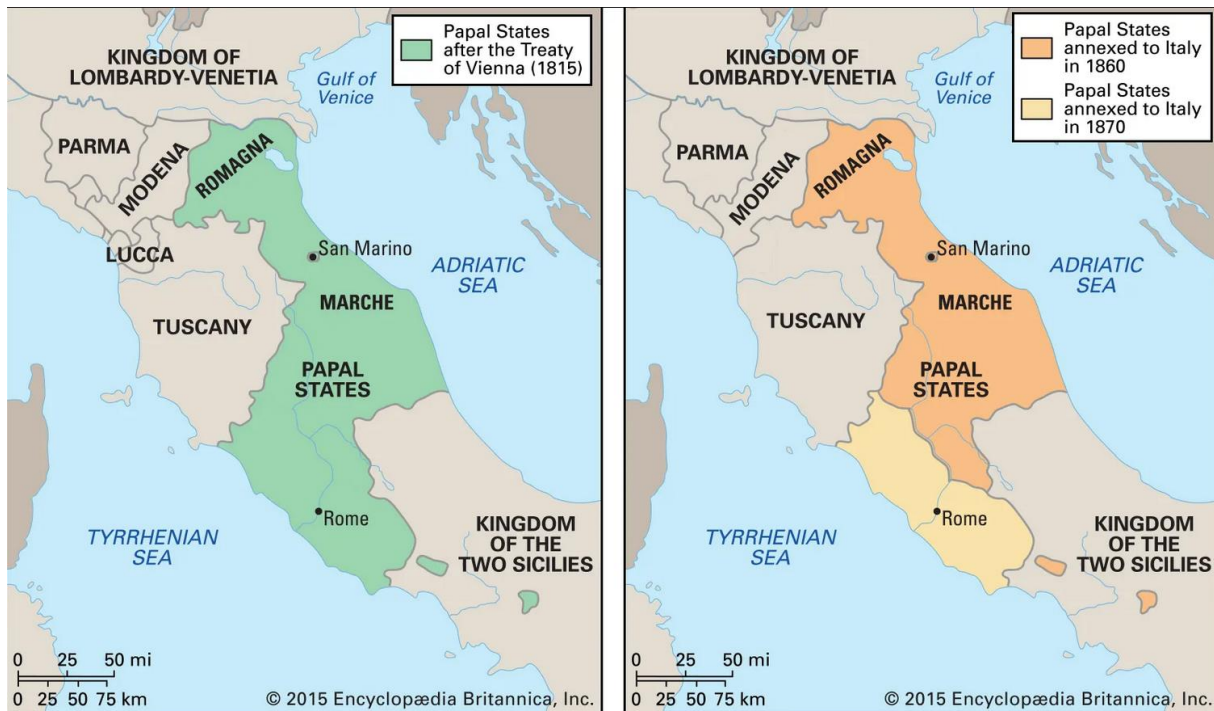
(source: *Professor G. Droysen, Allgemeiner Historischer Handatlas*, 1886 by [R. Andree](#)).





**Chart 7:** Map of the (French) Roman Republic (1798-1799)

It was established on February 11, 1798, following the French troops under General Louis-Alexandre Berthier's invasion of the Papal States and occupation of Rome. Pope Pius VI was taken prisoner on February 20, 1799, and died on August 29, 1799, in Valence, France. The next Pope, Pius VII, was held captive in France until after the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1814, after which a Pope was again in Rome.



**Chart 8:** Map of the Papal States

Left, 1815, when the Congress of Vienna (1815) restored territorial possession to the Papacy. Right, when the Italian Republic (1860) and the Italian Monarchy (1870) confiscated their territorial possessions (Right). (Source: [Encyclopedia Britannica](#)).

The Papacy regained possession of the current 0.44 hectares of Vatican City State when Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty on February 11, 1929, restoring papal political authority as an inviolable, independent Monarchy over the world's smallest country.



**Chart 9:** Map of the European Union, 2024 (source: [https://european-union.europa.eu/easy-read\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/easy-read_en))

## APPENDIX V: GREAT CONTROVERSY OVERVIEW IN DANIEL AND REVELATION

**Daniel 2** projects four kingdoms on Earth's historical timeline. They are symbolized by four materials: gold, silver, bronze, and iron, transitioning into a combination of iron and clay. Babylon is positively identified as the head of gold, lending confidence to the historicist interpretation (Dan 2:37-38).

**Daniel 7** presents the succession of kingdoms as animals—beasts, symbolizing the succession of world powers affecting God's people. The first, Babylon, is presented as a Lion with two eagle wings (Dan 7:4). Medo-Persia is a limping Bear with three ribs in its mouth (Dan 7:5). Greece is a panther with four bird wings and four heads (Dan 7:6). These three kingdoms are positively identified in Daniel 8:20-21, that we may know from history that the next is Rome. Rome is depicted as a horrific, frightful, and powerful monster with ten horns. This political power (beast) acquires religious authority and dares to stand up to God by changing his laws and precepts and haughtily imposing its doctrines upon the world. Daniel 7:7-8; 23-25.

**Daniel 8** begins with the second kingdom, as the first kingdom, Babylon, has passed from the scene. Medo-Persia is represented by a ram with two horns, one of which is higher than the other (Dan 8:3-4). The third kingdom, Greece, is symbolized by a fierce goat from the west, with a notable single horn between its eyes representing Alexander the Great. This horn soon breaks off, and four smaller horns emerge, corresponding to Alexander's four generals who divided the kingdom (Dan 8:5-8). Verses 9 to 14 of Daniel 8 center on the fourth kingdom, showcasing a significant character shift in verse 11, where the political power transforms into a God-defying religious entity. Further details are provided in verses 23-25.

**Daniel 9** features the captivating prophecy of the Messiah, referred to as "the Prince."

This prophecy predicts that Jesus Christ would be anointed and crucified "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy" (Dan 9:24) in heaven.

**Revelation 12** outlines the Great Controversy during the Christian era and establishes the timeframe for the Revelation. The great red dragon, representing pagan Rome, is depicted as a beast with seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns (Rev 12:3). Rome persecuted the Jews and the early Christian Church for nearly 300 years (Rev 12:4-6). A significant flashback recounts the acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice on Pentecost in 31 AD, which denied Satan access to heaven (Rev 12:7-12). The chapter also discusses the persecution by the Christianized political power from 538 to 1798, as referenced in Revelation 12:13-17, assuring that Jesus and his followers will be victorious through faith. Historical context reveals that Rome ruled for 920 years after conquering Greece in 168 BC. In 533, the imperial ecclesiastical authority was granted to the bishops of Rome, marking the beginning of the Byzantine Papacy, which lasted until 752. With the support of Pepin, the Papal system evolved into significant political power from 756 to 1806. However, revolutions from 1798 to 1870 stripped the Church of its political power, only to be restored by the Lateran Treaties in 1929. The prophecy indicates that the Roman Church will continue its role until God's eternal kingdom is established.

**Revelation 13** shifts its focus to the Americas, where a new power emerged as the influence of the Roman Church in Europe waned. This young Protestant nation, representing the United States, symbolized as a lamb with two horns, adopts principles similar to those of the beast from the sea. The power is veering towards a union of church and state, risking a return to Medieval persecutions. The Roman Church has infiltrated American politics through

organizations like Opus Dei and the Jesuits, claiming to uphold Christianity while pushing for adherence to its doctrines. Daniel used the words "cunning" and "with guile and deceit" (Dan 8:25). Eventually, these rules will be enforced in a two-fronted conflict with God's people, primarily in Europe and the United States, and due to their global influence. "All the world wondered after the beast" (Rev 13:3-4).

**Revelation 14** contrasts this falsity with God's unchanging requirements. In the first 11 verses, God's righteous claims are: I will have a remnant that will not bow to the tyranny of those two. They will not defile themselves with their false doctrines and mandates. I am the Creator, and the Sabbath is my sign (Rev 14:6-7); I have let go of that other system; they do not represent my interests anymore (Rev 14:8); do not be intimidated and do not consent, or you will perish with them (Rev 14:9-11); it will not be an easy trial but be patient and endure until the end (Rev 14:12).

**Revelation 15** presents hope for a good outcome for God's children and their song of praise.

**Revelation 16** assures a sevenfold horror for the ungodly, symbolized by the Valley of Final Decisions Megiddon) in the Battle of the Kings (Har). It is the decisive showdown of the confederation of the kings: the beast and the ten kings, the European confederation, against Christ and his chosen (cf. Rev 17:14) – the true King of kings and his victors.

**Revelation 17** presents the final climactic events of the fourth kingdom – the seventh pagan Imperial Roman stage, transitioning to the eighth, the Roman Church Papal Monarchy. The eighth is of the seven (Rev 17:11), alluding to a continuation of Roman power. This chapter details the Roman Church's influence in Europe. For a millennium, the pope was the supreme authority over the rulers and kings of Europe during the period of the Holy Roman Empire. Inadvertently, it lost that position in 1798 because the prophecy said it would. It was ever desirous of regaining it, and it regained it in 1929, putting in all its efforts to become the

world's last Monarch over Europe. The prophecy states that it will succeed. Many assert the confederacy of the beast, and the ten kings will last for one prophetic hour or 15 literal days, according to Revelation 17:12 and 18:10. However, the "one hour" (Gr.: *μίαν ὥραν*, Hebr.: *תקף*: Echad) can also be translated as a unity for a season. Revelation 17:12-14 and 17 allude to this. Whatever happens, Christ will be the eternal King who will triumph gloriously with his elect because God's prophecy never lies.

**Revelation 18** presents a final gracious call to God's children, wherever they may be, to show their allegiance to God and no longer worship the Golden Calf of apostasy (compare Exod 32:26), which will be judged and shattered to dust (Dan 2:35 and 45 and compare Exod 33:20). God's kingdom will be a holy 'mountain' filling the world (Dan 2:35, 44, 7:9-10, and 8:25).

Finally, **Revelation 19-22** presents the end of the Great Controversy, the sounding of the Second Coming, and the inevitable new order of things.

**Chart 10:** The four world powers of Daniel and Revelation

	<b>World's powers</b>	<b>Daniel 2</b>	<b>Daniel 7</b>	<b>Daniel 8</b>	<b>Revelation 12</b>	<b>Revelation 13</b>	<b>Revelation 17</b>	<b>Revelation 18</b>
1	<b>Babylon</b>	Head: Gold	Lion: 4 wings	-	-	-	-	-
2	<b>Medo-Persia</b>	Breast: Silver	Bear: 3 ribs	Ram: 2 horns	-	-	-	-
3	<b>Greece</b>	Tights: Brons	Panther: 4 heads	Goat: 1, then 4 horns	-	-	-	-
4	<b>Rome</b> Seven phases from 753 BC to 756 AD	Legs: Iron	Unidentifiable Beast: 10 horns, iron claws and teeth	Horn from the West	Great Red Dragon: 7 heads, 10 horns, 10 crowns	The dragon, giving throne (Rome) and authority (head of Catholic faith) to sea beast	-	-
	- Emerging eighth-stage Papal Rome	Feet and Toes: Iron and Clay: Final phase	Little horn coming up between the 10	Blasphemy: false, unbiblical doctrines and claims	Roman dragon and great dragon (Satan) oppress God's people	Heir of Pagan Rome: Blaspheming Panther-Bear-Lion Sea Beast: 7 heads, 10 horns, 7 crowns	Roman power's 8th phase is the throne for the woman in scarlet	-
	- Church-State Pontifical Rome	1000 years (800-1800) Holy Roman Empire	Claiming authority to change God's Law	Antichrist usurps High Priestly prerogatives of Christ: gross blasphemy	1260 years (538-1798) of Medieval oppression	Reintroduction of false worship (strange fire) and cunning politics: Sunday, mark of authority	Woman/ Babylon the Great: great in wealth, politics, and apostasy	Babylon the Great: Mother to nominal Christianity
	- Papal Rome's State Influence over Europe	Even by marriage arrangements, iron and clay do not stick	-	1844 marks the unveiling of the antichrist's usurping of Christ's role	-	Panther-Bear-Lion Sea Beast: 8 <sup>th</sup> head wounded in 1798; healed in 1929, and "goeth to perdition"	Scarlet Beast: eighth king/ final Monarchy: 7 heads (Pagan Rome), 10 uncrowned horns (Europe)	
	- America & Europe	-	-	-	Oppression of the Remnant in the Middle Ages and Latter Days	Earth Beast with 2 lamb horns; mimics the sea beast's Medieval system of oppression in Protestantism	Confederation reintroduces Medieval oppression	Confused Christianity: Babylon; God's people are called out
5	<b>Kingdom of Jesus</b>	Rock becomes an Earth-filling Mountain	The Judicial Court is seated	-	Christ, King of the Universe, is Victor	-	Lamb is the ultimate King of kings	God acquits his people



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