

REVELATION 17: THE DRAGON AND THE WOMAN

Research Paper

for

The 2025 Revelation 17 Prophecy Conference

October 16–18, 2025

Berrien Springs, MI 49103

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Revised, September 2025

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(From: *Earth's Final Kingdom*, ISBN 978-90-9040609-1)

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

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

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

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

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

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

found in Revelation chapters 12–18. There are fifteen key symbols to consider, and while doing so, five (probable) misinterpretations in the Greek in Revelation 17 surfaced (in verses 9, twice in 10, 11, and 12). Correcting these makes the text comprehensible and straightforward. Ignoring this prophetic foundation significantly limits the understanding of Revelation 17. Revelation 17 illustrates how the Roman power, represented by the iron legs in Daniel 2, evolved into a distinct ecclesiastical Roman Church-State Monarchy, symbolized by the two feet of iron and clay in Daniel's vision.² Revelation 17 is about understanding that a counterfeit mark of authority and false worship will be imposed, as referenced in Revelation 13:6–8 and 14–17. Every individual will face a choice between two distinct forms of worship, proclaimed across all nations, peoples, tribes, and languages (Rev 13:7 and 14:6). A global agreement, driven by two dominant political forces, United States of America, symbolized by the two-horned beast (Rev 13:11–17) and United Nations of Europe, represented by ten kings, are central. These powers will collaborate to enforce doctrines of the Roman Church, conflicting with the values of God's kingdom. This will ignite severe tribulation for those who oppose it (Rev 17:12–15).

2. Singular Vision: The author interprets the Book of Revelation as a singular, unified, comprehensive vision that gradually unfolds more details through repetitive and complex scenes. Reminding oneself that Revelation's vision is an imaginative object lesson on eschatology, conveying profound truths, is essential. Symbols introduced in the early chapters should remain consistent throughout the narrative (e.g., Revelation 2:22

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

corroborates with Revelation 17:1–6, and Revelation 2:26–27 explains Revelation 12:5).

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

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

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

- (1) Can a new methodological approach, grounded in a theoretical framework of seven contexts, enhance the interpretation of Revelation 17?
- (2) How do established interpretations align with the findings presented in this research, and what implications arise from these comparisons?

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

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

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

Greece. Historical analysis confirms that Roman power evolved through seven distinct phases of government, highlighting its complex political structure.

The scarlet-colored beast. The angel identifies the "scarlet-colored beast" as the eighth king. The original Greek indicates that this beast is not simply part of or resembling the seven but emerges "from" them, highlighting continuity and origin. This eighth king marks a significant shift from the Pagan Roman Empire to the Papal Roman Church. The woman sitting on the beast symbolizes how the Roman Church's religious ambitions are upheld by its political power.

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

The eighth king, the beast. The timeframe, prophetic, and historical contexts of Revelation 17 disclose the identity of the eighth king of Revelation 17:10 as representing Rome's final political phase. The timeframe focuses explicitly on the period from 756 to 800. In 800, on Christmas Day, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne, king of the Franks, as Emperor of the Romans. This date historically marked the birth of the Holy Roman Empire, a symbolic revival of the Western Roman imperial, which fell in 476 AD. However, the decline of the Holy Roman Empire began with the Investiture Controversies in the 11th century, and gradually, the Popes lost their grip on the nations and peoples of Europe, as pointedly noted in Revelation 17:6. In 1806, the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved under pressure from Napoleon. Eight years prior, in 1798, Napoleon forced the Monarch of the Vatican to abdicate, annexing the Papal States to the French Republic and ending the political authority of the Popes. The beast, symbol for a political power, was severely wounded unto death. The text speaks about being in the Abyss. This wounded state lasted until 1929, when the Lateran

Treaty restored the sovereignty of the Papacy, thereby reuniting Church and State. Revelation 17:8 anticipates this revival of political power, a theme echoed in Revelation 13:3, 12, and 14. This situation will last until the Second Coming of Christ. The prophecy suggests that the Papacy's influence over the nations will increase, eventually leading to a renewed European coalition in which the Church reclaims its former political position and reintroduces Medieval coercion (the image of or for the beast in Rev 13:14–17). God's people are encouraged by his promises of divine intervention to demolish all earthly powers "without human hands" (Dan 2:44–45, 7:13–14, 12:1–3, and Rev 18:8–10). "When he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things"—unquestionably, part of God's plan—"shall be finished" (Rev 1:19; 4:1 and Dan 12:7). Thus, Revelation 17 depicts the climax of the Great Controversy during the Christian Era.

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

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ABBREVIATIONS

Miscellaneous

BDAG:	Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich (Title: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>)
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, https://about.jstor.org/
LN:	Louw & Nida (Title: <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains</i>)
LSJ:	Liddell, Scott, Jones Ancient Greek - English Lexicon
MHBC:	Matthew Henry Bible Commentary
MM:	Ministry Magazine
NICNT:	New International Commentary on the New Testament
OPIL:	Oxford Public International Law (https://opil.ouplaw.com/page/about).
SDA:	Seventh-day Adventist
SDABC:	Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary
TDNT:	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
Thayer:	Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament
WBC:	Word Biblical Commentary

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, the primary translation in the Paper.
LXX:	Septuagint, the Alexandrian translation of the Jewish Tanakh (Old Testament).
NAS:	North American Standard
NIV:	New International Version
NLT:	New Living Translation
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 in the SDA Bible Commentary, 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)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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 were a 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.

I also appreciate the language coaches from the Academic English Now Team. Their expert guidance in refining my writing style has been greatly appreciated. Lastly, I also thank my brother in Christ, Daniel Muller, for academically reviewing the paper and helping to sharpen 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/>.

Greek Lexicons: BDAG, L&N, LSJ, and Thayer.

Literature review searches were conducted on websites such as Academia.edu, Scribd, Internet Archive, Everand, Encyclopedia Britannica, JSTOR, JHSS, Catholic Encyclopedia, American History Net, EGW Writings, SDA Biblical Research Institute, Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists, and Andrews University Archives.

Bible Commentaries explored: MHBC, TDNT, WBC, NICNT, SDABC.

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 concepts³ 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.*

³ Note: In this submitted abstract, accepted by the Revelation 17 Conference Steering Committee, the term 'concepts' was introduced. Within the study, this refers to a new methodological approach—a theoretical framework based on seven contexts, four of which form the core of the research.'

INTRODUCTION

This research proposes that contextualizing Revelation 17 within the broader scope of chapters 12–18 enhances our 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.

This research was initiated by a casual remark that challenged an 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 sparked a debate, prompting the researcher to undertake an extensive investigation into the history of ancient Rome and its governmental structures.

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

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

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

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

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

Those familiar with Jesus' teaching methods in the Gospels will recognize a similar narrative style in the book of Revelation. After his resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days helping his disciples grasp the foundational message of the gospel. 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, for attentive spectators and hearers, the book

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

In this conference paper, the first chapter lays the groundwork for the discourse by discussing the relevance of four proposed foundational contexts: the prophetic context of Revelation, the singularity of Revelation presenting one overarching vision, its timeframe from around 31 AD (Pentecost in Acts 2) to the end of the world, and its historical context. These contexts are crucial as they provide the framework for understanding the unique structure and meaning of Revelation:

- The prophetic context helps enhance understanding of the vision's purpose.
- The singularity of Revelation as one overarching vision ensures that it is not dissected into loose parts but interpreted as a unified whole.
- The timeframe guides knowledge of the sequence of events, while Revelation is barely chronological.
- The historical context provides the backdrop against which the events unfold.

These contexts are not just theoretical constructions but serve as keys to unlocking the deeper meaning of Revelation 17. The researcher argues that once these four contexts are honored, 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 12–18), where the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan unfolds and reaches its climax.

The third chapter presents a lexical and grammatical analysis of five misunderstood Greek words in the book of Revelation, chapter 17. Once these are corrected, Revelation 17 is unveiled.

The fourth chapter presents a verse-by-verse explanation of Revelation 17, based on the findings from the previous chapters.

The concluding chapter answers 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.

Four 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.

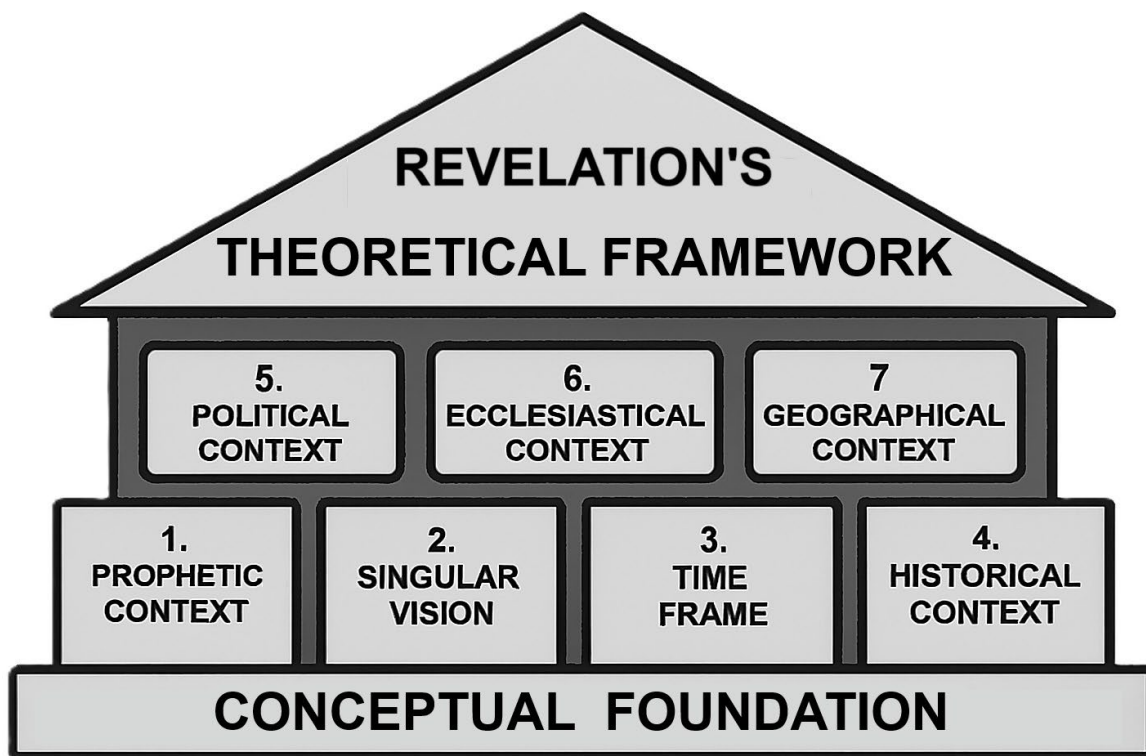
As the angel emphasized in Daniel 12:4, learning is not a static process; it is an ongoing endeavor that requires continual reevaluation of one's understanding. This active engagement is crucial for adequately reassessing communal and academic beliefs by aligning them with Scripture and underlying secular contexts. Emerging from the Bible-researching Philadelphia period, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is accustomed to this attitude of continual engagement. This emphasis on continual learning and reevaluation underscores the interpretation and understanding of Revelation 17.

The researcher demonstrates that a historicist hermeneutic, applied across seven interrelated contexts, provides the essential framework for interpreting Revelation 17. This methodology reflects God's intent that the time prophecies in Daniel and Revelation be embedded within human history (Deut 18:21–22; Isa 45:21; Jer 28:9). Because chronology is inseparable from historical narrative, it serves as the warp thread into which all other contexts are woven, producing a coherent and richly textured tapestry

A NOVEL CONCEPTUAL METHODOLOGY

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

The study approach situates Revelation's vision within a conceptual framework comprising seven foundational contexts.⁴ This theoretical framework is a methodological approach to support a consistent and comprehensive interpretation of Revelation, particularly in chapters 12 through 18. The framework is built upon seven key contexts serving as building blocks in a theoretical structure: Revelation's singularity and timeframe, alongside its prophetic, historical, political, ecclesiastical, and geographical contexts.



⁴ This theoretical framework is applied in her book manuscript, *Earth's Final Kingdom — Revelation 12 to 18*.

The conceptual framework emphasizes that the Book of Revelation reveals what was previously enshrouded about the fourth beast, the world power described in Daniel 2, 7, and 8. Contrary to the book of Daniel, it presents a single vision containing intricate details that reveal a vast eschatological panorama. 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 within this framework, it provides a comprehensible explanation for the chapter under study, Revelation 17.

The methodological design encompasses Revelation's

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

of an image. Setting Revelation on the timeframe from Pentecost in the year 34 and culminating when all will have been accomplished, bears significance.

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

authority from the dragon. Revelation 17:3 emphasizes that the woman is seated on the beast, indicating that the beast provides her with a seat of power, rather than being directed by her.

7. **Geographical Context** situates the events depicted in Revelation 17 on the European continent, specifically in the former Western Roman Empire. This context helps to understand the geopolitical backdrop of Revelation 17, whereas Revelation 13 and 18 cover both the Old and New World.⁵

Together, these seven contexts form a structured lens for interpretation, guiding readers toward a deeper understanding of the text's unique nature and its interpretative implications.

⁵ The terms Old World and New World are used here to reflect the geographical shift in prophetic focus—from Europe and the Middle East to the Americas. This usage is descriptive and alludes to the geographical perspectives in Revelation's narrative, which is part of this geographical context.

Revelation's Prophetic Context

The Book of Revelation continues the great time prophecies introduced in the Book of Daniel, chapters 2, 7, and 8. Its middle section, chapters 12 to 18, addresses the challenges posed by the final world power—Rome—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 for all subsequent chapters. It is the vantage point or helipad for understanding World's End Game: the final acts of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan. Starting on the wrong foot here misses the point in the coming chapters. The relevance of Daniel's and Revelation's visions lies in their precise fulfillment of 'His story' in our history. They alert us to the parts that are yet to be fulfilled. Acknowledging the prophetic context is pivotal to understanding Revelation 17.

Before tracing the prophetic context, it is essential to understand the nature of Revelation itself, how its visions are communicated, and how they invite symbolic interpretation. The word "revelation" refers to the unveiling of hidden realities. Standing on the beach of the island of Patmos, John witnesses a series of scenes flashing in the firmament. A messenger angel draws back the curtain on the Conflict of the Ages—that intense spiritual battle between good and evil. Jesus, the Revelator, intends for God's people to comprehend what is shown. As Deuteronomy 29:29 affirms, divine revelation is meant to be understood, and reading, listening, and understanding are essential. Unless the context clearly demands a literal meaning, each element must be approached first as symbolic. Symbolic interludes—encouragements, implorations, and parenthetical views—reflect the lived experience of God's people throughout history.

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 contains 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). SDA eschatology affirms that by saying, it is for the time of the end, the angel meant our time – the time after 1798 AD ending the 1,260 years of persecution (referenced seven times in: Dan 7:25 and 12:7; Rev 11:2, 3; 12:14, 16; 13:5). 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 view of a vast eschatological panorama, conveyed through the symbolism of four metals and four beasts, which originated more than 2,600 years ago (Dan 2:28, 31–33, 36–44; 7:3–10; 8:3–14, 20–25).⁶ The narrative begins with Babylon, followed by two successive world powers, each 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 of Daniel 7:7–8 with the Roman Empire.⁷ Still, 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). They recognized Daniel's exegetical method, which involved an initial overview followed by successive detailed elaborations. 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 angel⁸ 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. According to Daniel's imagery, it is an 'out of the world' ferocious, monstrous creature. Revelation pictures it as a great, fiery-red dragon, with many heads, horns, and crowns. The imagery shown was what John

⁶ According to the Canon of Ptolemy, Nebuchadnezzar dreamt about the statue in 604 BC, the second year of his reign as king of Babylonia.

⁷ Kimberley Fowler, *Jerome, Commentary on Daniel II.40* (2018). Accessed on April 30, 2025. [Z](#)

⁸ Though the text does not disclose the identity of the messenger angel, it might well be Gabriel. He was the messenger to Daniel (Dan 8:16 and 9:21), to Zacharias (Luke 1:19), and Mary (Luke 1:26).

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 pains of oppression while laboring for his Lord. 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 reinforced the rehearsal by reiterating Daniel's sequence in reverse, as though tracing its lineage back to the original setting: this Beast comes from the line of the Roman Dragon, the Greek Panthera, the Medo-Persian Bear, and the Babylonian Lion. The angel reinforced Daniel's visions as if asking, *"Do you remember Daniel's vision? That is what I am referring to."* Then the angel underscored that the Roman Dragon had furnished the beast's position, as if to say, *"Make no mistake, John — this beast is not a fifth world power; it is the prolongation of the fourth, the Dragon."*
4. In Revelation 17:3, a scarlet seven-headed beast with ten horns serves as a throne for a fallen religious system, an adulterous woman.

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.

Revelation's Singular Vision

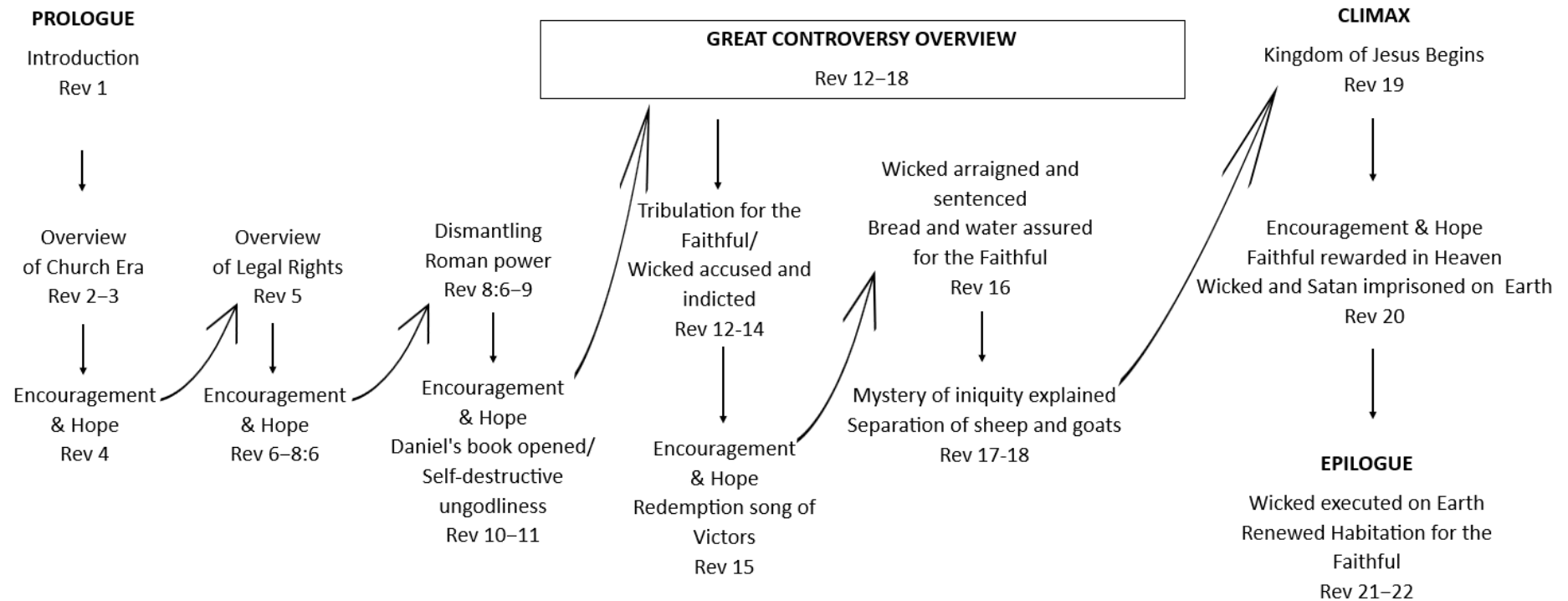
John did not divide the Book of Revelation into 22 chapters and 404 verses; this structure was created in the twelfth century. He received Revelation as a singular, cohesive narrative of a unified apocalyptic message. This narrative is told in layers of recurring scenes, not necessarily in chronological order. Adhering to this unity prevents misinterpretation and actively engages the audience to consider earlier interpretations when encountering reiterated 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 of the Christian Church from its inception until the end of the 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 setting where the rulers (Hebrew *חַרִּים* – harim) of the earth – ecclesiastical and political – are confronted with their final decisions. These recurring settings influenced numerous theologians to assume that Revelation comprises multiple visions. However, Revelation is to be read and 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 on the following pages 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 Flowing Structure of Revelation's Vision



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—the very One who reveals—so that although Revelation speaks in images, its core message is a real, factual unveiling. The nominative case marks "ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ" as a title and subject, emphasizing a singular, unified revelation.⁹ 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 all these instances, the word refers to specific revelations, personal insights, or future unveilings, rather than a comprehensive, canonical disclosure like in Revelation 1:1.
- In Revelation 1:9–10, John states that he received the vision on a Sabbath day.¹⁰ 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

⁹ The phrase "ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ" in Revelation 1:1 carries a deliberate double meaning:

(1) Subjective genitive – Jesus is the one who reveals (He is the revealer), and
(2) Objective genitive – Jesus is the one being revealed (He is the content).

The structure of the text suggests that both meanings are intended, presenting Revelation as both a disclosure *from* Jesus Christ and a disclosure *about* Him.

¹⁰ White, AA 581.4 [Z](#). 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).

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 10:5, 8 with Rev 13:1, KJV¹¹). 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:
 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

¹¹ "Καὶ ἐστάθη ἐπὶ". The Byzantine text, based on the Textus Receptus, renders ἐστάθην (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.

(800–1806 AD)¹² was deeply troubled by the Reformation, which denounced most of her teachings and led to the confiscation of her wealth, particularly during the reign of King Henry VIII in England (1509–1547), the secularization period in France (1789–1799), and the land reforms in Spain (1836).

2. In Revelation 2:26–27, Jesus 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 through that of his followers. 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 to every appearance of the image in Revelation's symbolic setting, with one exception:¹³
 - Revelation 1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1 – Jesus identifies the stars as the leaders of the seven church periods.
 - Revelation 8:10–11 – History suggests that Attila, leader of the Huns, is referenced.

¹² During this millennium, 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.

¹³ Except for one instance—Revelation 6:13, which relates to Matthew 24:29. It is generally held that this prophecy was fulfilled on November 13, 1833, because of Jesus' words: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven." The event is recorded as "The night the stars fell." [↗](#) While we know now that it was a great Leonid meteor storm, to the people at that time, the stars were falling. See also Ellen White in *The Great Controversy*, p. 333. [↗](#)

- Revelation 8:12 – The gradual dismantling of the Roman government structure in the West during Odoacer's military coup and the rise of the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy (476–553). The sun symbolizes the emperor, the moon symbolizes the consulate, and the stars represent the senate.
 - Revelation 9:1 – History points to Mohammed, leader of the Saracens.
 - Revelation 12:1 – The twelve stars are universally interpreted as the twelve apostles.
 - Revelation 12:4 – The abolishment of Judah's kingship, corresponding with Daniel 8:10.
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 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. It underscores the necessity of enhancing the audience's comprehension through close consideration of the prophetic, historical context, and the culture of the time.

Revelation's Timeframe

The research suggests that the vision of Revelation marks its own beginning and duration, setting 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 this context also helps to understand the prophetic timeline in 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 must soon take place [...]. Write now what you see, what is, and what is about (must be) to take place after these things. [...] come here, and I will show you what must take place after these things" (Rev 1:1,19; 4:1).¹⁴

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 progresses¹⁵ from John's time to the end of the Christian Era, emphasizing its message and the role of interpreters in

¹⁴ Revelation 1:1 – “δειξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ, ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου”:

δεῖ – verb, 3rd person singular, present indicative active of **δέω**: *it must, it is necessary*.

γενέσθαι – verb, present middle (deponent) infinitive of **γίνομαι**: *to come to pass, to arise, to be completed*.

Compare also Revelation 1:19 – “γράψον οὖν ἃ εἶδες καὶ ἃ εἰσὶν καὶ ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα”:

μέλλει – verb, 3rd person singular, present indicative active of **μέλλω**: *is about to happen, must occur*.

And Revelation 4:1 – “ἀνάβα ὧδε καὶ δεῖξω σοι ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα”:

μετὰ ταῦτα – *after these things*.

Greek text and parsing from <https://www.swrktec.org/>. Retrieved October 20, 2024.

¹⁵ 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 can lead to misunderstandings. If the assertion holds that Revelation 12:1–5 refers to the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, the interpretation stretches the symbolism into literalism, creating an out-of-context flashback. It is implausible that Mary, the mother of Jesus, would have worn a garland of twelve stars.¹⁶ Therefore, some suggest that the woman represents the Jewish congregation anticipating their Messiah.¹⁷ However, it is written that the Jewish people did not receive him (John 1:11). Furthermore, the 12 stars – do they represent the 12 tribes of Israel? The woman is presented as one unified "great sign" – clothed with the sun, standing on the moon, and wearing a garland of 12 stars on her head. All these aspects must remain in view of the interpretive framework. If Revelation 12:1–5 is understood to refer to the birth of Christ, the interpretation of all these aspects is significantly affected. Consistency would then require Revelation 12:6 and 12:13 to depict the Jewish congregation fleeing into the wilderness for 1,260 years, which disrupts the continuity of meaning.

¹⁶ More about the star symbol on pp. 66-67.

¹⁷ For example, Stefanović (2002), pp. 380-81.

But if Revelation 12:5 is interpreted as the inception of the early body of believers, the narrative aligns seamlessly with both the prophetic and historical context. Two Old Testament passages confirm this assertion: Exodus 4:22 and Hosea 11:1–3, in which Israel is described as God's son — a newborn male. According to the text, God cleansed Ephraim of his birth blood and instructed him to walk in his commands. He raised and nurtured him in the wilderness to grow into a congregation.¹⁸ The birth of that child occurred on the day of the Exodus. In the New Testament, similar imagery appears. Paul equates believers in the Corinthian and Galatian churches with infants (1 Cor 3:1–2; Gal 4:19). Ellen White's writings contain at least six distinct references to the Ephesus church (Rev 2:1) as "the infant church."¹⁹ Her words, saying, "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. And 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 16:8–14, she was not adorned with jewelry, but with the sun of the Gospel and educated by the moon of the Torah.

Thus, the symbolism of Revelation 12 prefigures the imagery that appears in subsequent chapters. Researchers of Revelation must adhere to this consistency. Other features within the metaphor offer deeper insight into the Timeframe concept. In Scripture, feet represent standing and walking in pursuit of knowledge and understanding (e.g., 1 Sam 2:9; Ps 8:7; 73:2; 119:59; Isa 52:7), as well as submission to authority (e.g., 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, educated in, and founded upon the teachings and prophecies of the Old Testament, a part of Scripture as valid today as in the days of the Prophets. Her

¹⁸ The first mention of God's people as a congregation is in Exodus 12:3.

¹⁹ See White in: AA 105.1 [↗](#); 3SP 323.3 [↗](#); ST Jan 29, 1885, par 8 [↗](#); WM 67.1 [↗](#); DA 177.1 [↗](#).

crown of the radiant sun, the Gospel of the New Testament, signifies the glorious fulfillment of the Old Testament shadows that point to Jesus Christ. The wreath of twelve stars encircling her head—the seat of her cognitive faculties—represents the leadership of the twelve apostles, the first appointed leaders of the reborn Christian believers. This understanding is further affirmed by the realization that Judaism was as deeply involved in the fierce controversy of the ages as Christianity is today. Both were, upon delivery, educated in the principles of God: one for forty years in the literal wilderness, the other for 1,260 years in a mythical wilderness, hidden near God's throne. Satan's agencies pursued both—one by Pharaoh's army, the other by the mighty arms of pagan and papal Rome, represented by the dragon and the beast.

Grasping these biblical contexts is essential for understanding the challenges faced by early Christianity, the impact of the cosmic controversy between Christ and Satan on God's people throughout history, and the ultimate resolution of that conflict. The Timeframe concept in Revelation supports the reader's understanding that chapters 12–17 disclose various aspects of the end-time Great Controversy. Revelation 12 and 15–16 depict events primarily in the past; Revelation 14 speaks to the present; and Revelation 13 and 17 span both past and future. Chapter 18 reveals the concluding events of the controversy—where final decisions are made, fate is sealed, and the work of redemption is completed. Revelation 19–22 bring the vision to its glorious conclusion: the 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 is 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. Recorded Roman History provides a fascinating glimpse into the evolution of Roman power. In 63 BC, the pagan Roman Republic began its encroachment on Judea. Its sixth administrative Imperial phase started in 27 BC under Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus (Octavian) and ended in the Western territories in 476 under Romulus Augustulus. The seventh phase is recorded as the Exarchy, with its seat in Ravenna, Italy. The Byzantine Emperor established this weak and insignificant administration in Constantinople to maintain control over the Western territories within the Empire. It lasted from 584 to 751. The eighth phase is the Pontifical Absolute Monarchy of the Vatican City State, also known as the Holy See, which began in 756. It marks the final phase in the Roman historical context of Revelation.²⁰

Sometimes it is disputed whether the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation are to be taken as unconditional.²¹ However, it is rarely argued that the time prophecies related to the Plan of Salvation are. The nature of time prophecies is that they are foresight, affirmed by hindsight – reading tomorrow's newspaper yesterday (Deut 18:21–22, Isa 45:21, and Jer 28:9).²² For such prophecies, one cannot present evidence of fulfillment if history has not yet happened. On the other hand, no one is excused from neglecting past events. Therefore, interpreters must approach time prophecies with the same rigor and discipline as historians.

This research adopts a historicist perspective,²³ as Ellen White (co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church) and early Adventist interpreters adhered to when explaining

²⁰ 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. 144–185.

²¹ 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 fulfillment is unconditionally determined in the future.

²² 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.

²³ See DARCOM, Volume 6, pp. 148–49.

the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. Ellen White's writings emphasize the importance of a diligent approach. Concerning Revelation, she wrote in 1897:

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.²⁴

And in 1911:

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).²⁵

Thoroughly understanding the historical context 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

²⁴ White in RH, August 31, 1897, par. 5 [↗](#).

²⁵ White (1911), AA 584.2–585.1 [↗](#).

assured that the visions of Daniel would be understood, and the biblical standpoint is that the 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).

From Pagan Empire to Papal Monarchy. The transformation of Roman authority from imperial rule to ecclesiastical dominion unfolded over centuries. Historians²⁶ agree that Roman power underwent seven stages of government. Its decline was accelerated by ten tribal nations surging into its western territories,²⁷ fulfilling the prophecy of 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." This led to a seventh pagan phase transitioning into a unique eighth, that of the pontiffs of Rome, thus providing the political structure for the Roman Church, symbolized by the woman on the scarlet beast in Revelation 17.

At the Council of Nicaea in 325,²⁸ presided over by Emperor Constantine the Great, Arianism was formally banned in favor of Nicene Christianity, establishing doctrinal unity under imperial auspices. Successive emperors promoted Nicene Catholicism, a process culminating in the Edict of Thessalonica, issued by Emperor Theodosius in 380. As a result, Nicene Christianity became the sole authorized religion of the Roman Empire.²⁹ By 402,

²⁶ See Appendix IV, pp. 144-185.

²⁷ Jones (1898), pp. 591-696. [↗](#)

²⁸ 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 coequal and coeternal.

²⁹ McGinn, Bernard J., et al., "Christianity." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 11, 2025. [↗](#) Accessed January 12, 2025.

when Emperor Honorius, son of Theodosius I, transferred the Western imperial seat from Rome to Ravenna, the bishops of Rome began to pursue temporal power. From 508, the papacy's position began to shift from a religious department under imperial oversight to an aristocratic landholder in the Duchy of Rome, exercising direct control over lands formerly administered by the imperial court. The bishops of Rome gradually increased their religious and temporal dominance.

The next step in the transformation process occurred in 533, when Byzantine Emperor Justinian's *Codex Justinianus* codified Catholicism into Roman civil law, formally recognizing the Bishop of Rome as the head of the Christian Church. Five years later, in 538, General Belisarius expelled the Ostrogoths, the third Arian horn, from Rome, fulfilling Daniel 7:24 and granting the composite beast from the sea its seat and "great authority" over the Church, as prophesied in Revelation 13:2. However, until 752, the appointment of each pope required imperial approval— directly from the emperor in Constantinople, or via the Exarch in Ravenna. The first pontiff under this system was Vigilius (537 AD), and the last was Zachary (741–752). Therefore, until 752, the pontiffs were effectively not sovereign but subjects of the Byzantine emperors.³⁰ The arrangement was mutually beneficial: emperors complied with the bishops' religious demands to secure their souls' salvation; in return, they provided military and civil protection to the pontiffs. When the Lombards captured the weakened Exarchate of Ravenna in 751, Byzantium, with its troops tied down in eastern campaigns against Ottoman and Muslim invasions, could no longer defend Italy. By 752, the Exarchate had ceased to exist. Pope Stephen II then turned to the Franks.³¹

³⁰ Baumgartner (2003), p. 10.

³¹ Browning (1992), pp. 57-58.

The decisive transformation occurred in 756.³² After defeating the Lombards for the second time in 756, 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.³³ This gift meets all the criteria of statehood for the Papacy: a defined territory (the Papal States), a ruler (the pope), and an official title (Pontifical Monarch), as well as its seat in the capital, Rome.³⁴ In Imperial Rome, political power was often intertwined with religious claims—first by deifying the emperor, and later, from Constantine onward, by utilizing Christianity to consolidate control, effectively making the Church a quasi-state department. By 756 AD, the Roman Church had fully reversed the imperial model—no longer a state department but the state itself, ruled by an ecclesiastical monarch. This marks the prophetic eighth phase, where spiritual authority augmented temporal power. The Church was no longer a religious department under imperial oversight; it became the state, symbolized by the woman sitting on the scarlet-colored beast, the eighth king from the seven in Revelation 17:11.

According to Adventist theologians,³⁵ 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. However, 538 marked the end of a doctrinal conflict concerning Catholicism's authority over Arianism, presented as a decisive war between the

³² 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.

³³ 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.

³⁴ Noble (1984), p. xxvi: "*Certainly, a deliberate and articulated desire to be free and independent, a clear sense of territorial claims within recognized frontiers, and the conscious deployment and refinement of institutional structures designed not only to administer a church but also to govern in all legitimate and necessary respects may be taken as distinguishing characteristics of a true state. All of these conditions were met by the end of the eighth century, and most of them had been met by the middle of the century.*"

³⁵ 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.

Imperial forces and the Ostrogoths. Actual political authority remained with the Byzantine Emperor until 751. It was not until 756, when Pope Stephen II allied with Pepin, that the bishop of Rome became an independent monarch, governing a substantial territory in Italy. It was Pepin who established that the keys of Rome and the recaptured Papal cities were handed over to the Pontiff.³⁶

Symbolically, Scripture presents the Roman Church as a woman—an ecclesiastical system. A beast has always signified political power (Dan 7–8; Rev 17; also, Jer 4:7; 50:44–46; Hab 1:6–8; Ezek 29:3). While in other Bible books, a single animal symbolizes the hostile power's character and activity, in Daniel and Revelation only composite beasts—complete with multiple heads, horns, and crowns—represent a single power's rise, division, fall, and eventual restoration. Daniel 7 portrays the "little horn" on the head of the ferocious fourth beast as a blasphemous, spiritual power having authority in doctrinal matters (Dan 7:24–25), a role the bishops of Rome, aided by the Roman emperors (Rev 13:2), exercised long before they gained temporal sovereignty. Revelation 13:3 predicts that one of the heads of the Roman beast would be fatally wounded yet revived. The prevailing Adventist interpretation correctly states that the political power, the beast, was injured in 1798 and that the 1,260-period of oppression pertained to 538 to 1798. Still, the sequence of prophecy, the emergence of an eleventh horn, the uprooting of three, and the sum of eight places the beast after 756, when Pope Stephen II became an independent monarch in Rome, counting to only 1,042 years. Thus, the 1,260-year period of oppression of the saints (from 538 to 1798) pertains to the exercise of ecclesiastical power by the Church. Moreover, consistent with explaining the four heads in Daniel 7:6 and the four horns in Daniel 8:8 as representing Greece, and the two horns in Daniel 8:3 as representing Medo-Persia, the wounded head is to remain part of the Roman beast, meaning that it is one of its political phases. Thus, the

³⁶ Noble (1984), p. 92.

affliction of the wound to one of its heads could only have occurred *after* the establishment of the political power of that head. The same applies to the little horn: its emergence is positioned during the dismantling of the Western Empire—"came up among them" (Dan 7:8), a period that history records as spanning from 395 to 752. Thus, the wounding must have occurred *after* the establishment of the blasphemous little horn, historically recorded in 1798. The conclusion is defensible that the dragon or beast with seven heads symbolizes Rome in its entirety, encompassing both its imperial and Pontifical stages. The Roman power in its imperial stage tried to annihilate the infant Christian Church, and the Roman power in its Pontifical stage will be demolished ("goeth into perdition") at Christ's Second Coming. It is crucial to note that the ecclesiastical power of the Roman Church was formally recognized in 538. In contrast, political power was augmented in 756, creating a peculiar Church-State (religio-political) unification. Only political power was withdrawn in 1798. Therefore, historically and prophetically, the period characterized by the beast that "was" (Rev 17:8, 11) spans from 756 to 1798.

When Napoleon's forces captured Pope Pius VI and abolished the Papal States in 1798, the Papacy lost its territorial dominion, stripping it of its political power—a blow prophetically referred to as the "deadly wound"—while retaining its ecclesiastical influence.³⁷ The wound was deadly because, at that time, nobody expected the Papacy to regain political power again, while its ecclesiastical authority was never questioned.³⁸ Thus, from 1798 until 1929, the Pontifical Monarchy "was not" (Rev 17:8), symbolized by the beast in the abyss. Ekkehart Müller argues that the imagery pertains to Satan during the

³⁷ A few years later, in 1801, there was a new Pope elected, Napoleon signed the Concordat with the Catholic Church, and in 1804, he wanted to be crowned emperor of France by the Pope.

³⁸ During the Garibaldi (1848) and Victor Emmanuel (1870) conquests, it was univocally understood that the Papacy would never rise again as an independent nation, while its ecclesiastical authority was never questioned. See, Kertzer (2004), p. 14.

Millennium.³⁹ However, as already said, in Scripture, a beast always symbolizes a political power. The beast of Revelation 17:11 undergoes three stages: it was, is not, and will be again. It is the eighth, following the previous seven, and it will eventually be slain. 2 Thessalonians 2:8 identifies this same power as "the Wicked" who will be consumed at the Coming of Christ. Revelation 16:13, under the imagery of the last seven plagues taking place after Probation closes, discriminates between the beast and Satan (the dragon). Revelation 19:20 reveals that the destruction of the beast takes place *before* the Millennium. Revelation 20:2 reveals that the destruction of Satan will be *after* the Millennium. Furthermore, nowhere in the Bible is Satan presented as a beast,⁴⁰ and since Genesis 3, there has never been a time when Satan was not. Stefanović asserts that the revival from the abyss pertains to the demonic locusts pictured in Revelation 9:1.⁴¹ However, history affirms that the locusts in Revelation 9:1–5, under the imagery of the fifth and sixth trumpets, pertain to the devastating demolition of the Eastern parts of the Roman Empire by the Persians and the Ottomans. The only fitting conclusion is that the eighth king is the final phase of the fourth political power, presented by Daniel as the feet of iron and clay. Adventists have always explained the feet as the final phase of Roman power – the fourth kingdom. This phase will be destroyed by the Stone of the Second Coming, before the Millennium.

What was taken away in 1798 and subsequent years until 1870 was the Papacy's territorial dominion. The Pope was reduced to a monarch without a kingdom. The Lateran Treaty of February 11, 1929, fully healed this political wound by creating Vatican City (0.44 ha) as a sovereign state and an independent nation.

³⁹ For example, Müller (2007), JAAS 10.1, p. 50.

⁴⁰ In Scripture, Satan is explicitly called the great dragon, the dragon, and the ancient serpent, but never directly labeled a beast. In Daniel and the Apocalypse, a beast stands for a political power.

⁴¹ See more details in Appendices II, pp. 132–138, and Appendix IV, pp. 144–185.

Some interpretations⁴² label this a partial healing, expecting the Papacy's persecuting power to return in full only in the future. For example, Julius Caesar Prado begins his argument with: "On February 11, 1929, the deadly wound began to heal..." but follows with: "...restoring part of the lost lands and also restoring the temporary power of the Pope." Then he cites the *San Francisco Chronicle* headline from February 12, 1929: "Mussolini and Gasparri Sign Historic Roman Pact Healing Wound of Many Years."⁴³ However, interpreting 1929 as the beginning of the prophesied healing overlooks a critical aspect: the wound inflicted in 1798 was not the removal of spiritual influence, but the stripping away of political sovereignty. The wound, strictly defined as a loss of political independence, marks 1929 as the completion of its healing. Furthermore, the prophetic context does not hinge on the degree of power restored but emphasizes the sequence of events: having, losing, and regaining political authority. The Holy See, the Papacy's political government, was reestablished, and the World community accepted the Vatican as a sovereign state. The Pope, its Monarch, regained temporal dominion over a defined territory. Therefore, the Lateran Treaty must be understood not as the prophetic turning point that reestablished the Papacy as a political entity. This unique union of Church and State—an invention of the Roman Empire—granted the Papacy a "throne" in Rome and "great authority." Revelation 17:3–6 hints at its religious supremacy, while Revelation 13:2–4, 17:8, and 17:11 trace the gaining, losing, and

⁴² For example, A.S. Maxwell in *Ministry Magazine*, November 1934, *Healing the Deadly Wound-What wounded the Papacy?* [↗](#) Ranko Stefanović consistently sees 1929 as a limited recovery of papal power, with the complete prophetic healing of the "deadly wound" still ahead. See his *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pp. 346, 411, 414–415, 573. Other theologians acknowledge that 1929 restored the Papal sovereignty, yet allude to a complete restoration in the future (Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, in *Issues in the Interpretation of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation*, *Ministry Magazine*, January 2012 [↗](#); Richard M. Davidson, *The Bible: Revelation and Authority*, Symposium on the Bible and Adventist Scholarship (2000), pp. 18–55; Alden Thompson, *Beyond Common Ground: Why Liberals and Conservatives Need Each Other*, (Pacific Press, 2009), p. 131; Richard Rice, *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will*, in *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Bethany House, 1994), pp. 45–73. Jon Paulien reads 1929 as the literal fulfillment of the wound's healing, yet projecting the beast's ten-king phase into the future in *Moments of Insight: Reading Revelation Today* (Pacific Press, 2019), pp. 102–130. This is also the stance of the researcher of this paper.

⁴³ Julio César Prado (2024), citing "The Beast, the Image, and the Mark," in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 9 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954), p. 706; and Dave Hunt (1994), p. 219.

restoration of its political power. This final phase of the fourth world power will continue until the Second Coming.

In conclusion, understanding the prophetic and historical context of Revelation necessitates thorough historical research, given 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, as well as 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.⁴⁴ At that time, the insurrections in the East were not in view.

As the seventh head waned, the eighth began to assert itself—fulfilling 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),⁴⁵ 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 Byzantine Empire, which had previously claimed the right to approve the

⁴⁴ KJV: understanding dark sentences; ISV: proficient at deception; NKJ: understanding sinister schemes.

⁴⁵ The remaining eight were the Alemanni, Franks, Burgundians, Visigoths, Suevi, Anglo-Saxons, Lombards, and Pontifical Monarchy. See summary in Table 2 on page 53.

selection and consecration of popes through its Exarch in Ravenna.⁴⁶ 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 deadly wound to the beast – the political authority of the Papacy - 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 1870.⁴⁷ As a result, the pope lost all his territories in Italy and the title of Monarch, declaring himself a prisoner in his Vatican palace.⁴⁸ Many believed, then, that the Pontiff in Rome would never regain temporal power; the beast had descended into the abyss, symbolizing death.⁴⁹ In 1929, the Lateran Treaties revived the wounded beast, restoring Vatican City as a sovereign state and reestablishing the Pope's temporal authority—fulfilling Revelation's vision of a power that "was, is not, and yet is." Since then, papal political influence has

⁴⁶ 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 reserved for the Roman rich who could afford to pay for the office. See De Cormanin (1847), pp. 185–94.

⁴⁷ Kertzer (2004), pp. 14, 55, 57, 82.

⁴⁸ 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.

⁴⁹ Its political power was taken away and was thought to be lost forever. 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>.

grown stronger and will remain until the 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).

To decode Revelation, one must employ a hermeneutic that allows prophecy and history to illuminate each other, thereby shedding light on the complex interplay between the two. Interpretation flows from text *and* context, and fulfillment confirms the interpretation. It is always a two-way street. For instance, consider the 70 weeks of Daniel. The text begins with the third decree by Artaxerxes I (in Ezra 7), which ordered the restoration of Jerusalem in 457 BC. 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.

Being consistent with prophetic symbolism means that a beast represents political power (Dan 7 and 8). These beasts had "flesh" (Dan 7:5), and the Medo-Persians devoured much of it—conquering Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt, symbolized by the three ribs in the bear's mouth. You can only have ribs in your mouth if the beast has been slain. In contrast, a woman in Scripture symbolizes a religious system—either pure or apostate—claiming allegiance to the God of heaven. However, Revelation 17 presents a striking departure from previous prophetic sequences: a fusion of woman and beast, a religious system supported by political power. Daniel 7:7 indeed describes the final beast as "different from all the others." The woman, interpreted as the Catholic Church, was endorsed by Roman emperors in 533 as the sole legitimate form of Christianity. This status was solidified in 538, when the Ostrogoths, the last of the three Arian kingdoms, were defeated. However, the Papacy remained subject to Byzantium until 752, when imperial influence over papal appointments

ended. In 756, the second donation of Pepin formally established the Papacy's political sovereignty.

Historical records affirm that the rise of Papal political power began in 508, when Clovis pledged Frankish allegiance to the Papacy. From 508 to 1798 spans precisely 1,290 years, aligning with Daniel 12:11, and 1,335 years to 1843, as noted in Daniel 12:12. The formal Papal temporal sovereignty, from 756 to 1798, frames the arc of its political dominion. However, the 1,260 years of war against the saints—from 538 to 1798—pertain to Papal ecclesiastical authority. Ecclesiastical dominance began in 538; political independence followed in 756. This ecclesiastical tyranny—centered on doctrine—fueled persecution. Yet it could only be exercised through political means, claiming spiritual authority over the souls of men.⁵⁰ In 1798, when the political strong arm was broken, the machinery of doctrinal coercion collapsed, symbolized by the wounding of the beast. Ecclesiastical authority did not end, but its power to enforce doctrine through political means was severed.

Appendix IV (pp. 144–185) gives a more detailed Historical review. Table 2 on the next page summarizes the historical context and provides an overview of the developments discussed in this chapter. The nations marked * were Arian converted to Catholicism. The nations marked with # were Pagan converted to Catholicism. The Franks embraced Nicene Catholicism with the conversion of King Clovis in 493 or 508, depending on the source. Three Arian nations – Heruli, Vandals, and Ostrogoths, marked with † – challenged Catholicism until their annihilation, the 'three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots' in Daniel 7:8.

⁵⁰ Napoleon wanted to be crowned emperor by the Pope. King Victor Emmanuel died in agony, seeking absolution from the Pope for his sins, which the Pope denied (Kertzer, 2004, p. 60).

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

World Powers	Dan 2:7–12; 7:4–8, 19–21; 8:3–12	Historic periods
1 st	BABYLON – head/lion	605–539 BC
2 nd	MEDES & PERSIANS – breast/bear	539–331 BC
3 rd	GREECE – belly & thighs/leopard	331–168 BC
4 th	ROME – legs & feet/monstrous beast	168 BC–perdition
Heads/Mountains/Kings: 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 LITTLE (Rev 17:10) The Greek text does not necessarily suggest 'time' or 'space'.		
7	Dukedom Exarchate of Ravenna	584–751
THE SCARLET BEAST IS THE 8 th KING AND IS FROM THE SEVEN (Rev 17:11). The Greek text does not say 'seventh' but 'seven,' meaning it is 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†	~406–493
9	Ostrogoths (Eastern Goths)†	451–538
10	Lombards*	568
11	Pontifical Monarchy's <i>rise</i> to temporal power	508–756
Judgment is set, Beast slain, and Beginning of Eternity		
5 th	KINGDOM of JESUS – THE ROCK	Second Coming

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.⁵¹ 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 other 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 12–18:⁵²

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)

Purple, Scarlet, and Jewelry (17:4)

⁵¹ 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.

⁵² Although these chapters have more symbols, the listed ones are deemed the most significant for understanding Revelation 17.

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 mature congregation of believers, whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament. Throughout biblical history, a virtuous woman consistently symbolizes the faithful remnant of God's people. Conversely, an impious woman — often portrayed as an adulteress — represents an unfaithful church system that claims to worship God but instead venerates gods of its invention (see Isa 47; Jer 3:1–3, 6, 8; Ezek 16 and 23). The woman symbol in Scripture is consistently applied to religious systems that are, in some way, connected to the worship of God — whether in truth or apostasy. Notably, the Bible never uses the woman symbol to represent purely pagan faith systems that have no covenantal link to the true God.

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*).⁵³ *Drakōn* is often associated with a mystical, unidentifiable, and unnatural creature, typically translated as a sea monster (Leviathan), a serpent (Latin: *Draco*), Satan, or a demon.⁵⁴ *Theriōn* is more generally used in a literal sense for a ferocious, wild

⁵³ In the LXX, the fourth beast (Dan 7:7) is described as *theriōn* (a beast), not as *drakōn*.

⁵⁴ 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).

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 world, reminiscent of a mystical dragon in its unnatural ferocity. In Revelation, both *the drakōn and theriōn symbols are used to represent* the different phases of 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 sea beast does. Pagan powers, although their leaders often assume divine prerogatives, do not blaspheme because they do not acknowledge the God of heaven. However, the beasts in Revelation 13:1–2, 5–8 and Revelation 17:3 blaspheme, indicating assumed ecclesiastical authority. In the Bible, blasphemy is defined as intentionally dishonoring God's Name, i.e., to deny verbally what He stands for (Exod 20:7; Leviticus 24:10–16), idolatry and covenant-breaking (Ezek 20:27; Isa 52:5), 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, possibly alluded to by Jesus as the "abomination that causes desolation" (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 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 sea beast originated from (Gr.: *ἐκ*) the pagan Roman Dragon (Rev 13:2 and 5).^{55, 56} 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.^{57, 58}

Great Red Dragon (12:3–4)

In Revelation 12, John sees a great red (Gr. *pyrros*)⁵⁹ 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. In ancient Rome, the colors red, scarlet, and purple held symbolic significance, often associated with imperial authority and aristocracy. These colors later became emblematic 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. This beast is interpreted as representing pagan Rome, which underwent various transformations, culminating in its final form as the political arm of the Pontifical Monarchy.

⁵⁵ LaRondelle in DARCOM-series, Vol 7, p. 171.

⁵⁶ 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.

⁵⁷ Smith, (1897), pp. 134.1-3 [↗](#)

⁵⁸ The blaspheming of the sea beast denotes ecclesiastical authority of the Roman Church. At this stage, temporal authority was not yet in view. That was augmented not earlier than in 756 AD.

⁵⁹ 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. 131.

Following the fall of the Byzantine Exarchate in Ravenna, the Popes assumed full political power, separating themselves from the Eastern (Greek) Empire. This transition marked the emergence of the Holy See as a sovereign monarchy in Rome, Italy. The position of bishop of Rome as head of the Christian Church was established in 538, when the last bulwark of Arian resistance against Catholicism, the Ostrogoths, was "plucked up by the roots" (Dan 7:8) during the Justinian reconquest of Italy.⁶⁰ According to the Seventh-day Adventist understanding, this marks the beginning of the prophesied 1,260 years of persecution of the conscience of believers and punishment of heretics. The 1,260 years ended in 1798 with a deadly wound to the political authority of the Papal System. Captured by the French, 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.⁶¹ However, with French support, the Papacy regained some power, only to suffer even more in 1870, when King Victor Emmanuel II annexed the Papal States. By then, the Pope retained only the Vatican grounds, declaring himself a "prisoner of the Vatican" until the Lateran Treaty of 1929.⁶² Despite these political setbacks, the Roman Church never lost its ecclesiastical authority, as even its opponents continued to seek absolution and spiritual legitimacy from the Pope, believing he alone held the keys to eternal salvation.⁶³

⁶⁰ While the Ostrogoths remained until the Battle of Mons Lactarius in 553, it was destined to fade away.

⁶¹ 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."*

⁶² Ibid., pp. 55, 57, 82.

⁶³ 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. According to Kertzer (2004, p. 60), King Victor Emmanuel of Italy was greatly distressed by being excommunicated by the Pope.

Great Dragon (Rev 12:7–17)

It is significant to note that in Revelation 12:7–17, the dragon symbol is also used to represent 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 Satan⁶⁴ or Satan behind the secular powers of the world.⁶⁵ Considering these perspectives stimulates critical thinking and encourages diverse interpretations of Revelation 17. Ranko Stevanović is a contemporary Adventist expositor of the Book of Revelation.⁶⁶ 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 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

⁶⁴ William Shea in DARCOM-series, Vol 6, p. 349.

⁶⁵ Andersson (2206), p. 290.

⁶⁶ Stefanović (2002), pp. 381–82.

primarily symbolizes Satan acting behind the power of pagan Rome, attempting to destroy Christ and, subsequently, his followers. [...].

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 over-spiritualization 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 its components.
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. The colors red, scarlet, and purple are distinctively Roman characteristics. Not so for Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Greece.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ See paragraph Purple, Scarlet, and Jewelry on page 63.

Another contemporary explanation comes from Jon Paulien:⁶⁸

[...] 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 (*diadēmata*) 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. [...].

While Paulien's interpretation recognizes the historical context, it 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 but one. This interpretation also conflicts with Daniel 7:6, as the crowns and heads are not just abstract symbols but represent real political structures within a defined prophetic framework.

Early Seventh-day Adventists adopted a historicist hermeneutical in interpreting the apocalyptic symbols of revelation. Ellen G. White taught that the great red dragon, the

⁶⁸ Paulien (2024), p. 4 (PDF). [↗](#)

leopard-like beast, and the beast with the lamb-like horns would all participate in trampling upon God's law and persecuting his people, continuing their influence until the Second Coming.⁶⁹ She interpreted these beasts' earthly powers, not Satan himself.⁷⁰ Uriah Smith similarly identified the red dragon of Revelation 12 and the scarlet beast of Revelation 17 as symbols of pagan Rome,⁷¹ aligning with the view that these beasts represent successive phases of Roman power. Stephen Haskell, however, offered a more complex interpretation. 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.⁷²

Haskell appears to merge two identities: the great red dragon as Satan and as pagan Rome. This dual identification raises interpretive tension, as Revelation 12:9 explicitly names the dragon "great" and identifies it as "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan." The great red dragon of Revelation 12:3, on the other hand, is described with features that allude to earthly authority—seven heads, ten horns, crowns, and a tail—suggesting a political or imperial embodiment. A closer reading of Revelation 12:7–13 supports a cosmic origin of the great dragon explicitly identified in verse 9:

1. He led a rebellion in heaven (vs. 7, 9).

⁶⁹ White, 4SP, p .276.1-2. [↗](#).

⁷⁰ White, 7BC 972.5. [↗](#)

⁷¹ Smith (1897), DAR 510.3-512.2. [↗](#)

⁷² Haskell (1905), SSP 214.1. [↗](#)

2. He engages in a heavenly *polemos* (πόλεμος; compare Rev 16:4)⁷³ —a polemical conflict, not merely physical warfare (vs. 7).
3. He is identified as the old serpent, the devil, and Satan (vs. 9).
4. He was cast down to Earth,⁷⁴ indicating that his origin is not earthly (vv. 9,12,13).
5. He deceived the world into believing a false gospel (vs. 9, 11, 12)⁷⁵ and, obviously, through his agents, he began persecuting the church that had grown out of its infancy (vs. 5, 6, 13–16).
6. He is 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 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 forms of government. 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 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.⁷⁶

⁷³ 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.

⁷⁴ *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.

⁷⁵ He came down (verse 12: *κατέβη*: verb, third person singular, aorist indicative active of *καταβαίνω*: to come down, descend) to destroy humanity.

⁷⁶ See article on Vatican website: The Roman Church and the Vatican. [↗](#)

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,⁷⁷ this perspective is inconsistent with Scripture. Regarding the second identifier – mountains, some translations⁷⁸ inaccurately translate the Greek word "ὄρη" as "hills." This has led Preterist scholars⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰ 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 (Matthew 18:12). 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 17 *sits* upon the beast, which symbolizes imperial Roman power supporting the ecclesiastical authority of the

⁷⁷ Various Adventist theologians adhere to this view, e.g., Reynolds, pp. 73-74; Stefanović, p. 38, among others. Specifically, compare Mueller (1998), p. 6, to Paulien (2006), pp. 187-207.

⁷⁸ For example, AMP; CEV; GNT, and NIV.

⁷⁹ 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, Stefanović (2002), p. 423; Andersson (2006), p. 312; Smith (1897), p. 538 [Z](#); Paulien (2024), p. 4. [Z](#) The application of like imagery in Daniel for Greece offers the insight of two separate governments in one nation.

Roman Church. The beast is the primary focus, not the woman. She does not drive or control the beast; it has dominance.⁸¹ Historical evidence confirms that Byzantine Rome promoted Catholic Christianity over Arianism, codified Catholic doctrine in Civil Law, and consecrated the Popes. This helped shape 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"⁸² 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 a 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 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 according to the one day is one year principle (according to Num 14:34; Ezek 4:5–6), the

⁸¹ Also see the interpretation of Smith (1897), pp. 602.1-603.4. [↗](#)

⁸² ἔχων or ἔχον: to hold or to have. See Revelation Greek at <https://www.swrktec.org/>. Retrieved October 20, 2024.

Greek word "μία" 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 of the dragon's tail is deeply rooted in biblical imagery. In Scripture, the tail can represent either weakness (Deut 28:13) or executive authority (Isa 7:4). In the context of Revelation 12, the tail's action – casting down a third of the stars – suggests aggressive, authoritative behavior. The Greek grammar of verse 4 supports this interpretation: "The tail (of) himself arrested the third (of) the stars (of) the heaven, and he (himself) threw them into the land."⁸³ The subject is the dragon's tail (or the dragon himself), and the object is a third of the stars of heaven. This differs from verse 9, where Satan (the object) is explicitly named and cast down by Michael (the subject). Thus, the grammatical structure indicates that the events in verses 4 and 9 are distinct. The symbolism of the stars also provides insight. In Revelation 1:16 and 20, stars represent the leaders or representatives of the seven churches, and in Revelation 12:1, they likely symbolize the apostles.⁸⁴ Thus, the stars in 12:4 may represent a portion of God's earthly leadership in John's time.

Uriah Smith interpreted the dragon's tail as a symbol of Imperial Rome's impact on Jewish leadership, noting that Rome removed one-third of the Jewish ruling structure, specifically the kings:

⁸³ 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 dragon. In a vivid apocalyptic narrative, the present active indicative can also serve a dramatic function, highlighting that the action occurs in the present time, the subject acts, and it is a true statement. Also see, Herb Swanson, Revelation 12&13-Greek [↗](#); Greek for All, Retrieved on October 28, 2024 [↗](#)

⁸⁴ Also see, White, GW 13.3-14.1 [↗](#); RH May 31, 1887, par 5. [↗](#)

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.^{85, 86}

Historical records affirm that Roman interference in Jewish governance intensified after 44 AD, culminating in the loss of kingship, priestly autonomy, and the authority of the Sanhedrin.⁸⁷ Therefore, the dragon's tail may symbolize Satan's influence through his instrument, Roman political power, which disrupted God's appointed leadership on Earth.

Male Child (12:1–5)⁸⁸

While the general interpretation of this verse is that the infant Christ is threatened by Herod, the layered symbolism of Revelation allows for a multifaceted understanding, which includes Christ in the body of believers, born through spiritual labor and the persecution of the Church. Add to this, Scriptural and theological support for the male child symbolizing the believers of the infant Christian Church. Then, it is logical to understand that the woman symbolizes the Church in its institutional and spiritual identity, nurturing, laboring, and

⁸⁵ Smith, (1897), p. 510.4 [Z](#).

⁸⁶ Ellen White used the phrases, 'many angels' and 'many of the angels:' 7BC 972.6 [Z](#); 'who joined him,' 7BC 973. 1 [Z](#); 'all those who united with him in his rebellion: 7BC973.7 [Z](#), and 'all those who sympathized with him' 7BC 973.1/8. [Z](#). 'Many of them'– 18LtMs, Lt 114, 1903, par 4. [Z](#) (also in 7BC 973.4 [Z](#); 7MR 63.2 [Z](#) and in 7BC973.4 [Z](#)). 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 [Z](#). 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 often quote the following statement: 5T 290.3–291.1 (1889). [Z](#) 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. [Z](#) It has been quoted and recited ever since.

⁸⁷ See Appendix III, pp. 139–143.

⁸⁸ This symbol from Revelation 12 confirms the timeframe of Revelation.

enduring persecution, and the male child represents the Church in its emerging form: the body of believers born out of spiritual struggle. Just as a tree represents both the seed and the fruit it bears, the Church can be seen as both the mother (the spiritual institution) and the child (the faithful believers it nurtures). This layered symbolism is supported by commentators like Matthew Henry, who describes the woman as the mother of believers and the child as "true and faithful professors" in whom Christ is formed. He writes 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."⁸⁹

Though Henry identifies the male child as Christ, he also affirms that the Church, the woman, gave birth to "true and faithful professors, in whom Christ is truly formed anew," suggesting

⁸⁹ Matthew Henry's Commentary on Revelation 12:1-6, MHBC 1180.2. [↗](#)

a dual interpretation. This is a nuanced commentary, reflecting on the layered structure of Revelation, which can represent believers who embody Christ, not just Christ Himself. While many commentators see the male child as Christ alone, Revelation's symbolic language often allows for both literal and spiritual fulfillment, as seen in the dual application of the 'rod of iron' to Christ and His faithful (compare Rev 12:5 and Ps 2:9 to Rev 2:26–27).

And Ellen White. She affirms that both the woman and her children symbolize God's people. Revelation 12 alludes to the remnant representing those who remain faithful in the last days. She writes 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 days, only a remnant remains."⁹⁰ This is, in fact, the only reference she makes to the woman and the male child. However, she often refers to the Ephesus church (Rev 2:1) as 'the infant church.'⁹¹ Thus, Ellen White supports the idea that the male child can represent the emerging Church.

The woman and the child are not mere separate entities. They are two aspects of the same spiritual reality, the Church in its fullness and the Church in its fruitfulness. Just as a tree is both seed and fruit, the Church is both mother and offspring. The woman labors to bring forth believers; the child is the fruit of that labor. When Revelation's vision remains within the boundaries of this study's conceptual framework,

- The prophetic concept alludes to Scriptural evidence in Hosea 1:11, where, under the symbol of Ephraim, Israel's congregation (cf. Exod 12:3) is likened to a newborn male child. In Isaiah 66:7–8, the wonder of the woman Sion bringing forth a nation almost without labor pains. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul likens the Galatians to infant believers (Gal 4:19) for whom he is still in labor

⁹⁰ White, in 7BC 972.5 [Z](#);

⁹¹ White, AA 105.1 [Z](#); 3SP 323.3 [Z](#); ST Jan 29, 1885, par 8 [Z](#); WM 67.1 [Z](#); DA 177.1 [Z](#).

pains. The text emphasizes that although the woman is in pain of delivering believers unto God, she is afflicted with pain due to persecution and threats of annihilation, but is assured of divine protection, as depicted in the remaining verses of Revelation 12.

- The historical concept testifies that for 300 years, Rome, the dragon, attacked and persecuted the young church.
- The Time Frame concept that Revelation's narrative begins at Pentecost – the official birth of the Christian Church at the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice and the sending of his *parakletos* – supports the idea that the male child represents the faithful early believers, born from the spiritual labor of the woman—the Church itself.

Thus, the Christian Church is presented as a spiritual, pure woman, taught by the Son of righteousness, whose teachings are supported by the Old Testament prophecies, shepherded by the twelve apostles, giving birth to the collective body of early infant believers. This nuanced, layered reading respects traditional views while exploring deeper theological and prophetic connections. It does not deny Christ's role, but expands it to include His body, the Church, because the symbols of Revelation often operate on multiple levels. The contexts here are Revelation's time frame, its historical, spiritual, and prophetic contexts. This combination allows for the male child not to be only Christ, but also Christ formed in His people.

The next scene in this passage features the imagery of the male child wielding the iron staff, symbolizing the power of the Gospel, which will shatter the world's conspiracy and deliberations against God, much like smashing pottery (Ps 2:1, Ps 2:8, Rev 19:15–16). This image encouragingly highlights the radical consequences of Christianity (Rev 2:26–27). Scripture identifies several figures who will rule in this manner. 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 may understand that the rod of iron, the two-edged sword, the staff, or the stick, while traditionally associated with Christ's messianic rule (Ps 2:9; Rev 19:15), is also extended to His followers—those who overcome through faith (Rev 2:26–27). This dual symbolism affirms that Christ's reign is shared with His body, the Church. 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). Christ's followers, those who believe in him and follow his teachings, play a significant role in advancing the Gospel, which has profound consequences, particularly in the context of Revelation. This insight suggests that Christ's rule encompasses those who reign alongside him as ministers of 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 sacrifice is not overlooked. Revelation 6:9–10, set against the image of the pale (chlorotic) horse, depicts medieval martyrs clothed in white

robes and resting under the altar until their oppressors' guilt is fully expiated—a consummation foreshadowed in Revelation 16:17.⁹²

The apparent question now is, if the male child is not the infant 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.⁹³ The Greek word *harpazó*⁹⁴ 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. Unlike the serene ascension of Christ described in Acts 1:9, *harpazó* in Revelation 12:5 suggests a dramatic rescue—a 'snatching away' from danger. This aligns with the Church's early experience of persecution and divine protection rather than with Christ's post-resurrection departure, because 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.

⁹² 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. Final retribution comes after Revelation 16:17.

⁹³ In Revelation 1:18, Jesus refers to his death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension as "experienced" by an adult, not an infant. Applying *harpazó* to the ascension of Christ is literalizing a passage that conveys symbolism throughout.

⁹⁴ Strong's number 726: The Greek verb *harpazó* 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.

The final image in this passage is that of God's throne. While the Greek word *tronos* refers to a physical seat of power, a ruler, or a judicial court, in the context of Revelation, the symbolic meaning denotes a focus on worship and divine fellowship (Rev 4:2–11; 5:6–14). We may understand that the faithful continually appealed their case before God's judicial court (Exod 3:9), and that wherever believers gather to worship, that throne is present. Thus, the child being "caught up to God and to his throne" may symbolize the infant Church's spiritual elevation into divine communion and protection. In Christ, believers are always near the throne, where he intercedes on their behalf (Rom 8:34; Rev 1:13, 16). This imagery powerfully illustrates the triumph of the infant church, despite being fiercely persecuted, as it was divinely preserved under the authority and shelter of God's throne (cf. Rev 6:9–11). A poignant parallel 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. Yet in truth, John was lifted to divine safety, snatched from the enemy's grasp, a living example of *harpazó* as spiritual rescue.⁹⁵

So, while the traditional interpretation of Revelation 12:1–5 is retrospective on Christ's birth and ascension, some scholars propose a typological reading: the radiant woman represents the Old Testament Jewish congregation, giving birth to the promised Seed of Genesis 3:15, Christ, whom Satan sought to destroy through Herod.⁹⁶ Yet Jesus fulfilled his mission, died on the cross, rose on the third day, and ascended to heaven after forty days, the *harpazó* of Revelation 12:5.⁹⁷ However, this view struggles to align with the symbolic imagery, the historical context, and the time frame of Revelation. If the woman is metaphorical, clothed with cosmic signs and crowned with apostolic authority, then consistency demands that her child, the *harpazó* and *tronos*, also be understood symbolically.

⁹⁵ White (1898), DA, pp. 224.2–5. [↗](#)

⁹⁶ See the Timeframe chapter, pp. 36–39.

⁹⁷ Johnson, in DARCOM Vol 7, p. 18; Reid (1878), p. 271; Stefanović (2002), p. 382.

Jesus was born to a literal Jewish woman, not a symbolic figure, and while the Jewish nation anticipated the Messiah, they ultimately rejected Him. Therefore, if the radiant woman in Revelation 12:1 is symbolic, her child must likewise represent a spiritual reality: the emerging Church, born through labor, persecution, and divine calling.

Revelation 12:1–5 is not a retrospective of Christ's nativity; it is a prophetic scene about spiritual birth, cosmic conflict, and divine protection, which we find recurrently presented in the Revelation narrative. The radiant woman, crowned with apostolic glory and clothed in and standing on celestial light, is in labor to bring forth a new creation. The male child is the militant body of believers, setting the Gospel on fire. They were downtrodden by persecution but ever elevated into communion with God wherever they were, even in the depths of the earth or in the Roman Arenas. Thus, the male child is Christ's transforming presence in his people—those who overcome by faith, who reign with Him, who smash unbelief by the power of the Gospel, and who dwell near the throne in worship and intercession. This powerful scene of the Conflict of the Ages is not confined to history alone. It is present in every believer, even now, who bears the marks of spiritual conflict and the triumph of divine protection. Revelation 12 reveals the identity of God's Chosen: born by the Spirit, sustained by grace, and destined to reign by the iron rod of the Gospel and the sword of the Spirit. It is a scene of triumph, not just of Christ, but of Christ in us—the hope of glory (Col 1:27). Revelation 12 unveils a prophetic scene of people fit to bear the name of Christians—from Pentecost to the final Remnant of her seed (Rev 12:17), who will ascend with Christ at His Second Coming into divine fellowship with God.

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,⁹⁸ the union of Church and State,⁹⁹ the non-oppressive Protestant denominations, and the non-oppressive Republican government,¹⁰⁰ or the two liberties represented in the American Constitution: civil and religious freedom.¹⁰¹ 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, 11 refers to a geographical region where Protestants fled to escape medieval papal persecution.¹⁰² History points to North America, prophetically symbolized by the earth swallowing the waters that were cast after the woman (Rev 12:16). This emerging, seemingly innocent political entity (a beast) is presented, not simply with two horns but with two lamb-like horns. If the explicit mention of lamb-like horns represents infancy, the image refers to a nation in its formative stage. The prophecy illustrates, and history confirms, the emergence of a new political context in a new geographical setting. All indicators point to formative years of North America in becoming the United States of America, from July 4, 1776, to April 9, 1865, a period marked by one nation divided into two separate governments (two horns: compare Daniel 7:6 and 8:8) during the American Civil War (1861–1865): the Northern United States of America and the

⁹⁸ Smith (1897), p. 537.2-539.2 [↗](#); White in 14LtMs/ MS51, 1899, par.5 [↗](#).

⁹⁹ Jones (1901), pp. 868.3-869.1 [↗](#)

¹⁰⁰ Andrews (1860) quoted by M.C. Maxwell in DARCOM Vol 7, p. 102. History shows a different perspective. Many of the Protestant groups who fled Europe to North America carried the conviction that civil authorities must enforce "the one true religion." In colonies like Massachusetts Bay and Virginia, dissenters were often fined, whipped, or banished for worshiping outside the established church. In some areas, Catholics persecuted Protestants, in others, Protestants persecuted Catholics, and in still others, Catholics and Protestants persecuted wayward coreligionists. [↗](#) And it is probably safe to say that the non-oppressiveness view of American Protestants and their government was not shared by the indigenous or enslaved people.

¹⁰¹ Stefanović (2002), p. 423.

¹⁰² 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.

Southern Confederate States of America. In that infant stage, there were two capitals—Washington, DC, and Richmond, VA—and two presidents (horns): Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis.¹⁰³ 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. Ironically, the nation that once stood as a beacon of freedom and refuge is prophesied to replicate the coercive methods of the sea beast, forming an 'image' of its persecuting power.¹⁰⁴ Empowered by its global influence, this earth beast will issue a global mandate demanding that Protestantism comply with the false doctrines of Catholicism, thereby reverencing and worshipping the sea beast.¹⁰⁵ 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 earth beast (Rev 13:11–17 and 17:14) are what is meant by "the image of the beast." Thus, the prophetic trajectory of oppression will enter its final phase. Daniel 8:23 describes a fierce king who arises in the latter days of the kingdom, skilled in intrigue and destructive in power—a metaphor often associated with the culmination of the Roman Church's apostate rebellion¹⁰⁶ against God. Revelation 17:14 echoes the climax of this final confrontation, where the beast and the kings of the earth (Europe and America) make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings. These texts together underscore the continuity of prophetic warning: earthly powers, energized by satanic rebellion, will unite in opposition to divine authority, but their defeat is assured.

¹⁰³ American History Net, article Union vs. Confederacy, (Accessed on September 18, 2024). [↗](#)

¹⁰⁴ 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." [↗](#)

¹⁰⁵ Sunday worship, as the exclusive mark of usurped authority, is but one of its many false doctrines.

¹⁰⁶ The context of Daniel 8:23 is the fierce Roman power that defeated the Greeks and culminated in the rise of apostate Romanism.

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 assuming a royal identity was deemed treasonous.¹⁰⁷ Unsurprisingly, the Popes, selected from the ranks of Rome's affluent bureaucrats and aristocrats,¹⁰⁸ 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 Scripture, Babylon functions as a powerful symbol of spiritual and moral corruption. It embodies 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 cruelty (Ps 137:3), the chaos of confusion (Gen 11), and the spirit of rebellion (Isa 14:4–24). Babylon represents not only sin and iniquity but also the influence of evil spirits and blatant apostasy. In Revelation 17, Babylon is portrayed as a corrupt church system, amalgamating these traits into a grand act of defiance against God. It embodies systematic opposition to divine righteousness. Babylon is a woman; it is a singular church system. Her name is written on her forehead, symbolizing that her actions are deliberate and calculated, not accidental (cf. Jer 3:1). Babylon is not a composite of various

¹⁰⁷ Croom (2012), pp. 29-32.

¹⁰⁸ Cermenin (1847), pp. 185-89; Noble (1984), pp. 128, 193.

ecclesiastical systems and political powers. Babylon is presented as the originator of the apostasy of other churches, her daughters.

Mother and Daughters (17:5)

The Roman Church has given rise to churches that retained its core false teachings. Even Protestantism, claiming *Sola Scriptura*, retained Sunday worship for which there is no other reference than the authority of the Pope. For this reason, she is described as both a mother of harlots and a mother of idolatry. This imagery suggests a legacy of spiritual infidelity passed on to her daughters, religious systems that perpetuate her apostasy.

Eight Kings (17:9–10)

The Greek text serves as a powerful corrective tool in interpreting Revelation 17:10, where it states, *"βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν"*—literally, *"seven kings there are"* (εἰσιν: 3rd person plural, present indicative active). A more precise rendering, *"There exist seven kings,"* suggests that the kings are distinct from the heads and serve to characterize the beast further. The existential construction does not grammatically link the kings to the *κεφαλαί* (heads). If the text had intended to equate the kings with the heads, it would likely have used the feminine plural pronoun *αὐταί* to refer to *κεφαλαί* (feminine plural noun), maintaining gender agreement. The absence of such a grammatical link supports the interpretation that the kings are a separate symbolic element. This distinction mirrors the prophetic symbolism in Daniel 7:6 and 8:8, where the four heads of the leopard and the four horns of the goat represent the fourfold division of Alexander's empire under his Diadochi. Similarly, in Revelation 17, the heads, mountains, and kings may overlap in meaning but are not strictly identical—a point emphasized by Richard Bauckham, who highlights the layered and multifaceted nature of apocalyptic symbolism.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Bauckham (1993), pp. 384–387). Additionally, see p. 89.

Having established the grammatical distinction between heads and kings, we turn to the historical identification of the seven kings. The angel explains that the beast is the eighth king, who is "*of the seven*." The Greek preposition *ἐκ* (from, out of) indicates origin or continuity, not simple membership. This suggests that the eighth king emerges from the same political lineage as the previous seven, reinforcing the idea of continuity rather than novelty. According to the angel's explanation, five kings had fallen, one was reigning, and one was yet to come. The eighth, who is also the beast, arises from the seven and ultimately "*goes into perdition*" (Rev 17:11). This implies that the eighth phase of Roman political power, though interrupted by a temporary interregnum, will persist until the Second Coming of Christ. The Greek structure emphasizes origin and continuity, not replacement, contrary to translations like the NASB, which obscure this nuance.

This fourfold interpretive framework—grammatical distinction, symbolic layering, historical continuity, and eschatological trajectory—provides a coherent lens through which to understand the identity and destiny of the beast. These insights are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: The Scarlet Beast of Revelation 17¹¹⁰

Fourth Beast of Daniel: Rome	Angel's Explanation		Symbolic language	Historical Context of the Western Roman Empire
βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν – there are seven Kings ...				
Pagan	Five are fallen	{	1 st King	Kings 753–509 BC
			2 nd King	Consuls 509–541 BC
			3 rd King	Decemvirs 541–499 BC
			4 th King	Dictators 499–59 BC
			5 th King	Triumvirs 59–27 BC
	One is	{	6 th King	Emperors 27 BC–476 AD
	One is yet to come and is bound to remain insignificant	}	7 th King	Exarchs 584–751 AD
	Woman - Church receives religious authority from Pagan Rome: 533–538 AD			
	The Beast is from the seven			
Papal	<i>Was</i>	{	8 th King	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)

Revelation 17:15 explains that the "many waters" symbolize "peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues." This aligns with the historical reality of the Roman Empire, which during its imperial period spanned vast territories across Asia, Africa, and Europe. The beast, described in Revelation 13:1–2, is best understood as a political entity that incorporates features of previous empires, including Babylon (the lion), Medo-Persia (the bear), Greece

¹¹⁰ Explaining the gaps in Table 3. The gaps pertain to periods when there was no single ruler in Rome – the epicenter of the prophetic pattern in Revelation 17.

Gap 1: 476 – 584 AD. After the last Western emperor was deposed in 476, Italy underwent several phases of control: Ostrogoths under Theodoric (493–526); Byzantine reconquest wars (535–554); and decades of civil and Gothic resistance, culminating in Constantinople's establishment of the Exarchate of Ravenna in 584. No single "king" held unbroken sovereignty over Rome during those decades, so the prophetic count pauses until the Exarch takes office.

Gap 2: 751 – 756 AD When the Lombards captured Ravenna in 751, the Exarchate collapsed. During those years, the Lombards contested control over Italy; the bishop of Rome negotiated protection from the Frankish king, and in 756, Pepin's Donation finally carved out the Papal States, inaugurating the "peculiar church-state." After the "seventh king," there was no ruler until the Papacy's temporal power was formally established when the 'withholding' Lombards were removed (1 Tess 2:6).

(the leopard), and Rome (the dragon), as seen in Daniel 2, 7, and 8. Revelation 12 to 17 appears to expand on Daniel's fourth beast, offering additional insight into its nature and development. 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). There are indications that the reference to the dragon's tail (Rev 12:4) alludes to the Roman cavalry's Draco standard—a symbol John would have recognized.¹¹¹ Additional contextual clues that John would likely have identified include: the fall of the Judean kingship (John 19:15; Acts 1:6), the persecution of the early church (Rev 12:6), and the beast's emergence from the sea and its dominion over many waters (Rev 13:1; 17:1, 15).. The angel's question, *"Wherefore didst thou marvel?"* may imply a gentle correction, suggesting that John—and by extension, the reader—was expected to discern the continuity between Daniel's vision and his own. Consequently, it can be inferred that Revelation 12:1–5 refers to the inception of the Christian Church around 34 AD, the dismantling of the Judean kingship in 44 AD, and the 300 years of conflict between Christians and Roman authorities. Revelation 12:6–17 reveals Satan as the source of this conflict. The Greek word *γενέσθαι* ("to come to pass") used in Revelation 1:19 and 4:1 reinforces the idea that the great controversy between Satan and Chris —manifested through the ongoing oppression of God's chosen people—will continue until the Second Coming.

Armageddon (16:12–16)

When discussing Armageddon, many theologians refer to the typology of the Old Testament's physical battlegrounds, such as Megiddo or Mount Carmel. Adventism agrees that Armageddon is a typological, spiritual battle over doctrine and world dominion.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Brzezinski (2002), pp. 32, 38-39; Marciniak (2010), pp. 102-31; Coulston (1991), pp. 101-14; Andersson (2006), p. 290.

¹¹² 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](#)

However, applications to Islamic terror, the so-called Axis of Evil, or Al Qaeda,¹¹³ are out of line with the prophetic and historical context of Revelation. Old Testament imagery often employs mountains as Yahweh's throne and valleys as his judgment hall (Isa 2:2–4; Ezek 37:1–14; Joel 3:14). The Hebrew fusion of *har* (mountain) and *gedud* (assembly) in Har-Mageddon underscores a symbolic assembly before divine authority.^{114, 115} Megiddo's first biblical mention occurs in Joshua 12:21, where Joshua records his conquest of Canaan and his decisive battle in "the plain," against a coalition of 31 Canaanite kings, including the king of Megiddo. Generations later, Judges 5 recounts a second major clash near Megiddo during Deborah and Barak's campaign; still later, King Josiah of Judah confronted Pharaoh Necho at the site—despite Necho's warning—and was fatally wounded (2 Chron 35:21–25; 2 Kings 23:29), marking the end of Judah's independent monarchy. Mount Carmel, where Elijah slew the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18), is situated on the Western rim of the Jezreel Valley. Consequently, Armageddon is said to be an image of the fortified city-state Megiddo on a Tell, and the Plain of Jezreel.¹¹⁶ While some futurists expect a physical war at Megiddo, the narrative suggests that it is not a physical geographical battlefield in the Northwestern Part of Israel. It functions as a metaphorical "place" (Rev 16:16) of judgment rather than a literal mountaintop or valley.

¹¹³ 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 portrays the rise and decline of the Turkish Ottoman kingdom to emphasize the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire.

¹¹⁴ (Hebr.: מִגִּדּוֹ; Strong's Lexicon 1416).

¹¹⁵ Strong's Concordance and the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon suggest that "Megiddo" may derive from the Hebrew root *gadad* (גָּדַד), meaning "to cut" or "to invade," which also underlies *gedud* (גִּדּוּד), "troop" or "raiding band." The BDB, however, notes that this connection is not entirely certain. See Strong's Hebrew 4023. מִגִּדּוֹ (Mgiddōn) – Megiddo, Bible Hub, accessed July 31, 2025, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/4023.htm>.

¹¹⁶ The Jezreel Valley (Gr.: Plain of Esdraelon), also known as the Valley of Megiddo, is a large, fertile plain and inland valley in the Northern District of Israel. It is the valley of the Kishon River, mentioned in Judges 4-5, where Deborah and Barak defeated Sisera's army. The river's sudden flooding helped sweep away Sisera's chariots.

Within its prophetic context, Revelation portrays Armageddon as a metaphorical controversy amidst the literal last seven plagues. Revelation 16:12–14 depicts a coalition gathered against God, echoing the conflicts of Joshua and Elijah, as a final spiritual conflict between Christ and Satan. The Greek polemos (πόλεμος) in Revelation 16:14 frames it as a doctrinal polemic, centered around spiritual allegiance, worship, and conscience (Rev 13:13–17; 16:13–16). This polemic started in heaven and commenced on earth (Rev 12:7–9). In Revelation 16:12–14, unclean spirits (Satan) gather earth's inhabitants who have accepted the mark of the beast, the apostate church (Babylon the Great, Rev 14:8; 18:2), its supporting political structure—"the kings of the earth," the Holy See (the beast), and apostate Protestantism—the false prophet (also see Rev 17:13 and 18:10), uniting them in a worldwide ideological coalition.¹¹⁷ In Revelation 16:16, Christ¹¹⁸ gathers the gathered¹¹⁹ (also see Rev 17:14). Christ's gathering is not a participation in a conflict that Satan started; it is the decisive call that culminates in history's final elaborate theological argument in action.¹²⁰ Moreover, it is "the battle of that great day of God Almighty"—he has a controversy with the inhabitants of the earth (Hos 4:1), which will end without human hands (Dan 2:34–35, 44). Revelation announces this "mystery of iniquity" in Revelation 16, explains it in Revelation

¹¹⁷ Contextual Subject Identification shows that in v. 14, the verb συνάγουσιν (3 pl.)—"they gather"—points to the three unclean spirits (v. 12–14) as the subject who go out to the kings of the earth. "God Almighty" is genitive in the phrase "the great day of God Almighty"—it's not the subject of this gathering. Additionally, Revelation 13:13 shows the beast performing "great signs" to deceive the world; Revelation 16:14 echoes this, stating that unclean spirits work miraculous signs.

¹¹⁸ Verse 15 introduces a new speaker: The Lord (Christ). Lexically, συνήγαγεν in verse 16 is a 3sg. Aorist Active Indicative (V-AIA) form of συνάγω with no explicit pronoun. Grammatically, it demands a single subject. Contextually, the nearest logical 3sg actor is the Lord who has just spoken.

¹¹⁹ The "them" in Revelation 16:16 is the third-person plural object pronoun αὐτούς, referring back to the kings (and, by implication, their armies) whom the unclean spirits of verse 14 have summoned. The text depicts Christ's ironic summons, calling up those very kings and armies that demonic spirits initially assembled, and bringing them to a place of judgment (See Joel 3:12–16, Revelation 16:16, and Revelation 17:14).

¹²⁰ Outline of how Armageddon's polemic is presented: Satan's fire and signs mirror Elijah's true heavenly fire (1 Kings 18), setting up a direct comparison and relation with the Megiddo area. The audiences of kings and peoples witness these wonders and are primed to side with the beast's and false prophet's cause. By framing these "fires" as polemical counterfeits, we honor Revelation's call to discernment—recognizing that not every miracle is from the Spirit, and that spectacular signs can mask spiritual treachery. The drama unfolds as a cosmic courtroom where Christ steps in to summon these gathered forces to *a place* of decisions and judgment.

17, and executes it in Revelation 18. Adventist exegesis locates the close of probation immediately before the seven last plagues (Rev 7:1–3; 16:1–2), during which the sealed saints endure Jacob's Trouble (Ps 91:7; Jer 30:7) yet remain unharmed (Ps 91:4–10) because their names are in the Book of Life (Rev 13:8).¹²¹

Consequently, there is no application of Armageddon after the Millennium: post-Millennium Scripture employs the Gog and Magog typology (Rev 20:7–10).¹²² The drying of the Euphrates in the fifth plague (Rev 16:12) echoes the fall of Babel in 539 BC, when the Medes and Persians diverted the river that protected the city. Likewise, earth's protection for "Babylon the Great" will cease, issuing a sudden and irrevocable "Mene, Mene, Tekel" fate—numbered, weighed, and found wanting (Dan 5:25–27). The horrific sixth and seventh plagues unleash an unprecedented destruction (compare Jer 15:3 and Rev 19:17) and the dramatic collapse of human systems. The end will arrive "as unexpectedly as a thief in the night" (Rev 16:15).

Table 4 illustrates the characteristics of the beasts in the Book of Revelation by consistently applying the 16 key symbols in this chapter. Table 5 on the next page presents

¹²¹ Compare the Israelites during the ten plagues in Egypt, Psalms 91:4-10, and Nahum 1:7.

¹²² Bible expositors identify Gog as the apocalyptic leader of a vast coalition intent on a final, desperate assault on God's people. Magog symbolizes the distant and far-off regions, "the land of Gog," which is also referred to as the land of the Gentiles. [↗](#) Matthew Henry comments on Ezekiel 38 (MHCW): *"This prophecy of Gog and Magog is undoubtedly alluded to in that prophecy of the latter days which seems yet unfulfilled (Rev 20:8): Gog and Magog shall be gathered to battle against the camp of the saints, as the Old Testament prophecies of Babylon's destruction are alluded to in Rev 18. In both cases, the Old Testament prophecies found fulfilment in the Jewish church, as the New Testament prophecies will in the Christian church. I. The attempt Gog and Magog make on Israel, with their vast army and preparations (vv. 4-7; 8-13), and God's hand in it (v. 4). II. The terror this strikes upon Israel (vv. 15-16, 18-20). III. The divine restraint on these enemies, and divine protection for Israel (vv. 2-4, 14). IV. Their defeat by the immediate hand of God (vv. 21-23). Here is I. An express prediction of Gog and Magog's utter destruction (vv. 1-7). II. An illustration of its vastness: the burning of their weapons (vv. 8-10), the burning of their slain (vv. 11-16), and the fowls feasting on the unburied dead (vv. 17-22). III. A declaration of God's gracious purposes for Israel, in this and other acts of providence, with a promise of further mercy (vv. 23-29)."* [↗](#)

the powers of Revelation 12, 13, and 17 in conflict with God and His people within their historical contexts.

Table 4: Characteristics of the Beasts of Revelation

Chapter	Heads	Horns	Crowns	Color	Period
12:1–5	7	10	7	red	1 st –3 rd 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 th –8 th 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 Conflicting Powers of Revelations 12, 13, and 17 in Their Historical Contexts

	Prophetic Symbol: Dragon or Beast	Satan, Devil, Old Serpent	Totality of Imperial Roman power ¹²³	10 nations of Western Imperial Rome ¹²⁴	Medieval Roman Church ¹²⁵	Earth-power mimics the medieval system ¹²⁶	End-time Pontifical Roman Monarchy ¹²⁷
Rev 12:3–4	Great red (<i>pyrros</i>) dragon, 7 crowned heads, ¹²⁸ 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 th beast (<i>theriōn</i>) of Daniel 7– Rome						X
Rev 17:12	Yet uncrowned 10 horns					X	

¹²³ Old Political context.

¹²⁴ Geographical context.

¹²⁵ Ecclesiastical context.

¹²⁶ New Political, Geographical, and Historical Context.

¹²⁷ The eight Church-State governmental form and successor of pagan Rome.

¹²⁸ Pagan Rome's seven phases of government.

REEVALUATING THE GREEK IN REVELATION 17

This chapter examines five potential misinterpretations in Revelation 17, observed by the researcher, and analyzes each term lexically and grammatically within the seven-context conceptual framework of this study. By respecting these contexts, our alternative translations bring Revelation's vivid apocalyptic imagery into sharper focus. Each section follows the same pattern—conventional reading, lexical insight, contextual evidence, and a translation proposal—offering an interpretive lens that justifies text, syntax, and context.

The analysis makes clear why:

1. ὄρη in Revelation 17:9 should be read not as literal hills but as symbolic mountains of dominion.
2. βασιλεῖς in Revelation 17:10 is not connected to the heads but is a separate existential element.
3. ὀλίγος in Revelation 17:10 has a qualitative meaning denoting weakness or insignificance rather than brevity.
4. The characterization of *the eighth king* (the beast) in Revelation 17:11 affirms the continuity of Roman power as the final kingdom in rebellion against God, pointing to the Monarchy of the Roman Church.
5. μίαν ὥραν in Revelation 17:12 is not a measure of chronology but a divine-appointed evil coalition during a season of unity.

1. ὄρη in Revelation 17:9: Mountains of Dominion

There is considerable variance among scholars over the meaning of ὄρη in Revelation 17:9. Preterist interpreters read the seven ὄρη as Rome's seven hills, identifying the woman (Babylon) with apostate Jerusalem and the beast with imperial Rome.¹²⁹ Some English Bible versions reflect this connection.¹³⁰ While Adventist scholar Jon Paulien notes this Roman

¹²⁹ Revelation Revolution. (n.d.). *Revelation 17: A Preterist Commentary*. [↗](#);

¹³⁰ For example, CEV, NIV, NLT, AMP.

association, he insists that the emphasis of *ὄρη* lies in the number seven, a symbol of completeness rather than a literal topography.¹³¹ George Eldon Ladd advocates for a purely symbolic interpretation, suggesting that the seven mountains represent successive world empires.¹³² G. K. Beale critiques the literal-hill view as inconsistent with the apocalyptic genre, arguing that in Revelation, the "mountains" represent kingdoms and thrones—echoing the visions in Daniel 2 and 7.¹³³ This wide variance invites a closer look at the lexical and grammatical evidence.

A survey of Greek lexicons demonstrates that *ὄρος* carries a context-dependent nuance rather than a fixed meaning, revealing a broad semantic range. BDAG records *ὄρος* as "hill" or "mountain," with context determining scale. At the same time, the Louw–Nida Lexicon places it among geographic terms and notes its metaphorical use in religious and prophetic settings. In the Septuagint (Isaiah 2:2; Psalm 48:1–2), *ὄρη* regularly translates Hebrew *הָרִים* (harim), where mountains symbolize nations and thrones of divine rule. In apocalyptic literature, this elevated imagery almost invariably carries symbolic weight. These lexical clues inform the contextual analysis of three contexts from the conceptual framework, sharpening understanding. Three of seven contexts refine the analysis. First, the prophetic context consistently uses mountains to symbolize divine authority (e.g., Hab 3:6; Ezek 20:40; Dan 2:35), a motif even Jesus invokes in Matthew 18:12. Second, the geographical context underlines that Rome's seven hills never emerged one after another—unlike John's vision of seven powers rising in sequence. Third, the historical context portrays those powers as successive rulers under the Beast, with Byzantine Rome's support of the Church (e.g.,

¹³¹ Paulien (2004), pp. 185–190. Paulien also sees Babylon as representing composite apostate religious systems and political powers opposing God throughout history. To him, the beast is not just imperial Rome but a series of oppressive powers culminating in the final eschatological Armageddon battle. The heads are successive kingdoms or phases of opposition to God, starting with Egypt.

¹³² Ladd (1972), pp. 224–26.

¹³³ Beale (1999), pp. 867–70.

Justinian Code; papal consecrations until 752 AD) confirming that the real seat of authority rests with the Beast rather than the Woman. In conclusion, translating 'ὄρη' as 'mountains' of ruling authority is well-supported by lexical evidence and prophetic, geographical, and historical contexts. This interpretation protects the theological coherence and prophetic integrity of Revelation 17:9.

2. βασιλεῖς in Revelation 17:10: Existential Greek

Traditional readings of Revelation 17:10 often equate the seven kings with the seven heads and mountains mentioned in the previous verse. However, a closer examination of the Greek grammatical structure, apocalyptic symbolism, and historical context suggests a more nuanced understanding.

In the Greek phrase *βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν*—literally "seven kings exist"—the verb *εἰσιν* functions existentially rather than equatively.¹³⁴ It simply states that "there are seven kings" without tying them grammatically to the feminine noun *κεφαλαί* ("heads"). Had John intended to equate the kings with the heads, he would have used a feminine plural pronoun such as *αὐταί* to secure gender agreement.¹³⁵ The absence of such a link invites viewing the kings as a distinct symbolic element. This separation gains traction when we consider the prophetic-apocalyptic context. In Daniel 7 and 8, horns and heads on the beast chronicle successive phases of that single power. This interpretation also finds historical support in the identification of the beast with Roman power and its eight stages. Seven kings are the successive stages of Roman governance: five have fallen by John's days, one reigns presently,

¹³⁴ Examples for Scriptural uses of existential εἰμι include Romans 8:1—Greek: Οὐκ οὐδεὶς νῦν κατάκριμα ὑμῖν ὑπάρχει ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ("Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"). 2 Corinthians 3:18—Greek: ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένοι τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς δόξης Κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν ("And we all, with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory").

¹³⁵ In Greek, pronouns must match their antecedents in gender, number, and case, and the absence of the required feminine plural demonstrative *αὐταί* reinforces the distinctness of the kings. On Greek pronoun-antecedent agreement, see Herbert Weir Smyth, *A Greek Grammar for Colleges*, section 1175; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, pp. 568–70.

and one more remains to come. Together, they account for seven phases within the power's eightfold progression. The existential mention of the kings shifts emphasis, suggesting a separate symbolic reading of the kings as phases of Roman authority. Leading scholars reinforce this symbolic reading. G.K. Beale indicates that the seven kings correspond to phases of Roman rule.¹³⁶ Richard Bauckham highlights the layered imagery in Revelation 17, noting that heads, mountains, and kings overlap in meaning without being identical in meaning.¹³⁷ Craig Koester observes that apocalyptic literature often employs numerical sequences to convey historical or theological realities, aligning with the concept of kings as a succession of rulers.¹³⁸ By adhering to the existential force of *εἶσιν* and the lack of gender agreement between *βασιλεῖς* and *κεφαλαί*, the text opens up to a richer, more contextualized interpretation. This new perspective on the text challenges traditional conflation and invites deeper engagement with Revelation's tapestry of symbols and many contexts, each thread contributing its own voice to the drama of Roman power.

3. ὀλίγος in Revelation 17:10: Qualitative Nuance

The Greek word ὀλίγος in Revelation 17:10 serves as the key that unlocks the chapter's meaning. While traditionally rendered as a brief duration, a comprehensive semantic and contextual investigation reveals that a qualitative reading—emphasizing weakness or insignificance—better aligns with both the word's range of uses and the historical and prophetic realities it evokes.

A close examination of the Greek text confirms that Revelation 17:10 lacks explicit temporal markers such as "time" (*χρόνος*) elsewhere found in Acts 14:28, or "season" (*καιρός*) as in Revelation 12:12. Yet lexical and grammatical analysis demonstrates that, even where a temporal nuance is possible, a qualitative interpretation may prove more fitting. In

¹³⁶ Beale (1999), pp. 871–75.

¹³⁷ Bauckham (1993), pp. 384–87.

¹³⁸ Koester (2014), pp. 690–92.

context, ὀλίγος (literally "few, brief, or weak") functions as adjective and adverb to convey "small in number," "short in time," "limited in magnitude," or "insignificant in quality or power."¹³⁹ (For example, ὀλίγοι (pl. masc.) in Matthew 7:14 describes the "few" who find the way. At the same time, ὀλίγον (neut. adverbial) in Luke 12:48 means "little." In Revelation 17:10, ὀλίγον appears adverbially—as in 1 Peter 5:10 and 2 Peter 2:18—to signify small worth or insignificance.)

Lexicons attest to both temporal and qualitative senses. BDAG records ὀλίγος as a temporal adverb even without explicit time-terms (χρόνος, ὥρα). In its entry on ὀλίγος, LSJ highlights how the word appears in everyday phrases, technical vocabularies, and metaphorical turns of speech. That attested usage underscores the term's legitimate non-temporal senses (for example, "insignificant") alongside its temporal ones. Moreover, BDAG, Louw–Nida, and Thayer document adverbial accusatives of manner—"weakly," for instance—validating non-temporal readings.

Historically, the Byzantine Exarchate of Ravenna (584–751 AD)—167 years, hardly a mere moment—remained politically fragile, militarily dependent on Constantinople, and was gradually overrun by the Lombards. This real-world profile vindicates reading ὀλίγος as "insignificant," reconciling a lengthy chronology of 167 years with prophetic imagery of divine foresight of frailty.

Theologically, a qualitative application preserves prophetic integrity. Deuteronomy 18:21–22 and John 13:19 demand precise historical fulfillment of time prophecies. Understanding ὀλίγος as weakness rather than brevity respects both the word's grammatical flexibility and the chapter's realization in a notably powerless regime.

¹³⁹ BDAG, entry ὀλίγος; LSJ, entry ὀλίγος; Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, entry ὀλίγος.

In sum, a qualitative reading of ὀλίγος is linguistically defensible, historically grounded, and theologically coherent. Major lexicons support its non-temporal usage even when temporal references appear; the Exarchate exemplifies frailty rather than fleeting time; and the prophetic-apocalyptic framework remains intact. This interpretive shift enriches the hermeneutical framework of this study, resolves the tension between grammar and history, and sharpens the symbolic contrast between the woman and the scarlet-colored beast.

4. *ἐκ* in Revelation 17:11: Derivational force

Revelation 17:11 declares, "καὶ τὸ θηρίον ὃ ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν, καὶ αὐτὸς ὄγδοός ἐστιν, καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐστιν, καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει" (The beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is from the seven, and goes into perdition). Within the study's four-contexts framework, key issues are the identity of the eighth king, its relationship to the previous seven, and the theological implications of its destiny.

A close lexical and grammatical analysis shows that the preposition *ἐκ* ("from, out of") marks origin or emergence rather than mere inclusion. BDAG defines *ἐκ* as pointing to origin or emergence, and Louw–Nida similarly describes it as "a part of a whole" or "proceeding from a prior state." Thus, the eighth king is not a random number eight, but proceeds directly from the preceding seven phases, culminating in a final, doomed iteration of the end-time Roman power.

Symbolically, the beast embodies anti-God authority. The "was...and is not...and yet is" schema (cf. Rev 13:3, 12) depicts a power that appears, vanishes, and then miraculously reappears. Although some readings trace its lineage back to Egypt, the Greek emphasis on emergence (*ἐκ*) combined with the apocalyptic schema in Daniel points decisively to an iteration of Rome.

Theologically, "goeth into perdition" pronounces irrevocable divine judgment (cf. Dan 7:9–10). Revelation 17:11 thus presents Rome's final phase—its eighth derivation from

seven—destined for destruction under God's sovereign decree. This derivational reading navigates the tensions of strictly futurist approaches while preserving the internal coherence of the biblical apocalyptic symbolism in Daniel's horns and heads motif (Dan 7:6–8; 8:8).

Figure 2: Eight Stages of the Imperial Beast

[Stage 1] → [Stage 2] → [Stage 3] → [Stage 4] → [Stage 5] → [Stage 6] → [Stage 7] → [Stage 8]

Many scholars have examined the symbolic and grammatical nuances of Revelation 17:11, without really resolving the verse's derivational nuance:

In exploring Revelation 17:11, G. K. Beale insists that ἐκ ("from, out of") signals a direct emergence of the eighth king from the preceding seven, anchoring Rome's final phase firmly within its historical lineage, yet he also describes this eighth rulership as "a revival of one of them," introducing tension between continuity and renewal¹⁴⁰; Richard Bauckham highlights the layered symbolism in Revelation 17, where heads, kings, and mountains overlap but are not identical, but also brings in the duality that the eighth king is "not merely another in the sequence but a final manifestation" of the same imperial essence¹⁴¹; Ranko Stefanović, arguing from the NASB which translates ἐκ to "one of the seven," places the eighth within a lineage of empires from Egypt through Greece to Rome, but in so doing he negates the source-pointing nuance of ἐκ—effectively flattening the emergent emphasis into mere succession.¹⁴² He argues:

The eighth head is actually a reappearance of the seventh head at the time of the end after the healing of the mortal wound. [...] 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

¹⁴⁰ Beale (1999), pp. 874-875.

¹⁴¹ Bauckham (1993), pp. 387–388).

¹⁴² Stefanović (2002), pp. 530–531).

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.¹⁴³

Uriah Smith's historicist model charts eight successive phases of the Roman beast—culminating in papal power—as expressions of a single political authority, thereby affirming an unbroken lineage. However, by conflating heads with kings, he overlooks the derivational force of ἐκ, missing the text's emphasis on emergence.¹⁴⁴ He proposes that the eighth represents the papal power revived after a temporary fall, stating that it is "usually denominated the seventh, [but] is, in reality, the eighth."¹⁴⁵ He misses the seventh because, to him, 167 years is not a short time, as the Greek word *oligos* is translated. Therefore, his interpretation is internally inconsistent with the angel's explicit distinction between the seventh and the eighth, because if the seventh is "in reality" the eighth, the total number is not eight but seven. Both interpretations—Stafanović's and Smith's—are contradicted by historical evidence. Table 6 on the next page summarizes how each position struggles with derivation, continuity, novelty, and the source-pointing nuance of ἐκ.

¹⁴³ Stefanović (2002), pp. 41, 516, and 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."*

¹⁴⁴ Stefanović (2002), pp. 530–531).

¹⁴⁵ Uriah Smith (1897), p. 728.

Table 6: Scholarly Perspectives on ἐκ in Revelation 17:11

Expositor	Key argument	Tension
G. K. Beale	ἐκ signals the direct emergence of the eighth from the seven	Ambiguity between continuity and revival of one of the seven
Richard Bauckham	Final manifestation of imperial power	Blurs the derivation with novel manifestation
Ranko Stefanović	Eighth situated in a lineage from Egypt through Rome	Ignores ἐκ's emergence nuance, flattened by simple succession
Uriah Smith	Eight successive Roman phases (historicist), in which the seventh is the eighth	Conflates heads with kings, ignores ἐκ's emergent force.

Each of these positions illuminates facets of the verse but falls short of fully accounting for ἐκ's derivational force. Only the emergence-focused reading faithfully aligns the Greek preposition, the layered symbolism of apocalyptic literature, Daniel's prophetic precursors, and Rome's history of successive governmental forms.

In summary, ἐκ's lexical meaning of "from/out of" drives the entire verse of Revelation 17:11. By distinguishing kings from heads and reading the eighth king as a direct continuation of Rome's earlier seven phases—bound for perdition—this interpretation offers a textually, grammatically, historically, and theologically coherent understanding of Revelation 17:11. It affirms Daniel's vision of continuity (from iron legs to feet of iron and clay) and anticipates the stone that strikes the statue's feet, bringing all world dominions to an end.

5. *μίαν ὥραν* in Revelation 17:12: Divine-Appointed Unity

The fifth misinterpretation surfaces in Revelation 17:12. While Seventh-day Adventists (unofficially) interpret this verse to mean that an upcoming tumultuous period will last for one prophetic hour—or fifteen literal days—a contextual reading of the Greek suggests a different interpretation. The phrase *μίαν ὥραν* (*mian hōran*) is better understood as a symbolic expression of a divinely appointed season of unity rather than a literal period.

The Greek word *ὥρα* (*hōra*) can denote a literal hour, an undefined period, a season, or a decisive moment. In Johannine usage (e.g., John 5:25; 9:4), *ὥρα* marks critical turning points—moments charged with divine intent. According to the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT), *ὥρα* in apocalyptic literature often refers to a divinely appointed time or critical juncture in salvation history. "In Revelation, *ὥρα* frequently denotes a decisive moment in the eschatological drama, not a literal time unit."¹⁴⁶ Bible scholars affirm this symbolic interpretation: "The phrase *μίαν ὥραν* is best understood as a metaphor for a short, God-ordained time of political unity and rebellion."¹⁴⁷ "The 'one hour' of authority given to the ten kings is not to be taken literally but signifies the ephemeral nature of their power." "The use of *μίαν ὥραν* here is idiomatic, referring to a brief and climactic period of eschatological significance."¹⁴⁸

Furthermore, although Revelation is written in Greek, the Hebrew concept of *אֶחָד* (*echad*), often translated as "one" or "united," may inform the symbolic reading. In the Tanakh, *echad* can imply unity or oneness of purpose, not just numerical singularity (e.g., Genesis 2:24; Deuteronomy 6:4). Thus, interpreting *μίαν ὥραν* as a season of unified purpose aligns with the broader biblical motif of temporary alliances formed to fulfill divine purposes. The ten kings receive authority for a brief, divinely orchestrated season of unity—an hour—

¹⁴⁶ TDNT, Vol. 9, p. 437.

¹⁴⁷ E.g., Beale, in NICNT (1998), p. 875.

¹⁴⁸ Aune, in WBC, Vol 52C, p. 947.

that compresses the rise and fall of their coalition into a single, fleeting moment. This unity is instrumental in fulfilling God's will, even though the actors are unaware (cf. Revelation 17:17). The emphasis is not on chronology, but on divine sovereignty and the futility of evil coalitions.

In summary, by reading *μίαν ὥραν* as symbolic rather than chronological, both the linguistic nuance of the Greek and the layered theology of Revelation are honored. The traditional Adventist interpretation of Revelation 17:12 as a literal 15-day period is neither lexically nor contextually supported. Neither is the "one day" of Revelation 18:8 best understood as a literal year. Instead, the symbolic reading of *μίαν ὥραν* as a divinely appointed season of unity is grounded in rigorous exegesis, Johannine parallels, and prophetic coherence.

REVELATION 17 DECODED

Revelation 17 is rich with biblical imagery and can be understood through the four key contexts: Prophetic Context, Singular Vision, Timeframe, and Historical Context. These contexts 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. Correcting five misinterpretations of Greek words adds further understanding. 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 7–17. 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 of Earth, but of 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 transitioning into the last-day stage of the blaspheming 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 symbolically. 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 a metaphor and represents the various forms of Roman government. As prophesied in Daniel 7:3, 17–18, and 23, from Babylon forth, 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 (eleven minus three), 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 Revelation 15:5–6. Their mention signals the end of probation, because they begin their work after the holiest of holy in heaven is inaccessible (Rev 15:8). 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—her daughters and 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 from a golden chalice, while representing false doctrines and idolatry. 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.¹⁴⁹ 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. Historical records indicate that the ten kingdoms that emerged from the fragmented Western Roman Empire now correspond to the modern Western European nations.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Ravenna". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 27, 2024. Accessed January 25, 2025. [Z](#); Duffy (1997), pp. 72-73.

¹⁵⁰ Jones (1898), pp. 591-696. [Z](#)

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-mīd* (חַתְתָּמִיד), 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 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,¹⁵¹ 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 fallen¹⁵² 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 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.

¹⁵¹ 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 excellent adherence to God – Rev 21:10.

¹⁵² 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.

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.¹⁵³ 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 and amazement. 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. This symbolism depicts complete emotional submission, which is disconnected from reason and common sense, also hinted at in Revelation 13:3 and 8. They are reminded of Christ's warnings in Matthew 24:4–5 and Revelation 13:13 to be vigilant and discerning.

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. Five key ideas guide the interpretation of this verse. First, the prophecy in Daniel chapters 2, 7, and 8 outlines the fourth kingdom that would dominate the world. Second, there are notable similarities between the red dragon in Revelation 12:3, the beast from the sea in Revelation

¹⁵³ Kertzer (2004), p. 14.

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 images 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. Third, consistent application of apocalyptic symbols from Daniel in Revelation challenges the notion of consecutive world powers starting with Egypt.¹⁵⁴ 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. Fourth, logical consistency demands that all heads on this beast-power 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. Fifth, the angel likens the beast's heads to mountains—a widely used biblical image for a ruling power. When *ὄρη* is likened to the topographic elevations of Rome, the image and its interpretation become inconsistent and incomprehensible.

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 directly refutes the hills theory because it necessitates the symbolic mountains to come up one after the other, and five to have disappeared in John's time, with one in power and a seventh yet to come. Obviously, this cannot be for the literal seven hills of Rome.

Evidence to understand this verse is found in Roman history, which indisputably accounts for Pagan Rome to have experienced seven distinct governmental ruling systems. Upon careful

¹⁵⁴ 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 to the fact that the prophecy goes further back to Egypt or Assyria.

examination of these verses, it becomes clear that in some Bible translations,¹⁵⁵ Revelation 17:10 contains a misinterpretation of the Greek 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'—the historical stages of the pagan Roman power. Furthermore, it is essential to note that this verse describes the beast, not its heads. The pronoun *αὐτῇ* (they) in Greek would have been used to refer to the *κεφαλαὶ* (heads) mentioned in the previous verse if a connection between the kings and the heads was implied. That connection is not implied. 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.

Additionally, in verse 10, a second misinterpretation arises with the Greek phrase *ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μέναι*, which is rendered as "he must continue for a short space" (in the KJV) or "he must continue for a short time" (in the 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 administration in the waning Western Roman Empire, which endured 167 years, from 584 to 751. Uriah Smith recognized this phase but dismissed it because, in his opinion, 67 years is inconsistent with the term "short" (he miscalculated its duration by 100 years). 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,

¹⁵⁵ See NIV, ESV, and WEB.

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".¹⁵⁶

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" (*ὀνόματα*) in Revelation 3:4. Yet careful lexical and grammar analysis reveals that even if temporal allusion is present, an alternative interpretation of the text can be more fitting. 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 historical context affirms this reading. 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, or insignificant" due to its limited influence and strength during a turbulent political period. Smith and others overlook this misinterpretation due to a lack of thorough lexical, grammatical, and historical study, resulting in an inaccurate translation. The papacy eventually filled the governance void left by this weak imperial authority. (Rev 17:11, 13).

In Revelation 17:11, another misinterpretation of the Greek becomes apparent. Again, the angel identifies this eighth political stage as "was, was not, and yet is," indicating that it is

¹⁵⁶ Smith (1897), p. 659.3. [↗](#)

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 (NASB).¹⁵⁷ However, 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. The final stage of Roman governance is not a new power but its 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. Following the fall of the exarchate, the Roman Church exerted significant political influence over the remnants of the Western Roman Empire for over 1,000 years. Thus, the eighth king is historically identified as the Pontifical Roman Elective Absolute Monarchy of Vatican City State—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 final misinterpretation of the Greek occurs, obscuring understanding. 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.: *אֶחָד* 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

¹⁵⁷ The NAS translates Revelation 17:11 as: *"is one of the seven."* However, the word 'one' is inserted.

unknowingly, they will do God's will, powerfully reflecting his control over the affairs of men.¹⁵⁸

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.¹⁵⁹

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

¹⁵⁸ The term "one hour" also appears in Revelation 18:10, 17, and 19. There, the allusion refers to a sudden, swift change in situation without suggesting a defined period.

¹⁵⁹ 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 Venerable, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 220–221; 285–286). [2](#)

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:

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. 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.¹⁶⁰ 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.

¹⁶⁰ Vick (2014), pp. 153-92.

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 remaining intact, she was left "desolate and naked" – symbolic language for denouncing ecclesiastical eminence, "eat her flesh" – symbolic language for abrogating political influence,¹⁶¹ 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

¹⁶¹ The verse makes no reference to the beast but to the woman – the Church, indicating ecclesiastical attributes. The relationship of the kings with the beast comes to the fore in the following two verses. The researcher believes that verses 15-16 pertain to the time when the Reformation and European nations denounced the ecclesiastical influence of the Roman Church. That verse 17 pertains to the end-time scenario.

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 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.¹⁶² These nations will again conduct God's will (Rev 17:17).

Revelations 13, 16, and 17 are interconnected and aid in understanding the two-front conflict the Saints will encounter:

1. Revelation 13:15–18 indicates that the United States will demand honor for the Roman beast and its ecclesiastical claims. The land where the Pilgrim Fathers found refuge from persecution will be instrumental in coercing every man on earth to false worship to navigate social and economic exclusion. Those who comply with ('mark on the forehead') or consent to set requirements ('mark on the right hand,' Rev 13:16–17) will have their names erased from the Book of Life. Their 'gathering' will be encouraged by wonders, signs, and even fire from heaven, denoting false spiritual revival (Rev 13:13–14). In

¹⁶² 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)." Additionally, refer to Appendix IV on pages 144–185.*

contrast, those who 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, as well as death, are insignificant compared to the prospect of eternal salvation.

2. Revelation 16 pictures a decisive polemic about doctrine under the image of Armageddon. There, every king is summoned by evil spirits ("gathered" in verse 14) to engage in a spiritual polemic on the Day of the Almighty God. Somewhat ironically, Jesus gathers the gathered (verse 16) in a symbolic place called Har-Mageddon—the gathering of the kings (symbolic: *harim*). This gathering is the echo of Joel 3:14's Day of the Lord in the Valley of Decision.
3. 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. Ironically, as alluded to in Revelation 13:15–18, the nation that once provided refuge from the Inquisition will adopt its own inquisitory measures. 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, due to the "Holy See" or the 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.¹⁶³

The final confrontation will be new wine in old wineskins. Satan's strategy has always involved 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 charge the consciences of men and work out their theories of apostasy and transgression. History will be repeated.¹⁶⁴

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 referred to as 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 by their side. The climactic events are depicted

¹⁶³ LaRondelle in DARCOM, Vol 7, p. 171.

¹⁶⁴ White (1897), RH August 31, 1897, par 7 [2](#); 12LtMs, Ms 111, 1897, par 41/ 12MR 413.3. [2](#)

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

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

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

can afford to be fair. True doctrine will retain everything by close investigation.¹⁶⁵

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

¹⁶⁵ White, CW (1946), p. 35.2-36.1/RH December 20, 1892, par 1. [↗](#)

innovative methodology seeks to challenge traditional interpretations and foster new perspectives, positing that the oversight of these fundamental contexts has led to inconsistencies and misunderstandings of the text.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Perceived misunderstandings of the Greek. Additionally, the researcher identified five misinterpretations of the Greek text, which obscure the understanding of Revelation 17.

These misinterpretations are not unusual, given that most Bible translators and commentators did not fully understand or value the imagery of Revelation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Every position of truth taken by our people will bear the criticism of the greatest minds; [...] therefore every position we take should be critically examined and tested by the Scriptures. [...] Movements are at work to bring us to the front, and if our theories of truth can be picked to pieces by historians or the world's greatest men, it will be done. We must individually know for ourselves what is truth and be prepared to give a reason for the hope that we have with meekness and fear... We are nearing the time when we shall stand individually alone to answer for our belief. We shall be attacked on every point; we shall be tried to the utmost. We do not want to hold our faith simply because it was handed down to us by our fathers. Such a faith will not stand the terrible test that is before us.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ White, 5T, p. 707.1 [↗](#); LDE, p. 70.1 [↗](#)

To this, Neal C. Wilson, former president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (from 1979 to 1990), adds, in his Word to the Reader in the book *A Search for Identity* by George R. Knight: "[...] the most striking characteristic about Adventism is the fact that we believe that truth is progressive and not static. As a result, Adventism keeps searching, investigating, listening, reviewing, researching, and praying with the conviction that God may enlighten and enlarge its understanding of the salvation story."¹⁶⁷ This is why the researcher stands firmly by her conclusions, while welcoming further study and meaningful dialogue at the 2025 Revelation 17 Conference.

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

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

¹⁶⁷ Knight (2000), p. 8.

2. The interpretations of Daniel and Revelation are not formalized as fundamental beliefs within the SDA Church. The concept of Present Truth resists rigid doctrinal fixation in the interpretation of apocalyptic and eschatological visions, as it is, by definition, the ever-deepening understanding of the historical fulfillment of biblical time prophecies. In other words, SDA's interpretation of Daniel and Revelation is rooted in historical analysis, which challenges our understanding of God's authority (Deut 18:21–22, Isa 45:21, and Jer 28:9). On the other hand, we should acknowledge that our peculiar theology influences the Seventh-day Adventist analysis of history.
3. The SDA Church has faced and overcome numerous challenges in prophecy interpretation throughout its history. A notable example is the Ten Horns Controversy, in which Uriah Smith and Alonzo Jones debated whether the Huns or the Alemanni should be recognized as one of the ten kingdoms of the Western Roman Empire.¹⁶⁸ This record of overcoming obstacles instills confidence in engaging emerging interpretations of apocalyptic prophecy. Now, we may take this a step further and be more inclined to understand that the image of the ten horns represents the total fragmentation of the Western Imperial territory into what we now call Europe, rather than ten identifiable separate nations.
4. The SDA Church has grappled with significant non-prophetic issues, including the Sabbath-Sunday question, differing views on the timing of the Sabbath (whether from 6 am to 6 pm, from sunset to sunset, or from evening to evening), the distinction between clean and unclean meats, and the Spirit's role in inspiring and guiding the faithful. These historical disputes have provided valuable lessons in approaching Scriptural texts.
5. The 1888 Righteousness by Faith Controversy taught us to be cautious about hasty negative or dismissive responses to research findings that challenge established beliefs. It reminds us of the importance of thorough examination and thoughtfulness. Ellen G. White,

¹⁶⁸ Rosario (2020). [↗](#)

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

If every idea we have entertained in doctrines is truth, will not the truth bear to be investigated? Will it totter and fall if criticized? If so, let it fall, the sooner the better. The spirit that would close the door to investigation of points of truth in a Christlike manner is not the Spirit from above. [...] I think it is high time that we were Christians at heart. The condition of things here is such that it requires most earnest, persevering labor to counteract the work that has been done here for a few years in the past. I am glad that a time has come when something will stir our people to investigate the points of our faith for themselves. We should not consider that either Elder Butler or Elder Smith are the guardians of the doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists and that no one may dare to express an idea that differs from theirs. My cry has been: Investigate the Scriptures for yourselves and know for yourselves what saith the Lord. No man is to be an authority for us. If he has received his light from the Bible so, may we also go to the same source for light and proof to substantiate the doctrines which we believe. The Scriptures teach that we should give a reason of the hope that is within us with meekness and fear.¹⁶⁹

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

¹⁶⁹ White, 1888 Materials, pp. 186.2, 188.1. [↗](#)

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 upon a Hill. As attendees and presenters, we must uphold a posture of spiritual discernment and ongoing inquiry.

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

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The research yielded significant insights into interpreting chapters 12–18 of Revelation, particularly chapter 17. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that limitations may have shaped its findings and interpretations. Recognizing these biases and understanding why the results emerged as they did is not merely academic; it is essential to deepening 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, and Environmental Studies, she has undertaken a theological investigation. This may raise questions about the work's academic standing. Yet the SDA Church affirms that the Lord qualifies whom he calls and alone appoints his instruments.
2. **Potential impact on the trustworthiness of SDA beliefs.** Based on the results, the researcher recognizes that the potential implications for SDA theology and congregational beliefs warrant theological and pastoral discernment. Nonetheless, the SDA Church has long demonstrated doctrinal courage in the face of interpretive challenges.
3. **Academic supervision is needed for further research.** A more in-depth review of the issues encountered is necessary to substantiate the arguments underlying the assertions and meet the standards of academic work at the Master's or PhD level. Moreover, a broader discussion of the impact of prevailing Adventist interpretations is needed before the SDA academics and community may accept the results. A committee of theologians, ideally including the researcher, should re-evaluate the findings.
4. **The Present Truth Principle.** SDA biblical teachings have always been at the forefront of understanding, leaving room for interpretive tension and ongoing discernment (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. Final events will remain unconfirmed, for time will not record their fulfillment.

5. **Methodology.** The contextualization of the theoretical concept has demonstrated itself to be a compelling and innovative lens for interpreting Revelation. Further research may be required to formally establish this approach as a recognized methodology within biblical studies.
6. **Paper limitations.** This paper does not explore in depth the relationship between the Holy See, the ten kings, and the European Union, a connection that may illuminate the meaning of 'the gathering of the kings of the earth [...] to the battle of that great day of God Almighty' (Rev 16:14). Likewise, while the typology of Armageddon—understood as the devastation spanning the sixth and seventh plagues within a pre-millennial framework—has been touched in this paper, it remains an area requiring deeper exegetical and theological investigation. Additionally, the paper does not yet fully integrate the remaining three contexts of the theoretical framework: political, ecclesiastical, and geographical. These will be explored more thoroughly in the forthcoming book manuscript, which is expected to provide expanded interpretive depth.
7. **Style inconsistencies.** As a work in progress, the paper may contain minor discrepancies in style across references, footnotes, and the bibliography listing. Finally, the researcher is aware that the text requires editing to achieve a smooth and flowing academic paragraphing style.

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. These are strong indications that the reference to the dragon's tail (Rev 12:4) alludes to the Roman cavalry's Draco standard.

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.¹⁷⁰



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. 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

¹⁷⁰ 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.

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 15th 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 533. 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 laid the groundwork for the papacy's march toward political power. His Merovingian Frankish kingdom became a staunch defender of the Catholic faith, a protector of the Papacy, and a 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.¹⁷¹

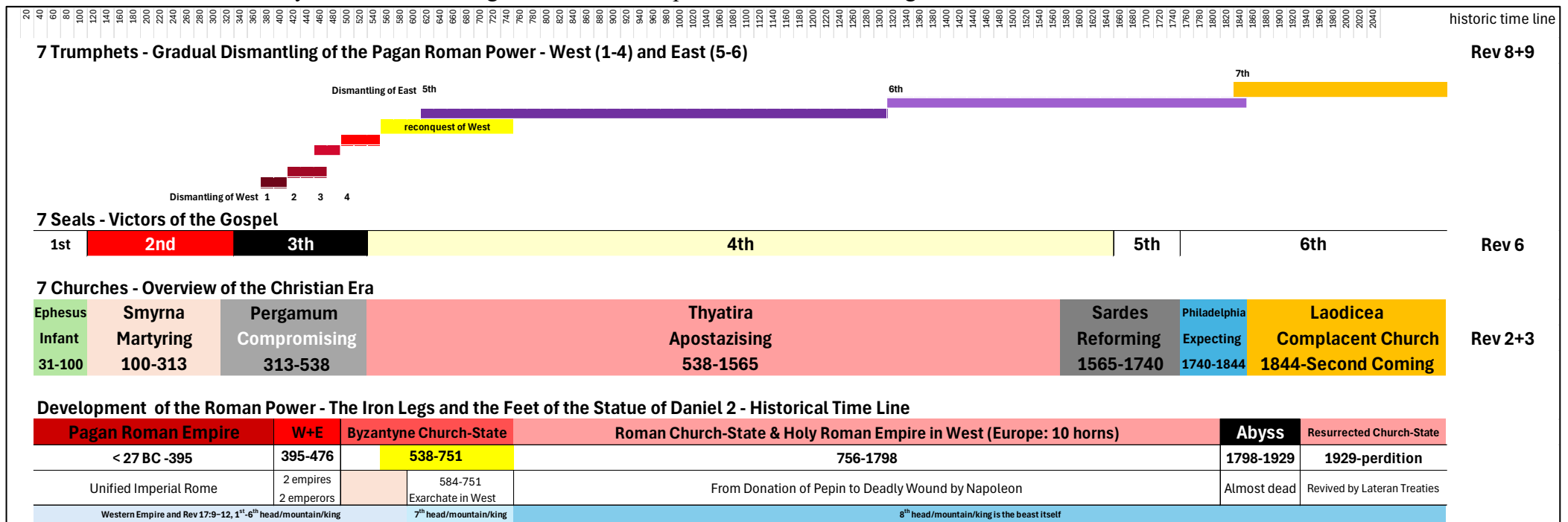
5. **Saracens/Mohammed (622–1299):** This period refers to the rise of Islam and its subsequent expansion within the Byzantine Empire.
6. **Turks/Othman (1299–1449):** This phase encompasses the emergence of the Ottoman Turks and their subsequent influence over Christendom, culminating in the definitive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

The fifth and sixth trumpets are depicted in the prophecy in considerable detail (Rev 9:14–21). The fulfillment spans from July 12, 1299, to July 27, 1449, which is 150 years or five prophetic months, according to Revelation 9:5. From July 27, 1449, to August 11, 1840, Islam ruled over Christendom, a period of 391 years and 15 days, as per Revelation 9:14–15. The seventh trumpet is heralded in Revelation 11:15. The scenes depicted in Revelation 11:1–12 allude to the atrocities of the French Revolution and the End-time 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

¹⁷¹ Mitchell (2025) [2](#); and Drinkwater (2025) [2](#).

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 Solomon (971–931 BC), the kingdom of Israel was divided into Judah, consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin under Solomon's son Rehoboam, and the ten other tribes became the kingdom of Israel under the command of Jeroboam (931–910 BC),¹⁷² 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.¹⁷³ Judah survived the Babylonian Exile but was unable to 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

¹⁷² Thiele (1994), p.10.

¹⁷³ 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.¹⁷⁴ In 47 BC, Julius Caesar restored some political authority to Hyrcanus, appointing him to the dual role of ethnarch, client king,¹⁷⁵ 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),¹⁷⁶ was appointed tetrarch in 40 BC by Mark Antony, a tribune of the

¹⁷⁴ John Hyrcanus II (*Yohanan Hurqanos*) (died 30 BC), a member of the Hasmonean dynasty, served as the Jewish High Priest in the 1st century BC. He was also briefly the King of Judea from 67 to 66 BC and then the ethnarch (ethnic ruler) of Judea, probably over the period from 47 to 40 BC. [↗](#)

¹⁷⁵ Client or Vassal kings were quasi-monarchs of non-Roman descent who enjoyed the protection of the Roman Senate. Client kingdoms were typically situated 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). [↗](#)

¹⁷⁶ He is the Herod who ordered the massacre of the children of Bethlehem (Matt 2:16).

Roman Senate. After an 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.¹⁷⁷ The Romans never again awarded the title King of the Jews as 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 over Chalcis was given to Agrippa II (53–100), son of Herod Agrippa, but

¹⁷⁷ Flavius Josephus in The Wars of the Jews, book 1, chapter 14.4. On EarlyJewishWritings.com. [Z](#)

only as a tetrarchy. Thus, the kingship of Judah officially ended in 44 with the death of Herod Agrippa I.¹⁷⁸

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.¹⁷⁹ 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.¹⁸⁰ 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 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

¹⁷⁸ 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." [↗](#)

¹⁷⁹ 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).

¹⁸⁰ According to historians (for example, Van Kooten, 2011, p. 419), the destruction of Jerusalem happened in 70 AD. [↗](#).

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 threefold 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. ¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ 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 bring an end to 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 backdrop of 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,¹⁸² 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.¹⁸³ 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.

¹⁸² Saggs, Henry W.F., "Babylon". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 18, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Babylon-ancient-city-Mesopotamia-Asia>. Accessed October 3, 2024.

¹⁸³ 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 consensus¹⁸⁴ 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*

¹⁸⁴ 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 [...]."¹⁸⁵ 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.*¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Titus Livius (Livy), Liv. 6 1 [↗](#).

¹⁸⁶ 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.¹⁸⁷

Republic:

2. Consuls (509–451 BC): Two consuls were elected annually and had supreme authority in civil and military matters. They presided over the Senate and assemblies, enforcing laws.¹⁸⁸
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.¹⁸⁹
4. Dictators (449–59 BC): During governmental reforms aimed at reducing 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.¹⁹⁰
5. Triumvirs (59–27 BC): The second Triumvirate, established in 43 BC, included Octavian (later Augustus), Mark Antony, and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus. They

¹⁸⁷ Bradley (1888), pp.109-10.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 131, 366

¹⁸⁹ Smithsonian Timelines of History, p. 52.

¹⁹⁰ 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.¹⁹¹

6. One is — Imperial Rome:¹⁹²

- a. (27 BC– 395): A unified empire from Octavian to Theodosius I.¹⁹³
- b. (395–476): The empire was divided into Eastern and Western sections, each led by its emperor. In the West, rulers included Honorius.¹⁹⁴
- 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.¹⁹⁵

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, maintained that the stability of the government relied on proper divine worship, with the Sun

¹⁹¹ Bryans (1908), p. 70; Pelling (1996), pp. 1-69.

¹⁹² The Eastern Empire collapsed in 1449 AD. Smith (1897), pp. 402-34; 452-87 [2](#); 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.

¹⁹³ Bryans (1908), p. 72.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 100.

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.¹⁹⁶ 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.¹⁹⁷ 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

¹⁹⁶ 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](#).

¹⁹⁷ Footnote 1 in chapter 6 on p. 122 of 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 757.¹⁹⁸

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.¹⁹⁹

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 coequal 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."²⁰⁰ 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.²⁰¹

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 tribes seeking to establish themselves in the region. This influence enabled the Roman

¹⁹⁸ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Ravenna". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 27, 2024. Accessed January 25, 2025. [Z](#)

¹⁹⁹ Herring (2020), p. 10-13.

²⁰⁰ 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](#)

²⁰¹ Lippold, Adolf. "Theodosius I". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 13, 2025. Accessed January 22, 2025. [Z](#).

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.²⁰²

- 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.²⁰³
- 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.²⁰⁴ Odoacer established his residence in Ravenna and dissolved the imperial court in Rome, marking the definitive end of the Western Roman Empire.

²⁰² 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.

²⁰³ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Battle of the Catalaunian Plains". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 24, 2024. Accessed January 23, 2025. [↗](#).

²⁰⁴ Reynolds (1946), p. 41.

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.²⁰⁵ 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:²⁰⁶

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.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Noble (1984), p. xxi.

²⁰⁶ 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 that condemned Arianism as heresy.

²⁰⁷ 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.²⁰⁸

Reconquering Italy: 533–584²⁰⁹

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.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 81. Text errors are not corrected.

²⁰⁹ The information for this and the following paragraphs, including the timeline, is obtained from B. Aguilera-Barchet (2015).

²¹⁰ *"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). [Z](#). 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 presided over the opening session and participated in the discussions. He hoped that a general council of the

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 Rome the only part of the Western Roman Empire 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

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.

7. One is yet to come and is bound to remain insignificant – Exarchate

Augmenting Temporal Authority 584–756

The period from 537 to 751, commonly referred to as 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.²¹¹

²¹¹ 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-8th 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.²¹²

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. Throughout the seventh century, the territory under the exarchs' governance was diverse and

²¹² Noble (1984), p. xxii.

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."²¹³ 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, Forlì (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, and the Duchy of Rome.²¹⁴ 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

²¹³ Duchesne (1907), p. 2.

²¹⁴ While exact historical measurements are unavailable, estimating the total land area of the Papal States in 756 AD based on the cities and their surrounding territories makes a rough estimate of 44,000 km². 100,000 x bigger than the current 0,44 km².

Roman Empire, Pope Stephen II, having long set his eyes on Ravenna, 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.²¹⁵

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 became the inheritor of the Roman power. 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.²¹⁶ 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

²¹⁵ Noble (1984), pp. 90-95.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. xx.

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 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."²¹⁷

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

²¹⁷ Noble (1984), p. xxvi, 15–98.

VIII by Otto I. This scenario enabled Otto to exert imperial control over the Roman Church, 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," referring to a secular ruler or government exercising supreme authority over ecclesiastical matters, thereby subordinating the church to the state or a secular authority.²¹⁸

The origins of this complex Church-State system can be traced back to the Carolingian Empire in France, initiated by Pepin in 751, and it reached 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.

²¹⁸ 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 being controlled by local secular lords, who established 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.²¹⁹

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,

²¹⁹ 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 property within the country. In France, anti-clerical sentiment reached its peak 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.²²⁰ Further confiscations occurred in Spain during the

²²⁰ The decline in temporal power is alluded to in Revelation 13:3 and 17:8.

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 Apostolic Palace, within the Leonine walls on Vatican Hill. 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.²²¹ 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,²²² 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.²²³

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 Justinianus, which significantly influenced European jurisprudence. Legal reforms and edicts

²²¹ Noble (1984), pp. x, xx.).

²²² Kertzer (2004), p. 14.

²²³ 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 judicial power." [↗](#) Accessed 4 October 2024.

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.²²⁴

The evolution of the Western Roman Empire from Pagan to Papal²²⁵

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.*
- *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.*

²²⁴ Revelation 17:13-14 alludes to a final attempt to bring European states again under papal political supremacy.

²²⁵ 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.

- *451 *Atila 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.²²⁶ These reforms were part of Justinian's broader efforts to unify the empire under both civil and ecclesiastical authority, often referred to as 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.

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 (the Third Council of Constantinople, Sixth Ecumenical) to reconcile with Rome.

695 An anti-Byzantine rebellion breaks out in Ravenna.

²²⁶ Waldorf (1935), p.7. [↗](#).

- 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 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 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.*

- 1801 Napoleon signs a Concordat with the Pope Pius VII 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 Eglises 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.

Papal Subtleties in the European Union and Prophetic Perspectives²²⁷

Medieval Origins of the "European" Idea. Historian John McCormick demonstrates that early chroniclers initially used "European" to describe Charles Martel's military forces.²²⁸ Still, it only became a lasting political identity after Charlemagne's coronation by the Pope as Holy Roman Emperor in 800. "The term European was used by contemporary chroniclers to describe the forces under the command of Martel, but it did not become more widely used until the year 800, when Charlemagne was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by the Pope and became the king and father of Europe."²²⁹ Thus, the papacy's act of crowning fused a military coalition with a pan-continental, Christendom-centered aim—setting a precedent for later supranational visions.

Early Proposals for a Christian Confederation. Building on that Roman setting, medieval thinkers argued for formal structures to preserve peace under papal oversight. "Proponents of unity... believed that a united Christian Europe was essential for the revival of the Holy Roman Empire... princes and cities of Europe should form a confederal 'Christian Republic'... with the Pope acting as a final court of appeal."²³⁰ By framing disputes as matters for papal arbitration, Pierre Dubois (1306) and his predecessors reaffirmed the model of a single spiritual authority guiding a multi-state union.

Nineteenth Century Vision: The United States of Europe. "...without losing [their] distinctive qualities or ... glorious individuality, will merge closely into a higher unity and

²²⁷ This paragraph on the EU and its timeline, as well as the paragraph on the Fall of the Byzantine Empire, are the researcher's.

²²⁸ Charles Martel's relationship with the papacy was a strategic alliance. By hosting papal envoys and acknowledging the Pope as "prince of the apostles," Martel laid the groundwork for a Franco-Papal bond that his son, Pepin the Short, would formalize—culminating in Pepin's anointing by Pope Stephen II and the Donation of Pepin, which created the Papal States. This arrangement shifted the papacy's allegiance from Constantinople to the rising Carolingian dynasty, setting the stage for Charlemagne's (Charles Martel's grandson) coronation as Emperor of the (European) Holy Roman Empire.

²²⁹ McCormick (2002), p. 32.

²³⁰ McCormick (2002), quoting Pierre Dubois, pp. 34-35.

will form the fraternity of Europe ... Two huge groups will be seen, the United States of America and the United States of Europe, holding out their hands to one another across the ocean."²³¹ This statement from the writer-politician Victor Hugo repackages medieval Christianity into a secular-liberal ideal in which the conspicuous fraternal language draws attention to the communal imagery McCormick identifies. By envisioning a federation of nations bound by shared values rather than borders, Hugo echoed the papal concept of a universal community under the control of the Vicar of Christ. His metaphor of two continental federations prefigures modern EU–US relations, underlining how the "European Idea" retained its roots in ecclesiastical unity even as it embraced nineteenth-century liberalism.

Post-War Foundations: The Schuman Plan and ECSC. "The coal and steel industries of France and Germany would be brought together under the administration of a single joint authority. Other countries were invited to take part, but only Italy and the three Benelux countries expressed interest."²³² The endeavor translated old confederation motifs into economic terms, using industrial integration as glue. McCormick observes that the Plan's rhetoric of an "ever closer union" subtly revived medieval appeals to a universal Christian polity—now reframed in the language of reconstruction of economy. By institutionalizing shared sovereignty over key resources, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) embodied the continuity of papal-modelled confederation through modern supranational governance.

Papal Foundations in the European Union and Prophetic Perspectives. European integration did not spring forth in a secular vacuum. From the time of Charlemagne's coronation to Pierre Dubois' envisioned "Christian Republic," proponents sought a European

²³¹ Ibid., pp. 56.

²³² Ibid., pp. 56.

Christendom under papal oversight. The Schuman Plan and the birth of the ECSC marked a modern revival of old motifs. Although never explicitly acknowledged as a papal project, the Holy See's interest in reviving a unified Christendom can be inferred from the use of terminology, the symbol of twelve stars, Marian blue, and the concept of a single, transnational European body. The prophetic lens of Revelation 17:12–13 speaks of ten kings who "receive no kingdom as yet" but wield power alongside the beast. The European Union—beginning with six coal and steel partners and currently expanded to a union of twenty-seven—echoes that confederation motif. Its shifting sovereignty, rotating presidencies, and appeals to a "higher unity" can be seen as successive echoes of the papal-Holy Roman Empire model, foreshadowing the prophetic coalition.

Key Theological Reflections for Seventh-day Adventist Scholars

- Recognize the subtle persistence of papal influence beneath secular façades.
- See in Revelation 17's ten-horn motif a call to watch how modern federations echo ancient confederacies.
- Appreciate that accurate prophetic interpretation demands both historical rigor and spiritual discernment as we trace the EU's evolution and its implications for end-time alliances.

This short treatise concludes by underscoring a dual task for Seventh-day Adventists: to continue historical research into obscured ecclesiastical threads and to maintain prophetic vigilance over Europe's unfolding unity. The papal echoes within Brussels challenge us to discern how past theocratic models may inform future political-religious coalitions—and to proclaim the three angels' messages, considering what is yet to come.

Thematic Timeline of European Integration

The steps leading to the foundation of the European Union, its policies, and its role on the global stage as we know it today:

1. World War II Triggers

1946 "In 1942–43, Winston Churchill had suggested the development of 'a United States of Europe' operating under 'a Council of Europe' with reduced trade barriers, free movement of people, a common military, and a High Court to adjudicate disputes (quoted in Palmer, 1968, p. 111). He made the same suggestion in a speech at the University of Zurich in 1946 – '*We must build a kind of United States of Europe.*'"²³³

2. Foundations of Economic Union

1951²³⁴ 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.

3. First Steps Toward Democratic Participation

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

²³³ McCormick (2002), pp. 56, 63.

²³⁴ The website of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union dates the EU's beginning to 1951.

parliament but rather as representatives directly elected by European elections held every five years in the Member States.

4. Deepening the Single Market & Political Union

- 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, as well as standard foreign and security 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.

5. Institutional Reform for Enlargement

- 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.

6. Consolidation & Global Ambitions

- 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

Finally, the total collapse of what was left of the Eastern Roman Empire occurred in two significant assaults. 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 a period of 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.²³⁵

²³⁵ The fall of the Western Roman Empire is prophesied in the first four trumpets of Revelation 8. The fall of the Eastern Roman Empire is foretold in Revelation 9. See, for a comprehensive explanation: U. Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, pp. 402-34 [2](#); 452-87 [2](#); *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.

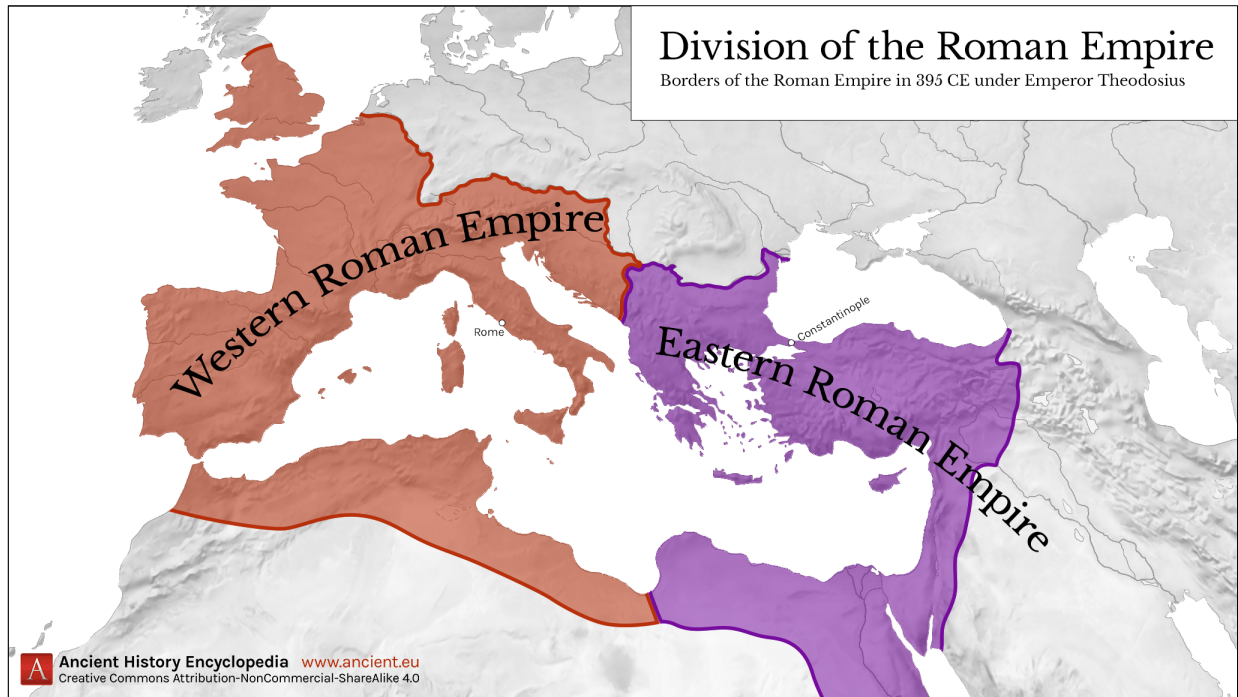


Chart 3: The Roman Empire, under Theodosius

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

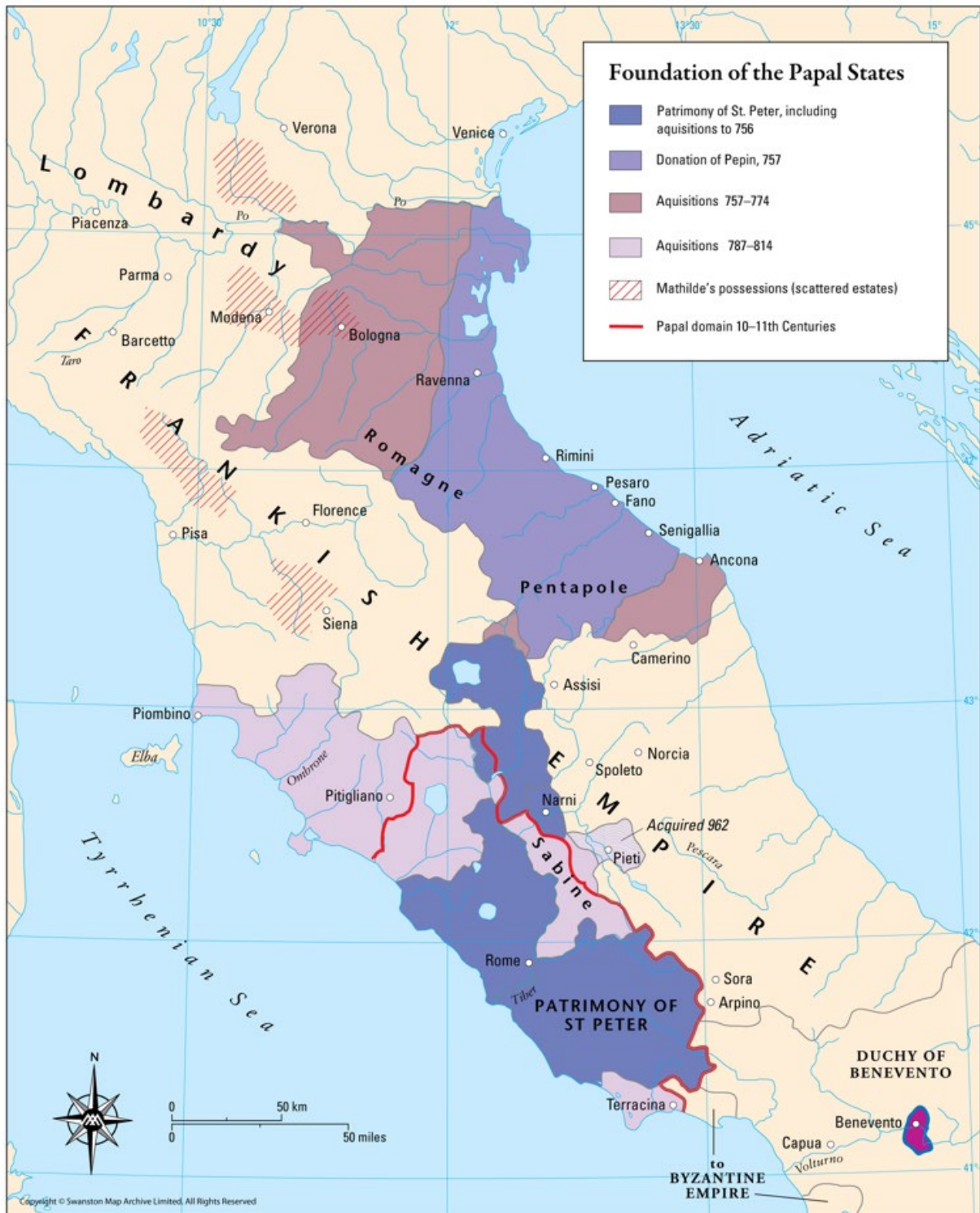


Chart 4: Map of the Papal States at their foundation in 756

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.

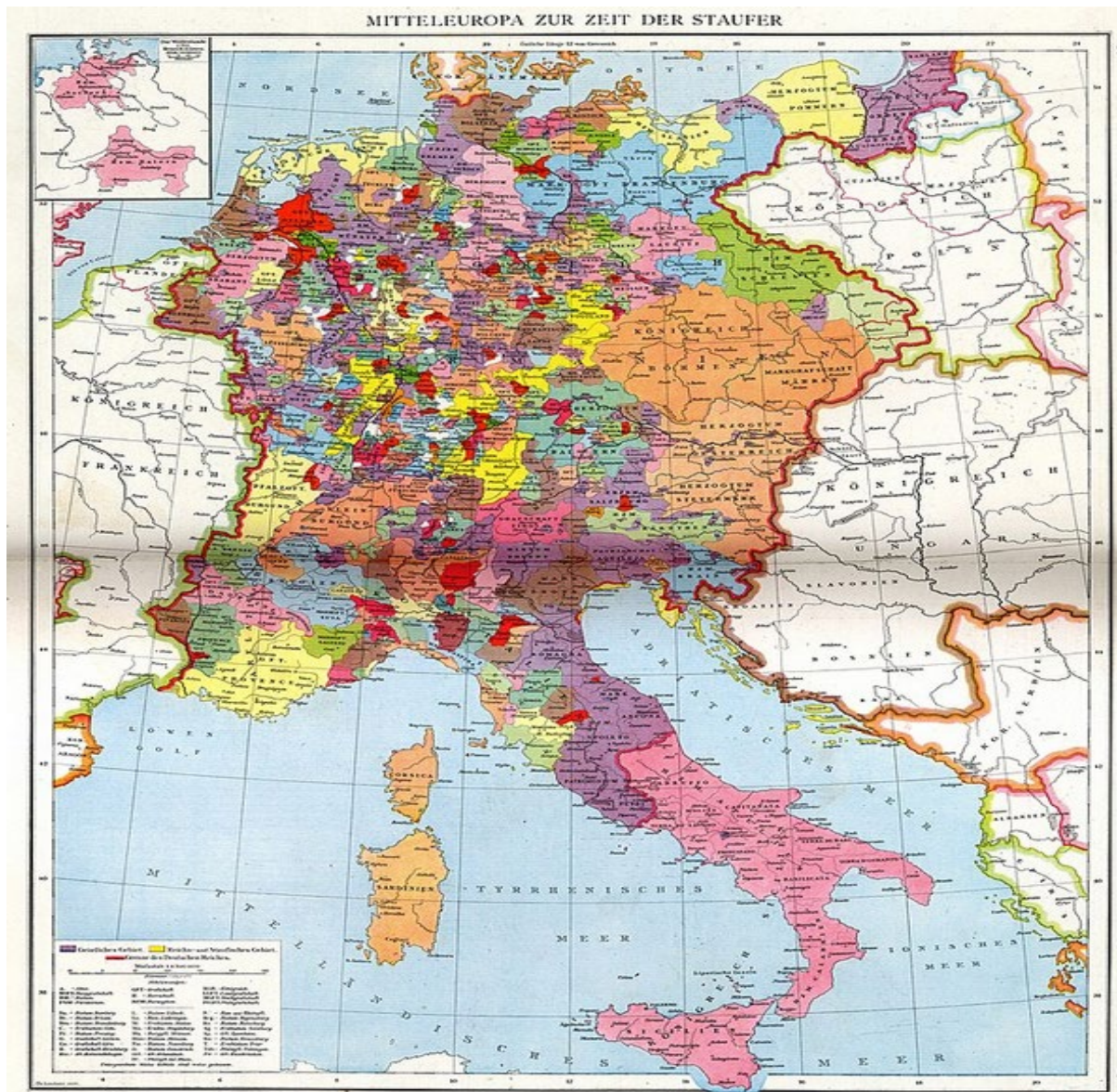


Chart 6: The Holy Roman Empire under Frederick II, around 1200

(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.

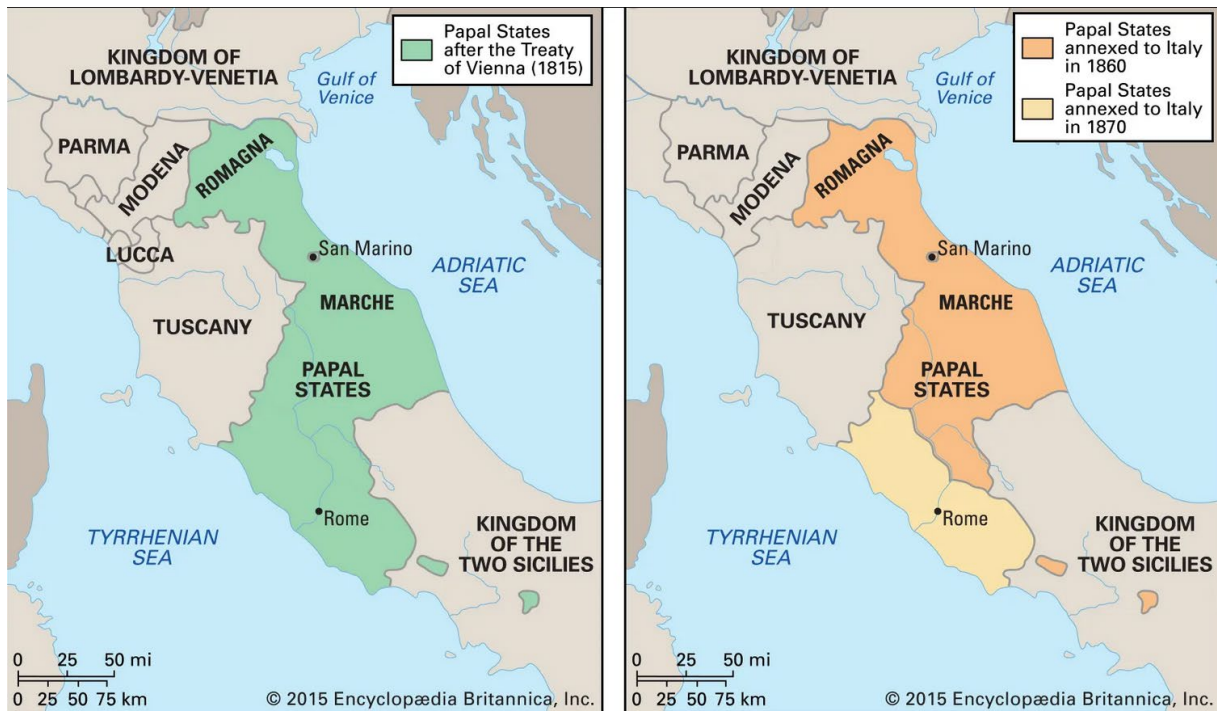


Chart 8: Map of the Papal States

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](https://www.britannica.com)).

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)

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, and ultimately combine 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 that affect 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 like 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 (Megiddo) 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 fails.

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

Prophetic Context		Daniel 2	Daniel 7	Daniel 8	Revelation 12	Revelation 13	Revelation 17	Revelation 18
1	Babylon	Head: Gold	Lion: 4 wings	-	-	-	-	-
2	Medo-Persia	Breast: Silver	Bear: 3 ribs	Ram: 2 horns	-	-	-	-
3	Greece	Tights: Brons	Panther: 4 heads	Goat: 1, then 4 horns	-	-	-	-
4	Rome 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 the 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 (800-1806) 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 th 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	Kingdom of Jesus	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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