

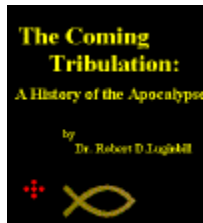
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The Coming Tribulation: A History of the Apocalypse

Part 3B

Antichrist and his Kingdom

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Introduction: In the previous installment, we noted the following combination of divine and satanic trends which characterize the Tribulation's first half:

	Satanic	< >	Divine
Spiritual level:	* The Great Apostasy	< >	* Worldwide Evangelism
Temporal level:	The Rise of Antichrist	< >	* Worldwide Warning Judgments

We have covered three of these four trends (marked with an asterisk above, i.e., the Great Apostasy and the contrasting worldwide evangelism of the 144,000 under the direction of Moses and Elijah, and the series of trumpet judgments which serve to warn the world of the impending coming of Christ). It now remains to treat in detail the central character of the satanic trend opposing and rejecting the gracious warnings of God, namely, antichrist.

Aside from the brief foreshadowing of his rise by the first seal (Rev.6:2), the book of Revelation does not formally introduce "the beast" until chapter 13. At that time, when the dramatic, previously prophesied events of the Tribulation's midpoint finally take place, he will be unequivocally revealed for who he really is, namely, Satan's *anti*-Christ. At that juncture, the reader of Revelation is given a panoramic (and highly symbolic) account of antichrist's tribulational career, retrospectively as well as prospectively (Revelation chapters 13-17). The delay in introducing antichrist until after the other major events of the Tribulation's first half have been discussed allows the reader to better consider "the beast" and his egregious career as a whole, and also serves to focus attention upon his primary role as a replacement Christ who persecutes those who truly follow Christ. Unquestionably, this divinely inspired approach assumes that the reader (or teacher) is well-versed in the numerous passages of scripture which speak of antichrist and so supplement this panoramic view. For without possessing a clear and (scripturally) complete picture of Satan's pseudo-Messiah, the synopsis of the Great Tribulation (Rev.13-17), the subsequent judgments upon Babylon (Rev.17-18), and the specifics of the Second Advent (Rev.19-20) may seem incoherent to some (to the extent that the focus of the devil's anti-God operations during this most cataclysmic of times are for that reason misunderstood). Inasmuch as it is our purpose in this series to amplify these teachings in the manner of a comprehensive "history" of the apocalypse, it is necessary at this point to examine the rise of the beast from his first unveiling, investigating all that scripture has to say about his activities during the Tribulation's first half, before moving on to our treatment of the Great Tribulation proper.

I. Definition, Names Sources, and Prophetic Types of Antichrist

1. Definition: First of all, it needs to be understood that antichrist is not merely a symbol, but a real person. Specifically, he is Satan's substitute Christ who will actually claim to be Christ, rising to power during the first half of the Tribulation, and dominating the world during its second half, the Great Tribulation. So while we do indeed need to beware of multiple false "Christs" (Matt.24:23-28; Mk.13:21-23; cf.

1Jn.2:18-22; 2Jn.1:7), and while the "spirit of antichrist" is already abroad in the world (i.e., the lawlessness which will characterize antichrist's reign: 1Jn.4:3), scripture is yet quite clear about the fact of the coming of this one particular arch **anti**-Christ (1Jn.2:18; 4:3; cf. Dan.8:11). He it is who will persecute Israel and the Church as never before (Dan.11:31-35), take his seat in the temple of God proclaiming himself to be God (2Thes.2:1-12; cf. Dan.11:36-37), and oppose our returning Lord Jesus Christ at the battle of Armageddon (Rev.19:19-21; cf. Dan.8:25).

The Greek preposition *anti* (αντι), when used in compounds of this sort, often bears two senses, both of which would have occurred to any native Greek speaker of John's day who heard or read the word. First, *anti* means something "opposed to" the thing to which it is prefixed, but, secondly, it can also mean a "substitute for" that thing. And, truly, the beast, Satan's "anointed one" or false "Messiah" (*Christos*, Χριστός, being the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew *Meshiach*, משיח), will be both: a pseudo, substitute Christ who will at the same time directly and violently oppose our Lord and His holy people, Israel and the Church. To this we may compare the devil's most common name, "Satan", which similarly means "adversary", since he is the arch-opponent of both the Father and the Son, and of their representatives on earth, Israel and the Church (cf. Rev.12:10).

As in the case of any forgery, the twin characteristics of opposition and substitution necessarily work hand in hand (e.g., counterfeit currency is an imitation that by its very existence attacks true currency). Therefore one cannot substitute for Christ without also opposing Him, just as one cannot effectively oppose the truth without offering a false substitute for it (cf. Dan.11:36-37; 2Thes.2:4). This explains the many characteristics of antichrist which deliberately mimic those of the true Christ. To believers of the present day, years before the commencement of these events, these deliberate and diabolically engineered similarities of antichrist to Jesus Christ may seem so superficial and so obviously fraudulent that they invite, in addition to disgust, outright ridicule. But we must take it to heart that to the unbelieving world of that time, under the intense pressures of the Tribulation and in the absence of Holy Spirit restraint, those who through faith remain loyal to the genuine but invisible Christ instead of giving obeisance to the spurious but manifest antichrist will be the ones who seem worthy of ridicule and disgust.⁽¹⁾ And before we become too self-assured that we personally could never be deceived by Satan's counterfeit "Christ", we would do well to remember the words of our Lord:

And at that time many will fall away and will betray each other and will hate each other, and many false prophets will arise and will deceive many. Now because of the increase of lawlessness [at that time], the love of the many will cool. But he who endures until the end, this [is the one who] will be saved.

Matthew 24:10-13

At that time if someone says to you "**Look** [(as they will tell you then)]! Christ is here!", or "Here [He is]!", do not believe [it]. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will perform great miracles (lit., "signs") and wonders [sufficient] to **deceive even the elect**, if [that were] possible. **Look** [(as I am telling you now)]! I have told you ahead of

time.

Matthew 24:23-25

As indicated in the chart at the beginning of this section, the rise of antichrist will coincide with and respond to the worldwide spiritual decline of the "Great Apostasy".⁽²⁾ This mass falling away from the true faith will thus work hand in glove with a growing (false) sense of antichrist's legitimacy. We may also safely assume that the numerous points in which the beast will deliberately mimic our Lord will contribute in no small way to the world's growing acceptance of him. This list of such areas of mimicry is long and various, and, while each separate point will be discussed in its proper place below, it will be helpful to mention here some of the more salient instances wherein the devil will proffer his antichrist in direct and deliberate imitation of the true Christ:

- Antichrist's pseudo "virgin birth": Satan's engendering of antichrist, while more abnormal than unique, will be touted as a "second coming" (cf. Gen.3:15; 6:4; 2Thes.2:9-10; Rev.13:1-2).
- His unprecedentedly charismatic personality: (2Thes.2:9-10; Rev.13:3; 13:8)
- His supernatural empowerment: (2Thes.2:9-10; Rev.13:2)
- His messianic title: (2Thes.2:4; Rev.13:16-18; cf. Dan.11:36-37)
- His leadership of a new and powerful religious movement: (2Thes.2:4; Rev.13:16-18; cf. Dan.11:36-37)
- His pseudo signs and "miracles": (2Thes.2:9; Matt.24:24; cf. Ex.7:11; 7:22; Rev.13:13-15)
- His false prophet: the beast too will have a "herald" (Rev.13:11-17; cf. Ex.7:11; 7:22; 2Tim.3:6-9)
- His meteoric political rise: (Dan.8:23-24; 11:21-24)
- His unprecedented military successes: (Dan.8:23-24; 11:25-45)
- His pseudo "resurrection": (compare Rev.13:3 with 13:8; 13:12; 13:14)
- His earthly "session" in the rebuilt temple: (2Thes.2:4; cf. Dan.9:27; 11:31; 11:36-37)
- His pseudo Millennium: (Rev.6:2-8)
- His final crusade against so-called "evil": (Ezek.38-39; Rev.16:12-16; 19:19-21)

Antichrist is thus very clearly "the devil's man", and Satan will go to great lengths to present the beast to the world as an ersatz "Christ". As a result, antichrist will be accepted by the majority of the world's population (those who do not "know their God") as the genuine article. The fact that scripture assigns the beast both a *parousia* (i.e., an "advent": 2Thes.2:9) and an *apokalypsis* (i.e., a "revelation": 2Thes.2:6-8) is a clear

indication that we are to take the direct opposition of antichrist to Christ by Satan as both deliberate and complete, analogous to the devil's complete and deliberate opposition to God the Father. In each of these cases, moreover, the diabolical intent is clearly not only to oppose, but to counterfeit, substitute and replace (bringing us back to the core meaning of the word "antichrist").

In short, for those who do not know God (or are not following Him closely enough), antichrist's life and career will seem in many important respects to fit the bill for a "second coming". Although without argument these similarities are indeed superficial, false, and fraught with innumerable, clear contradictions, any one of which would be sufficient to refute his claim to be the Christ, those who want "to believe" in antichrist will do so, and that number will include the great majority of the world's population at that time, including many former believers who have allowed themselves to become swept up in the Great Apostasy (Matt.24:5; Mk.13:6; Lk.21:8).

2. Names for Antichrist: There are, in scripture, a variety of other designations for antichrist, each of which sheds light on his particulars:

a. The Serpent's Seed (Gen.3:14-15; cf. Gen.49:16-18). Antichrist is the devil's "seed" both metaphorically and literally (see section II.1 below).

b. The King of Babylon (Is.14:4-23). Babylon is the spiritual name for Satan's kingdom on earth, so that this title calls attention to antichrist's intimate connection with the devil's grand designs.

c. Gog of the land of Magog, Chief Prince of Meshech and Tubhal (Ezek.38-39). "Gog" is an individual, specifically, antichrist. This prophecy deals with antichrist's mustering of the world's armies at Armageddon to oppose Christ's return.

d. The Little Horn (Dan.7:8-26; 8:9-25; cf. Rev.17). The "horn" a common symbol of power in Old Testament symbolism, is "small" because it refers here to an individual (namely, antichrist) rather than a country or empire.

e. The Stern-faced King, well-versed in Deception (Dan.8:23). Speaks to antichrist's character.

f. The [Roman] Prince who is yet to come (Dan.9:26). Identifies antichrist as the one who will reconstitute the Roman empire in a territorial sense.

g. The Man of Contempt (Dan.11:21). Antichrist will be both "contemptible" in every sense, and "contemptuous" of everything good and decent (the Hebrew participle admits of both senses).

h. The Prince of the Covenant (Dan.11:22) Antichrist is the king who will make the crucial alliance or "covenant" with Israel, only to break it "in the middle of the week" (cf. Dan.9:27).

i. The King of the North (Dan.11:21-45). This name identifies antichrist's power center as essentially European, as well as containing a pseudo-messianic reference (cf. Is.9:1-7).

j. The Man of Lawlessness (2Thes.2:3-12). As we have seen in the previous installment of this series, this is a critical designation, indicating that antichrist's regime will be unlike any which have gone before it in its undermining of basic legality and morality.

k. The Rider on the White Horse (Rev.6:2). This description shows clearly antichrist's deliberate representation of himself as a (pseudo) Messiah, conquering the world.

l. The Beast (Rev.11:7; 13:1-4; 13:12-18; 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2; 16:10; 16:13; 17:8-17; 19:19-20; 20:4; 20:10; cf. Dan.7:1-11; 7:19-25; Rev.6:8 [Greek]). This last title, the dominant one in the book of Revelation, has a two-fold import, representing both antichrist's beastly personality, character and behavior, and his essential oneness with the coming satanic kingdom he will rule.

3. Prophetic Types: In addition to specific names and designations, scripture also furnishes some more extensive "types" of antichrist, that is, historical individuals whose behavior or other characteristics are closely parallel to those of antichrist and are therefore instructive of that behavior and those characteristics.⁽³⁾ In each of the cases below, the individual in question was likewise a minion of the devil, and, likewise, the ruler of an anti-God kingdom. Therefore in each of these cases we can see in principle the pattern of actions taken by Satan against God and His people, and the ultimate triumph of our Lord. As the similarities and parallels between antichrist and each of these individuals and their careers are too numerous to recount in full here, the reader is encouraged to revisit the pertinent scriptures which deal with each typical tyrant after mastering the information about antichrist given in the body of this study. General points of comparison between these types and antichrist include:

- being an agent of the devil.
- pursuing a satanic agenda.
- fostering anti-God religion.
- fostering rebellion from God's authority.
- practicing an anti-God type of rulership (violation of basic principles of law and justice).
- overt opposition to divine will.
- stubborn defiance of divine will.
- arrogance beyond normal human limits (hubris).
- persecution of believers individually or collectively (e.g., Israel).

- dramatic destruction by God of the person or of his works.

a. Nimrod (Gen.10:8-12; 11:1-9; cf. Gen.6:4 with 1Chron.1:10): We have covered the career of Nimrod and his leading role in the construction of the tower of Babel previously in the Satanic Rebellion series (and the reader is encouraged to read the detailed discussion given there).⁽⁴⁾ In some respects, Nimrod represents the beginning of a trend for which antichrist furnishes the termination. For Nimrod was the first person to attempt (and the only person besides antichrist to actually achieve) the political unification of the world for nefarious purposes. In each case, that of Nimrod and of antichrist both, the power behind the political movement by which they accomplish international unification is Satan. And in each case, the hidden purpose behind the unification is diabolical in the extreme, namely, the eradication from the earth of faith and of the faithful. Both men place at the center of their political and social reforms a religious core that is exclusive in respect of any genuine worship of God. Nimrod's ziggurat and antichrist's "abomination of desolation" both serve the same essential purpose of forcing universal worship of Satan while at the same time preventing any overt expression of faith in the one true God. Universalization, homogenization, and degradation of national, legal, economic, and social barriers are key planks in the agendas of both men, for these steps serve to remove the divinely provided bulwarks of resistance that have at other times prevented such total assaults on true faith and practice.

Though we know less than we should like about Nimrod, we can say from scripture that he was an extremely effective organizer, and a man of unprecedented charisma (indeed, he is said to have been a "mighty man at capturing men [and turning them] against God": Gen.10:9). To such a degree was this the case that he was able to enlist the entire population of the earth of his day into his satanic enterprise of building both Babylon (the city which comes to symbolize antichrist's kingdom as well), and the tower of Babel (a unifying religious symbol that serves as a powerful metaphor for the beast's anti-Christian religion). That this plan was most definitely anti-God in both design and effect was made clear enough in his appeals as the meaning of the nickname Nimrod clearly attests (i.e., "let us revolt"; cf. Ps.2:1-3). In a similar way, antichrist will oppose God in an unmistakable and overt way, for he will portray himself as actually being God (2Thes.2:4; cf. Dan.11:36-37).

Although there were doubtless a few individuals in Nimrod's day who did not in fact "bow the knee to Baal", the biblical chronicle of events suggests that they were few and far between. The social and political structures of that time all came around to allegiance with Nimrod and his diabolical vision. So too will it be with antichrist and his political operations during the Tribulation. One important thing to glean from Nimrod's prophetic type, therefore, is that we contemporary Christians should take pains not to underestimate the persuasiveness of antichrist, or the effectiveness of his appeal, or the near totality of his coming successes. For as a prophetic type of antichrist, we must understand that Nimrod's experiences are to be taken as roughly analogous to those of antichrist. This is both a minatory and monitory fact that speaks not only to the magnitude of antichrist's future power, but also to the shocking alacrity with which the

world of that time will turn to follow him. Believers, therefore, need to be doubly on guard, and prepare themselves diligently against that day when seemingly the whole world will be swept along after him. For the events and circumstances of those times will be more electric and seductive than we can easily imagine before the fact, and only those who are solidly and resolutely committed to their Lord can have any hope of escaping the tremendous pull that antichrist and his messianic movement will exert (just as in the case of Nimrod when very few managed to do so).

As we pointed out in our earlier study of Nimrod, the building of Babylon (a political-economic undertaking) was the main satanic objective and the tower of Babel (a social-religious icon) the rallying point to enlist support for that objective. Similarly, antichrist will have both a political-economic objective (i.e., world political and economic domination), and make heavy use of a unique socio-religious strategy to advance that objective. Just as Nimrod's appeal was to build the tower so as to preserve "the name" and unity of humanity, so we may expect the satanic religion of antichrist to preach a doctrine of extreme "humanism", and to furnish putative moral grounds for an internationalist, messianic crusade that promises the ideals of social and religious unity (based upon the prior imposition of political and economic homogeneity imposed from above). As with all "purity" movements of this sort, divergence beyond the parameters set by the movement will not be tolerated, and in this we see the true satanic purpose behind all such internationalism: the eradication of "alternative points of view", namely, of true faith and of the truly faithful.

Nimrod's scheme began as a grass-roots mass movement, and we have every reason to believe that such will be antichrist's method as well. In a troubled world, a charismatic leader calling for a new age of religious tolerance, social justice, economic reform, and political enfranchisement will again prove to be a successful formula, both because of the attractiveness of the leader proposing it, and because of the unique, radical, and comprehensive nature of the changes being proposed. To put the matter in twentieth century terms, antichrist will exude charisma and leadership beyond anything seen in the most successful fascist leaders, while his political and religious formulations will prove exciting and astounding even to skeptical intellectuals. And the dark genius of both his personal appeal and of his doctrines will be that these will yet be inclusive of all but the established elites (whom he desires to replace) and those determined to remain loyal to principles of either natural or biblical divine truth (i.e., believers along with unbelievers who are not deceived by the essential wrongness of his utopian rhetoric – both of which groups antichrist will be intent on destroying). Aimed at circumventing the existing power structures (at least its initial stages) and content to ignore that small element which will maintain its allegiance to the truth, antichrist's movement too will begin as grass-roots mass movement, until, as it gathers momentum, it begins to coopt institutions and organizations en masse (just as Nimrod had done).

For many who will be caught up in the enthusiasm of this movement, the higher purpose of antichrist's socio-religious "crusade" will be the bait which draws them in. But just as Nimrod used the tower of Babel to draw in supporters for his plans of world unification, so also after these victims of antichrist have been hooked the switch will come, and it will then be an easy matter to convince them that political and economic domination

must first be achieved before social justice and religious enlightenment can be imposed. In this way, antichrist will, like Nimrod before him, enlist the bulk of the earth's population into his satanic movement.

b. Pharaoh (Exodus chapters 2-14): In many respects, the experience of the children of Israel in escaping from Egypt and Pharaoh forms a close parallel to the future experiences of believers who will pass through the Tribulation, with antichrist in the role of Pharaoh, and the journey out of Egypt into the "promised land" being analogous to all the trials and troubles that will befall believers during those most difficult seven years. We will have occasion to explore this deliberate scriptural analogy from the point of view of the believer in part 7 of the present series. What most concerns us here, however, is the prophetic type of antichrist furnished by the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

First, Pharaoh had no regard or respect for the Lord or the Lord's people (facts obvious from his behavior, and also adumbrated by the observation about his predecessor at Ex.1:8 who "did not know [i.e., take any account of] Joseph"). The lawlessness of that previous Pharaoh (seen most perspicuously in his plan to destroy the Hebrew children: Ex.1:15-22) is a trend that clearly continues with the Pharaoh of the Exodus as can be seen from the "groaning" of the Israelites which reaches God's ears (Ex.2:23-25). Complete lack of concern for law, human or divine, will as we have seen also characterize antichrist, the "man of lawlessness" (2Thes.2:3).⁽⁵⁾ This total disregard for God and the people of God is made abundantly clear in all of Pharaoh's dealings with Moses and Aaron, and the conflict between arrogant human will and the will of God as mediated by his earthly representatives will be closely paralleled by antichrist's opposition to the two witnesses, Moses and Elijah (compare also Pharaoh's court magicians and their pseudo-miracles with the deceptive signs of antichrist's false prophet: Rev.13:11-17).

One of the most striking parallels between antichrist and his type, Pharaoh, is the similarity they evince in their persecution of God's people. Pharaoh's response to the insistent divine demand to "let My people go!", was, of course, the famous command to make bricks without straw. This oppressive economic burden placed upon the shoulders of God's children forms a close parallel to the tribulational dictum of antichrist that no one who refuses to take his mark be allowed to buy or sell (Rev.13:16-17). Pharaoh's later attempt to slaughter the Israelites at the Red Sea likewise marks an escalation of his persecution that is analogous to the Great Persecution to come wherein many believers will be martyred for their Lord.⁽⁶⁾ And finally in this vein, God's severe plagues upon Egypt in response to the persecution of His children are clearly paralleled by the final round of tribulational judgments upon the world and upon antichrist and his kingdom in particular, namely, "the seven bowls of God's wrath" (Rev.16:1-21).

In terms of character and personality, Pharaoh likewise forms an instructive type of antichrist. His duplicity in dealing with Moses and Aaron is well-known, and this is a characteristic of the beast's personality as well (cf. Dan.8:23). Even more to the point in respect to his similarity to antichrist is the exceptional hardness of heart he exhibited in the face of a series of awesome demonstrations of divine power at the hands of Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh's stubborn resistance to God was, in fact, only possible because of a

special dispensation from God which allowed him to harden his heart beyond normal human limits (Ex.4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10; 14:4; 14:8; 14:17).⁽⁷⁾ God's purpose in granting Pharaoh such extraordinary blindness was to demonstrate His own glory in the face of the most extreme resistance from the most powerful human being on earth at that time (Ex.9:16; cf. Ex.14:4; 14:17; Ps.106:8; Rom.9:17). Antichrist too will boast against God and defy God to an extraordinary degree (Dan.7:8; 7:20; 7:25; 8:25; 11:36-37; 2Thes.2:4; Rev.13:5-6; 16:14; 17:13-14; 19:19), and God will gain all the more glory through His complete victory over the beast at Christ's return. Finally, we also see many similarities in the destruction of Pharaoh and antichrist. Both lead a pursuit against the Israelites in which they are intent upon their annihilation (Ex.15:9 with Dan.11:44). Both are prevented from their objective by a unique darkness that precedes the critical engagement (Ex.14:20 with Zech.14:6-7). In both cases the Israelites are delivered through an extraordinary miracle (Ex.14:21-25 with Zech.14:4-5). And the armies of both Pharaoh and antichrist are subsequently trapped by God and totally destroyed along with their blasphemous commanders (Ex.14:26-31 and Ps.136:15 with Is.29:5-8 and Rev.19:19-21).

c. The King of Assyria (Isaiah chapters 7-39): Assyria was "the Lord's rod" (Is.10:5) with which He executed His terminal judgment upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel and "the waters rising up to the neck" with which He accomplished His severe warning judgment upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Is.8:6-8). It is in the Assyrian invasion of Judah that one sees a particularly close correspondence with antichrist's later invasion. Indeed, as we saw in part one of this series, much of the first half of Isaiah is deliberately constructed with reference to the "Day of the Lord paradigm".⁽⁸⁾ That is to say, Isaiah explains and expands his prediction of the Assyrian invasion by comparing it to antichrist's later invasion. Assyria and her king are clear types of the beast, of his kingdom, and of his armed forces, which invade the land of Israel and meet with equally miraculous disasters at the hands of God (Is.37:36-38 with Rev.19:19-21). In the process, both Sennacherib (through his minister Rabshakeh: Is.36:4-10; 2Kng.18:19-25; 2Chron.32:9-16) and the beast (Dan.7:8; 7:20; 7:25; 8:25; 11:36) speak unheard of things against the Lord, and it may well be that the threefold repetition in scripture of the arrogant word's of Sennacherib's representative is meant to emphasize the temerity of such hybriatic conduct towards the Lord God. Indeed, this tendency to not only be arrogant in the extreme but to express it verbally in extreme ways was a notable characteristic of Assyria and of her king (cf. Is.10:12-19), and will be a salient feature of antichrist and his regime as well (2Thes.2:4; Rev.13:5-6; 16:14; cf. Dan.11:36-37). Moreover, the statement in Nahum 1:11, "from you [Nineveh-Assyria] one has come forth who conceives evil against the Lord, a counselor of wickedness" is a prophetic one that also deliberately compares the contemporary king of Assyria with the coming antichrist (a use of the so-called "prophetic perfect" tense in the Hebrew text): Assyria's attempt to utterly destroy Judah when the Lord's will was only that she be chastened (Is.10:7) forms a direct parallel to antichrist's future attempts to annihilate the Jewish state and the Jewish people contrary to the expressed will of God (Is.29:1-8; Ezek.38:10-11; Dan.11:44; Zech.14:2; Rev.12:1-17). We can also see in the progress of the Assyrian empire similarities with the empire of the beast who likewise will conduct military campaigns against the southern powers (led by Egypt in both cases) and will similarly

defeat his opposition in an unexpected and dramatic way. Isaiah chapter nineteen is therefore prophetic both in the near and in the far term, with the prophecy of verse four, that the Lord will hand Egypt over to a "cruel master" and a "fierce king" being both reminiscent of Assyrian rule and similar to the other prophecies about antichrist's regime (cf. esp. Dan.11:25-45). Finally, the encouragement given to the citizens of Judah to persevere until the Lord removes the Assyrian threat is deliberately and perfectly appropriate for the Jewish believers who will be awaiting our Lord's advent (Is.35:3-4; cf. Is.25:9; 2Chron.32:7-8), when the Messiah returns to dispose of antichrist and his armies in a manner similar to the destruction of the hordes of Sennacherib (Is.37:36-38 with Rev.19:19-21; cf. Is.30:27-33).

d. The King of Babylon (Is.14:4-23; cf. Jer.25:9-32): In Isaiah and elsewhere in scripture, Babylon represents both a contemporary power and *the* future diabolical power, the home kingdom of the beast. The king of Babylon, moreover, is frequently acknowledged by interpreters to be a type of Satan, but what is less widely recognized is that this king is also a type of antichrist. This double typology should not be difficult to accept when one recalls the significant similarities between the devil and his seed, antichrist. For Satan and the beast represent the height of opposition to God in their respective species, angelic and human, and both lead rebellions against Him and His universal order, in heaven and on earth respectively. When we add to this the fact that antichrist is literally the devil's own seed (Gen.3:15; see below, section II.1), and will carry out Satan's will on earth, the appropriateness of the two-fold typology here is immediately evident. Antichrist is the "son of Satan" and a deliberate counterfeit of the Son of God. It should not be surprising therefore that there are instances where prophetic typology applies equally to both as it does on occasion for the Son of God and our heavenly Father (see, for example, Is.6:1-13 compared with Jn.12:39-41), the very relationship the devil is seeking to superficially mimic and exploit (2Thes.2:4; Rev.13:3-7; cf. Dan.11:36-37).

e. Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan.8:23-26; 11:21-36): Perhaps the most important and certainly the most detailed typology of antichrist occurs in the book of Daniel where we find the king of the Seleucid empire, Antiochus Epiphanes, used as extensive type for the beast.⁽⁹⁾ While we shall have much to say about these two chapters below, it needs to be stressed here that the prophecies about Antiochus definitely do apply to antichrist as well, so that we should see this typology operating in chapter eight as well as chapter eleven, and that typology beginning in chapter eleven with verse twenty-one, and not withheld until verse thirty six (as is often wrongly supposed).⁽¹⁰⁾ In many respects, Antiochus is the perfect model for the future antichrist, for his activities track those of the coming beast more closely than any of the other representatives listed above. Antiochus and antichrist both arise from unexpected and lowly beginnings (cf. Dan.11:21 with Rev.13:1). They are both individuals devoid of scruples or conscience (cf. Dan.11:27 with 11:44). Both are successful military commanders (cf. Antiochus' alternate epithet, *nikephoros*, "victorious", with Dan.11:37). Both come to rule kingdoms which dominate Israel from the north (the Syrian kingdom and antichrist's ten-kingdom empire respectively), and the kingdoms of each are associated on the one hand with Babylon (Antiochus' capital of Seleuceia was near Babylon, and antichrist's home country and original power center is called "Babylon": cf. Rev.18), and, on the other, with Rome

(Antiochus was educated at Rome and copied much in the Roman social and political system, while antichrist's ten-kingdom empire is, in great measure as we shall see below, a revival of Rome). Both have names which express their implacable opposition to the Lord (the *anti* prefix in Antiochus' name is identical to that of antichrist, with his name as a whole meaning "one who holds out against"). Both are responsible for putting an end to the temple rites in Jerusalem (Dan.8:12-13; 9:26-27; 11:31a; 12:11; cf. 1st Macc.1:20-64; 2nd Macc.5:15 - 6:11), and both replace these rituals with rites which honor themselves (Dan.11:31b; 11:36-37; 2Thes.2:4; Rev.13:12; cf. 1st Macc.1:47), and which are in reality devil-worship (Dan.11:31; 12:11; Matt.24:15; Mk.13:14; Rev.13:4; cf. 1Cor.10:18-21). Both represent themselves as divine (compare Antiochus' epithet "Epiphanes", meaning "appearance", that is a divine manifestation or "epiphany", and coins which depict him as Zeus, with Dan.11:36-37; 2Thes.2:4).⁽¹¹⁾ Both oppress the holy people of God to an extraordinary degree (cf. Dan.8:12-13; 8:24; 11:28-35 with Dan.11:44; 12:1; Rev.12), resulting in significant apostasy (cf. Dan.8:12 with 2Thes.2:3) and martyrdom (Dan.11:33-35 with Rev.7:9-17; 12:11; 13:9-10; 14:1-16; 15:2-4). And both kings are highly radical in their methodology, choosing to remake society in every respect after their own images and to fit their own purposes, regardless of the anti-God nature of their reforms (cf. Antiochus' attempted Hellenization of the Jews with antichrist's radical reforms: e.g., Dan.7:25; on this point see section III below). All of this perhaps explains how and why Daniel has so little trouble segueing directly from Antiochus as a type of antichrist to a non-typological, direct prophecy of the beast himself at verse thirty-six of Daniel chapter eleven. The critical thing for the exegesis of this important prophetic chapter, however, is not to omit any of the information it provides about antichrist, including that which comes our way as a result of the Antiochus Epiphanes' typology (i.e., in verses twenty-one through thirty-five).

II. The Origin, Character and Rise of Antichrist

1. The Origin of Antichrist: There are many myths about antichrist, and it is likely, as the end times grow ever nearer and when he finally makes his appearance on the world stage, that these stories and rumors will multiply. Indeed, we know that his deceitful pretensions to being the "Son of God" will be self-advanced, and we may be sure that all reports which augment his personal mystique will be of benefit to him in his rise to world dominance. To be thought of as "super-human" or "miraculously begotten" or even as something "beyond human" is clearly helpful to all leaders of mass political and religious movements, and antichrist's rise will proceed via both of these venues. But though he is an abomination, antichrist is not an alien (there are no "aliens"), nor the first of a new species (there is no "evolution"), nor a resurrected prodigy of the past (only God can resurrect the dead), nor, needless to say, is he in any way divine (though he will claim to be). We can say, however, that antichrist is unique – provided we are allowed to strip that word of all positive connotations.

a. Antichrist's "paternal" origin:

Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And she replied, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate". So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are accursed, more than any beast or wild animal. You shall go on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life. And I shall place hostility between you and the woman, that is, **between your seed and her Seed**. He (i.e., Christ) will attack you head[-on], but you will attack Him from behind" (lit., "His heel").
Genesis 3:13-15

To begin with, we should note that while, on the one hand, the serpent (i.e., the devil) will launch underhanded "attacks" against the woman's Seed who is our Lord, on the other hand it is the **seed** of the serpent rather than the serpent himself who will be hostile to (or "opposed" to = **anti**) the woman's Seed. That is to say, Satan opposed Christ during our Lord's first advent ("attacking His heel"), and Christ will completely defeat the devil at the time of His second advent ("attacking his head"), but the most significant manifestation of the *hostility* referred to here between the serpent and our Lord is said to come in the person of the devil's seed, namely antichrist (through his representation of himself as Christ, his persecution of Israel and of Christ's Church, etc.).⁽¹²⁾

The Seed of the woman, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is a true human being, born in the natural way as all human beings are, but born of a virgin, having been uniquely and divinely conceived (Is.7:14; Matt.1:18; Lk.1:34-35; Jn.1:14; Phil.2:5-8). From any hermeneutic standpoint, therefore, it would be very difficult to justify taking the woman's Seed as literal and biological, and yet at the same time imagine the serpent's seed to be merely metaphorical or symbolic. By any canon of interpretation, if the One is a literal human being, then the other should be as well. This does not, of course, mean that there is an exact equality between the two, and the differences between the Christ and the antichrist could not be more profound or significant. However, the point of similarity which we are addressing here is also important to understand. Just as our Lord's genuinely human body had an extra-human paternal origin, so in an analogous (though far from identical) way, antichrist's paternity and conception will be of other than human origin. Antichrist is in a literal sense the "seed of the serpent", for he is the offspring of Satan (Gen.3:15-16).⁽¹³⁾

To understand how this is possible, we need look no farther than the incident of the Nephilim in Genesis chapter six. It will be remembered from our earlier study of that passage that in the time before the great flood, the cohabitation of fallen angels with human women was a relatively common occurrence, so much so that by the time the flood waters came, Noah and his family represented the only true and completely human seed left on the earth.⁽¹⁴⁾

Now it came to pass that when men began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God (i.e., the fallen angels) noticed the daughters of men, that they were beautiful. So they took wives for themselves from all whom they selected.
Genesis 6:1-2

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days and afterwards as well. For when the sons of God (i.e., the fallen angels) went in to the daughters of men, they bore to them those "mighty-ones" (i.e., the Nephilim) whose names are famous from ancient times.

Genesis 6:4

But Noah had found favor in the Lord's eyes. These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, and perfect in his generations (i.e., of pure human seed). Noah, moreover, made a habit of walking with God. Moreover, Noah was the father of three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Genesis 6:8-10

As a result of their outrageous conduct, the demons involved in this attempt to destroy true humanity were consigned by God to the Abyss (1Pet.3:19-20; 2Pet.2:4-10; Jude 1:5-7). That terrifying prospect seems to have allayed all such behavior since (at least as far as the biblical record is concerned: Lk.8:31; cf. Jude 6; Rev.9:1-11; 9:13-16; 20:1-3; 20:7). In fulfillment of the prophecy of Genesis 3:15, however, Satan will engage in just such an activity in order to spawn the beast, making the antichrist "the seed of the serpent" in a literal sense. As with all anti-god activities, nothing can happen in history without the Lord's approval, and everything that happens ultimately, inevitably and completely works toward the fulfillment of His perfect plan (whether or not mankind chooses to see and accept this fact; cf. Ex.9:16; Prov.16:4; 21:1; Is.25:1; 37:26; 46:8-11; Rom.8:28-30). That this principle is equally true of the devil's fathering of antichrist and of the beast's astounding success in dominating the world is specifically stated by scripture:

And I looked, and behold, [there was] a white horse, and the one sitting on it (i.e., antichrist) had a bow, and a crown was given to him (i.e., **by divine permission**), and he went out conquering and did conquer.

Revelation 6:2

And there was given to [the beast] (i.e., **by divine permission**) a mouth speaking arrogant things and blasphemies, and it was given to him (i.e., **by divine permission**) to do as he wills for forty-two months (i.e., during the Great Tribulation).

Revelation 13:5

And it was given to him (i.e., **by divine permission**) to make war with the saints and to conquer them, and authority was given to him (i.e., **by divine permission**) over every tribe and people and language and nation.

Revelation 13:7

For **God put it into their hearts** (i.e., the beast's subordinate "kings") **to carry out His purpose** and to be of one accord and to give their kingdoms to the beast **until the words of God shall be fulfilled.**

Revelation 17:17

And then the lawless one (i.e., antichrist) will be revealed, [that same one] whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth and destroy when He appears at His [glorious] return – [that same lawless one] whose appearance [will come about] through

Satan's empowerment [and will be] accompanied by every [sort of] false miracle, both signs and portents, and by every [sort of] unrighteous deception [designed] for those who are perishing, [namely those who will believe these lies] because they did not open themselves up to the love for the truth so as to be saved. And for this [very] reason **God is going to send upon them** an empowerment of error so that they may believe the lie in order that they may be condemned, [even all those] who have not believed the truth but have [instead] approved of unrighteousness.

2nd Thessalonians 2:8-12

Thus the Nephilim provide more than a close parallel to antichrist. They were also sired by demon fathers, and became as a result "mighty men" and "famous" (Gen.6:4), possessing on account of their angelic paternity abilities and powers beyond those of normal human beings. Scripture offers us a number of other indications which suggest that the exceptional nature of antichrist can only be fully explained by his satanic paternity:

- Just as the Spirit's restraining ministry had first to be put in abeyance before the great flood which terminated the Nephilim could begin (i.e., at the end of the 120 years of Gen.6:3), so the revelation of antichrist can only occur after a similar abridgment of the Spirit's ministry of restraint (2Thes.2:6-7), one which releases the great cataclysm (or "flood"; cf. Dan.9:26; 11:22 [Hebrew]) of the Tribulation, at the end of which antichrist too will be submerged by divine judgment – in the lake of fire (Rev.19:20). Thus both the Nephilim and antichrist usher in periods of severe judgment upon the earth which are only made possible by removing the Spirit's restraint, and both the Nephilim and antichrist are removed at the end of said judgment by exceptional divine measures (Gen.7:23; Rev.19:20). However, that antichrist's very "revelation" requires the previous removal of divine restraint (something not even the case with the Nephilim) is best explained by his exceptionally unnatural origin.
- The arrogance and pretension of antichrist to divine status and world rule are unprecedented and otherwise difficult to explain (e.g., Is.14:9-23; Dan.11:36; 2Thes.2:4; Rev.13:4).
- The charisma and political successes of antichrist are unprecedented and otherwise difficult to explain (Dan.8:24; 11:23-24; 11:36-39; Rev.13:3-4; 17:17).
- The military skills and successes of antichrist are unprecedented and otherwise difficult to explain (Dan.8:24; 11:36-39).
- The blasphemy and opposition to God to such a great degree on the part of antichrist are unprecedented and otherwise difficult to explain (Dan.7:8; 7:11; 7:20; 7:25; 9:27; 11:36; Rev.13:1-6).
- The religious veneration the beast occasions are unprecedented in both scale and type in our collective human experience, and are otherwise difficult to explain (Dan.9:27; 11:36; Rev.13:4-10; 2Thes.2:4).

- The astounding devastation caused by the beast worldwide are unprecedented in both scale and type in our collective human experience, and are otherwise difficult to explain (Is.14:16-17; Rev.6:1-8; 17:15-18).
- The miraculous signs and wonders performed apart from God in support of antichrist are unprecedented and otherwise difficult to explain (2Thes.2:9-10; Rev.13:13-14).
- The apparent resuscitation of antichrist apart from God is unprecedented and otherwise difficult to explain (Rev.13:3; 13:12; 13:14; 17:11).

Thus, independent of the passages which directly suggest satanic paternity (i.e., Gen.3:15 and 2Thes.2:8-10, on which see immediately below), we have these significant additional indications that antichrist is not entirely human, and that this difference is to be connected to his special relationship with the devil.

And then the lawless one (i.e., antichrist) ***will be revealed***, [that same one] whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth and destroy when He appears at His [glorious] return – [that same lawless one] ***whose appearance [will come about] through Satan's empowerment*** [and will be] accompanied by every [sort of] false miracle, both signs and portents, and by every [sort of] unrighteous deception [designed] for those who are perishing, [namely those who will believe these lies] because they did not open themselves up to the love for the truth so as to be saved.
2nd Thessalonians 2:8-10

Given the testimony of Genesis 3:15 and the additional indications of abnormal origin just treated, we should therefore understand the passage from 2nd Thessalonians quoted immediately above along the same lines. That is to say, the phrase "whose appearance [will come about] through Satan's empowerment" should be taken to mean that it is antichrist's "arrival" on the earth which is first and foremost "empowered" by the devil. The word translated here as "appearance" (or "coming" in KJV, NASB, and NIV), is the Greek *parousia* (παρουσία). This word, familiar to many Christians as the Greek equivalent to the Latin derived "advent", is also used for our Lord's second "coming" to the earth (Matt.24:3-39; 1Cor.15:23; 2Pet.1:16; 1Jn.2:28). While no one would wish to deny that 2nd Thessalonians 2:9 also refers to the devil's empowerment of the pseudo-miracles which help to solidify antichrist's false claims of divinity during the Tribulation, the close connection of the word *parousia* with the phrase *kat' energeian tou Satanou*, "through Satan's empowerment", strongly suggests that we should understand these words, taken together, initially and perhaps primarily to be an expansion of the Genesis 3:15 prophecy: antichrist's origin or "coming" is satanically empowered (i.e., he is the devil's "seed"). Furthermore, in addition to having a *parousia*, it is significant that antichrist is also said in this same passage to have an "unveiling", that is, a "revelation" or "apocalypse" ("then the lawless one will be revealed"; also in 2Thes.2:3 and 2:6). But while our Lord has two "comings", the first to free mankind from the power of sin, and the second to free mankind from the power of the devil, antichrist's revelation and single *parousia* go hand in hand, for there is no benefit to mankind in either his coming or his revelation, only severe oppression and persecution, and the tribulation and divine

judgment it occasions. As one who has staked his future on replacing God,⁽¹⁵⁾ it would make sense that the devil would wish to have a "pseudo-virgin birth" for his own "pseudo-Messiah" whom he is planning to foist upon the earth. If the devil were to have any literal offspring (or "seed"), it thus stands to reason that antichrist would be it.

In the symbolism used in Revelation for the coming of the beast onto the historical stage, moreover, we also find indications of an unearthly origin. In verse one of chapter thirteen, antichrist is said to rise from the sea, and this symbolism is significant. In biblical typology, the sea is usually representative of evil and God's judgment upon it. God judged the original earth by covering it with a world-encompassing sea (compare Gen.1:1 with 1:2; cf. Is.45:18; 2Pet.3:5-6), destroyed the Nephilim with the world-wide flood (Gen.7:22-23; cf. 1Pet.3:19-20; 2Pet.2:4-6; Jude 1:6-7), and annihilated Pharaoh and his army by bringing the sea back upon them (Ex.14:26-28). In regard to these three examples, inasmuch as the original earth was destroyed through water because of Satan's rebellion (and anti-God genetic experiments reminiscent of antichrist's spawning), and inasmuch as the Nephilim were destroyed through water because of their half-angelic nature and the threat they posed to true humanity, and inasmuch as Pharaoh is, as we have seen, a type of the devil's seed, antichrist (as seen most perspicuously in his attempts to destroy the people of God), it can be no accident that, when Revelation describes the beast's first appearance on the historical stage, it is from *the sea* that he rises. The confluence of symbolism detailed above certainly points to this "rising from the sea" as a further indication of antichrist's non-human paternity. This impression is strengthened by the fact that the sea is also the allegorical home of satanically symbolic creatures such as Leviathan (Job 3:8, 41:1-34; Ps.74:12-14; Is.27:1), Rahab (Job 9:13, 26:12-13; Ps.87:4; 89:9-10; Is.30:7, 51:9-10), and the Serpent (Amos 9:3; cf. Is.27:1), so that, in addition to connecting antichrist to past improper angelic interferences into the human realm, this rising from the sea also paints a symbolic picture of antichrist coming up from the place of his father, the devil. Finally, as the location of the abyss (a part of Hades), the sea also is the present abode of some of Satan's most notorious incarcerated followers (indeed – the very ones who produced the Nephilim: 1Pet.3:19-20; 2Pet.2:4-6; Jude 1:6-7; cf. Rev.9:1-11), the future temporary prison of Satan (Rev.20:1-3), and is analogous to the ultimate home of the devil and all fallen angels (i.e., it is called the **lake** of fire for a reason: Matt.25:41; Rev.20:10).

In addition to explaining his exceptional nature, antichrist's satanic paternity also accounts for the fact that he is more closely linked to the devil than any other individual in scripture. Revelation 13:1-2, for example, which depicts antichrist being summoned by Satan from the sea, provides a clear symbolic picture of antichrist's origin, rise, and later apparent resuscitation being intimately linked with and entirely dependent upon the power and will of the devil, with the sea representing the demonic realm, Satan's cosmos, and death-Hades respectively (see 2Thes.2:9; Dan.11:36-39; Rev.13:3-4, where the respective connections are made),⁽¹⁶⁾ and the importance of the symbolism of a fire-red, seven-headed, ten horned dragon summoning up a scarlet, seven-headed, ten-horned beast should not be underestimated as a factor in closely connecting these two (Rev.12:3 with Rev.13:1 and 17:3). Secondly, it should be pointed out that the beast gains world rulership by accepting it from the Satan's hands (Rev.13:2), the very offer refused by our Lord during His temptation (Matt.4:8-10; Lk.4:5-8), and, as far as scripture is

concerned, only the second time this offer has ever been made by the devil (here again we see the direct opposition between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent). Thirdly, the fact that antichrist will be celebrated and worshiped by the world to a degree unprecedented in human history is also closely tied by scripture to the worship of the devil (Dan.11:36-39; Rev.13:3-4), and not only does the beast have no problem with worshipping Satan, he will attempt to force the entire world to do so as well (through the agency of the false prophet: Rev.13:16-17 compared with Rev.13:12). Fourthly, along with the devil and the false prophet, antichrist receives "special treatment" at the Second Advent, being deposited directly into the lake of fire (Rev.19:20; 20:1-3). These unique associations with Satan are further evidence to support the hypothesis being advanced here that the beast really is "the devil's seed" (Gen.3:15).

Moreover, it is likely that antichrist is even now already alive (based upon our previous calculation for the time of the commencement of the Tribulation).⁽¹⁷⁾ At the point of writing, he would almost have to be. Although he is half-angelic, his body, despite its exceptional capabilities, is still material, just as were those of the Nephilim, all of whom perished during the great flood (cf. Gen.7:23). Given his rapid rise to power, his astounding and energetic military feats, and the fact that he comes swiftly to notoriety, seemingly out of nowhere (cf. Dan.7:8; 8:9-12; 11:21-24; 2Thes.2:5-12; Rev.13:1-4), it seems more than reasonable to suppose that antichrist will still be fairly young when the Tribulation begins. As was apparently the case of the Nephilim (born to human mothers: Gen.6:4), antichrist will have had a "natural birth". While we have no indication of a particular birth date from scripture, an approximate target date of circa the turn of the millennium has the virtue of being consistent with antichrist's "prodigy" status at the time of his rise (ca. 2026), while at the same time linking his birth to a date which the world will deem significant (i.e., ca. 2000). This later point is of no small moment, since the beast, as we have shown in some detail, will make the claim that he actually is the Messiah. As such, the world will be impressed by a date of birth that is both coincident with the beginning of the new millennium and putatively marks two thousand years since the first advent. The question of when the millennium genuinely began (i.e., 2000 or 2001) is entirely mute in this regard since 1) the most likely date for our Lord's birth is December of 2 B.C., and 2) the significant point for dating the return of the Messiah is His crucifixion and resurrection, not His birth.⁽¹⁸⁾

Finally, it cannot be stressed strongly enough that it is indeed important for Christians to grasp and accept these facts about the abnormal birth of antichrist. For the beast will be so charismatic, so successful in all that he undertakes, and so like unto the Christ (in all the superficial ways which impress the world), that he will indeed be taken to actually **be** the Christ by the majority of the world's inhabitants, including many weak and former believers (Matt.24:23-28; Mk.13:21-23; cf. Dan.11:36-37; 2Thes.2:4; 1Jn.2:22; 2Jn.1:7). This is not as unexpected and bizarre as it may sound to us now, still sufficiently removed from these events so as to be temporarily insulated from them: antichrist will be **so** unusual in so many impressive ways that it will be logical to conclude that he is no ordinary human being – and that will indeed be the case. However, those who fail to understand or accept his diabolical origin will thus run the

risk of falsely attributing his unprecedented uniqueness to divinity instead of to the devil.

b. Antichrist's maternal origin: Having discussed the beast's paternal origin above, we can say nothing more about his mother than that she traces her genetic line back to Israel. This fact in and of itself is significant. Although it may perhaps seem surprising to some, the person who will institute the most far reaching persecution of Israel in human history (more so than that of Pharaoh, or of Haman, or even of Hitler) will himself be partially of Jewish stock. For the one thing we can say about the origin of antichrist's human half is that he is born of a mother of Jewish extraction. The carefulness of this language is necessary because, in biblical terms, to be truly "of Israel" requires a person not only to be of the blood of Abraham but also to be of the faith of Abraham (Rom.9:8; cf. Rom.4:16). Israel's most violent and vehement opponent can therefore certainly not fit into this category. It seems banal in the extreme to point out (but at the same time perhaps necessary) that neither the scriptures which teach this principle nor the explanation of it given here can in any logical way be used to support any sort of anti-Semitic agenda. Rather it is antichrist who will be the most extreme anti-Semite in history. He will persecute Israel as never before, attempting to destroy her entirely at the behest of his father the devil. And it is antichrist who will impersonate, attempt to supplant, and in the final hour oppose with all his might the true King of the Jews at His return, the genuine Messiah, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To begin with, it is difficult to see how the beast could possibly be classified as an anti-*Christ* (or at least be believable as one) were he lacking such an essential qualification of Messiah-hood as being born of a Jewish mother (for even today this is the essential test of "Jewishness" used by the state of Israel). Regardless of spiritual status, religious affiliation, or national origin, everyone is well aware that the Messiah comes from Israel and, in particular, from the line of Judah (Gen.49:8-12; Mic.5:2; cf. Num.24:17; Matt.2:2b). Any pretender to the Messiah-ship would have to be able to establish such a Jewish origin even to be granted an initial hearing, and we may certainly assume from the great success of the beast and from his description as anti-*Christ* that he will be able to do just that.

Secondly, the close relationship which the beast fosters with Israel during the first half of the Tribulation is also difficult to fathom apart from some sort of natural bond, one that is best explained by his Jewish origin (i.e., he is the "prince of the covenant": Dan.9:27; cf. Num.24:24; Dan.11:22b). The last two verses cited here are often entirely misunderstood, and, as a result, also frequently the victims of poor translation (KJV on Dan.11:22b is the closest to the truth). Taken together (in concert with Dan.9:27) they contain compelling evidence for the antichrist's Jewish antecedents. We will have much to say about these verses below, but suffice it say here that the Hebrew text in both instances contains a prophetic reference to the beast: *ve-gam hu`* in the first passage and *ve-gam naghidh berith* in the second, meaning, respectively, "and this indeed is the one (i.e., antichrist)" and "and this indeed is the prince of the covenant (of Dan.9:27, i.e., antichrist)". Antichrist's special status as the putative "Messiah" will serve him well in all his actions relative to Israel, for he will initially be seen as her "savior".

He (i.e., the little horn, antichrist) even magnified himself against the Prince of the host (i.e., Christ).

Daniel 8:11a

Thirdly, Daniel 11:37-38 twice mentions "the God of his fathers" in reference to antichrist. Since in biblical terms the "fathers" represent exclusively the patriarchs of Israel (e.g., 2Chron.20:33; cf. Rom.9:5: "of whom [i.e., Israel] are the fathers"), this attribution of the true God as the ancestral God of antichrist (spurned by him, of course, since he is said to have "no regard" for this God), must mean that antichrist is of Jewish ancestry (an impression strengthened in Dan.11:39 where we are told that antichrist will instead honor "a foreign [i.e., non-Israelite] god", a remarkable thing only if this ultimate "king of the north" is Jewish).

Finally, there are indications from scripture that antichrist arises from the tribe of Dan, and that we should therefore understand his maternal origin to be Jewish as a result, and specifically from that tribe. First, Dan is the one tribe not mentioned in the list of the twelve tribes from whom the 144,000 Jewish witnesses are called (Rev.7:5-8). This omission is striking. Levi, often excluded in lists of this sort, is included instead, with Manasseh and Ephraim (called Joseph in v.8 because of the effective primacy of Ephraim: Gen.48:12-20) counted as individual tribes. Beyond all argument, there has to be a reason for the divine omission of one of the tribes from this list, and the descent from Dan of the one who will trouble Israel as never before would certainly account for that tribes' lack of representation among the witnesses who will ultimately be martyred by antichrist. The fact that Judah, the tribe of the coming Messiah who will destroy antichrist is (uncommonly) first in this list, strengthens this argument. The other major prophetic passages dealing with Dan likewise confirm this tribe's association with the beast:

Dan [in the person of antichrist] will judge his people *as if he were* [of] one of the tribes of Israel. [But] Dan (i.e., antichrist) will be *a serpent* beside the road, *a viper* beside the path, one who strikes at a horse's heels, so that its rider falls [off] backwards. I wait [in hope] for your deliverance, O Lord!

Genesis 49:16-18

The identification here of Dan as a serpent (always prophetically associated with the devil) needs little elaboration and should not be underestimated, coming as it does in this first, critical prophecy about the future of that tribe. In terms of the translation given above, it should be remarked that the Hebrew particle *ce*, invariably comparative in meaning, should rightfully be translated as is it here, namely, "as if", for this word never bears the meaning "in the capacity of" (although this is the interpretation implied by translating it, as many versions do, with the word "as" alone). This distinction is very important, because the natural Hebrew translation given above clearly distinguishes between Dan and true Israel, whereas the often found incorrect translation implies that there is no question of Dan's legitimacy being raised here, exactly the opposite of what the passage actually states. Now since Dan as a tribe *is* truly and legitimately one of the twelve, we are right to conclude that this prophecy is focusing in upon *one prominent Danite* in particular, namely, antichrist. Just as Dan is left off of the list of tribes who

supply the 144,000, so in this prophecy of the end times the tribe of Dan is (temporarily) considered as if it were illegitimate because of its association with antichrist, an unbeliever if ever there was one and so definitely not a part of Abraham's "promised seed" (Rom.4).

The principle of a group standing prophetically for a single prominent individual within the group (and vice versa) is well attested in scripture (most germane here is the fact that the figure of the beast can stand for either antichrist or his empire: cf. Dan.7:17-19; Rev.17:9-17). Further, the reader actually anticipates such a usage in this case inasmuch as this verse is talking about the overall rulership of Israel (something that must ultimately fall into the hands of a single person). In this respect it is also important to note that earlier in chapter forty-nine we find the same usage of a tribe standing for a single prominent individual also in the case of Judah, where "the scepter [of rulership]" clearly refers and is looking forward to the ultimate Good Ruler, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah (Gen.49:8-12). Joseph had begun his prophecy by telling his family that he was about to explain what would happen "at the end of days" (a common phrase referring to the end times and specifically to the Tribulation as we have seen).⁽¹⁹⁾ Thus we have here in Joseph's prophecy a clear and deliberate juxtaposition between these two diametrically opposed future rulers of Israel, the Lion of **Judah**, our Savior (cf. Gen.49:8), and the serpent's seed, the viper antichrist, coming from the tribe of **Dan**.

To return briefly to the symbolism of the serpent representing Satan (and therefore also antichrist, who mimics his father's methodology), the reference in Genesis 49:16-18 to the viper "striking at the heels" of the horse so as to unseat the hapless rider is more than a little reminiscent of the serpent of Genesis 3:15 who similarly strikes at the heel of the woman's Seed, the Messiah. Indeed, the unusual Hebrew word for viper used here, *shiphphon* (שפִּיפּוֹן), is so similar in its root to the unusual word used for "attacking" or "striking" in Genesis 3:15, *shuph* ([vw), that we are clearly supposed to draw this connection, making it all the more certain that our present passage is likewise meant to be taken as a prophecy of the false Messiah who will oppose the people of God.⁽²⁰⁾ Just as Satan opposed Christ, so the devil's antichrist will oppose the true sons of God. Like a snake, antichrist will deceive and stealthily attack Israel and all true believers. The fact that the rider in this prophecy falls off "backwards" seems clearly symbolic of apostasy, and, indeed, we have already seen how those in Israel who refuse to heed the ministries of Moses and Elijah and the 144,000, will be easy prey for antichrist as he leads them astray from the "right road". Importantly here too, the deliverance, or "salvation" for which Joseph emphatically prays on behalf of all of his descendants destined to experience that bitter time to come, most certainly casts the activities of the serpent in the previous verses as something that will require a specific divine deliverance of some magnitude. The Hebrew word used here for deliverance (or "salvation"), *yeshu'a*, יְשׁוּעָה, is the one commonly used for just such extraordinary rescues by the Hand of God (e.g., from Pharaoh and Egypt, types of the beast and his kingdom: cf. Ex.15:2), and is also the word from which the name Jesus is derived (through whom we have our ultimate "deliverance" and salvation). The ultimate deliverance in this context will come when Jesus Himself, the Deliverer, returns to destroy the beast and his kingdom and to save His people from antichrist's hand.

We see this same essential meaning and connection of the tribe of Dan with antichrist in the other major prophecy of the twelve tribes, the blessing of Moses:

And of Dan he said, "Dan is a lion's whelp. He will spring forth out of Bashan".
Deuteronomy 33:22

Bashan was a region north of Israel across the Jordan, and its scriptural connotations are hardly positive. It was the home of the Rephaim (Deut.3:11; cf. Gen.14:5), a race of super-tall men who call to mind the Nephilim (and antichrist is essentially one of this latter type through his satanic paternity as we have seen). The "bulls of Bashan" symbolize the assaults of the devil against our Lord Jesus Christ (Ps.22:12), and the "cows of Bashan" typify the materialistic apostasy of the women of the northern kingdom during the reign of Jereboam (Amos 4:1), both of which images relate directly to a satanic and anti-spiritual connection. Bashan is also associated with Tyre (Ezek.27:6), with the sea (Ps.68:22), and with the slaughter of the armies of antichrist at Armageddon (Ezek.39:17-20), associations which remind us respectively of antichrist's home country (Tyre-Babylon), his satanic origins (the Abyss), and his ultimate end (at the hands of Messiah at the Second Advent). Thus from the composite negative picture of Bashan given by scripture, from the start of this prophecy the reader expects a likewise negative development on account of Dan's "springing forth" from that locale. Such is indeed the case, for, like Bashan, eschatological Babylon is north of Israel (cf. Is.2:13), and it is from the north that antichrist will "spring forth" against Israel when he abrogates his treaty with her in the middle of the Tribulation (Dan.9:27). The portrayal here of Dan "pouncing" with the hostile intent of a young lion from a place north of Israel towards some sort of "prey" is, in the absence of any other stated object, best taken to mean that Israel herself is the target. And, again, since the tribe of Dan never individually attacked the rest of the nation of Israel, and since the verb here is in a future construction, we are left to conclude that this "blessing" upon Dan by Moses is along the lines of the "blessing" which Isaac pronounced upon Esau, that is, a historically accurate prophecy about future progeny which is in its particulars no particular blessing (Gen.27:37-40), but rather, in this case, a further prophecy of antichrist's future assault upon his own kindred (reinforcing Joseph's earlier prophecy of Gen.49:16-18).

Finally, the Hebrew phrasing used here of Dan, "lion's whelp", is identical to that used of Judah in Genesis 49:9. In that earlier prophetic passage about Judah, the lion's whelp is, as we have pointed out already, a clear symbol of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah (cf. Rev.5:5). The characterization of Dan in Deuteronomy 33:22 as a lion, one found nowhere else in scripture, is hardly accidental. Given that this lion has a hostile intent towards his own kith and kin, we are right to see in this symbolism not only a prophecy of antichrist which ascribes his (maternal) origins to the tribe of Dan, but also another clear indication of the deliberate mimicry of the Messiah which will constitute a large part of antichrist's modus operandi (i.e., the beast "has a mouth like a lion", meaning, among other things, that he will claim to be the Messiah: Rev.13:2).⁽²¹⁾

The association of Dan with antichrist in these two critically important prophecies about the futures of the twelve tribes (from Joseph and Moses respectively) is in keeping with numerous other negative references to Dan in scripture, many of which have prophetic implications:

The coming of the Babylonian invasion from the north is a prophetic type of the invasion of antichrist, the king of eschatological Babylon, who likewise will come from the north against Israel. And this invasion is associated with Dan several times in the book of Jeremiah:

A lion (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar as a type of antichrist; see section I.3.d above) has come forth from his lair, and has set out to destroy the nations (cf. Jer.25:32-38; esp. v.38). He has set out from his place to devastate your (i.e., Israel's) land. He will lay waste to your cities until they have no inhabitants. For a voice is proclaiming **from Dan**, and announcing trouble from mount Ephraim. Make it known to the nations. Behold, proclaim it against Jerusalem. Blockaders are coming from a land far away, and they will lift their voices against the cities of Judah.
Jeremiah 4:7 and 4:15-16

In chapter eight, Jeremiah's picture of Nebuchadnezzar's attack is highly reminiscent of Ezekiel's description of Gog's (i.e., antichrist's) future invasion of Israel, as his mounted hordes swarm across the land, and the connection of Dan to the snake again surfaces in that context:⁽²²⁾

From Dan is heard the snorting of his horses; the whole earth shakes from the neighing of his mighty steeds (cf. Ezek.38:4). For they have come and are devouring the land and its fullness, the cities along with their inhabitants. For behold, I am going to send them upon you [as] **serpents**, [and as] **vipers**, which cannot be charmed. And they will bite you, says the Lord.
Jeremiah 8:16-17

Dan is associated more closely with idolatry and apostasy than any other tribe (Judg.18:30-31; 1Kng.12:28-30; Amos 8:14; cf. Lev.24:11: the half-Israelite Danite of a Jewish mother who blasphemes the Lord). While the other tribes occupied their allotted territories within the land, the tribe of Dan (at least in part) abandoned their assigned habitation, moving instead to the far north, and becoming more deeply ensnared in anti-God practices as a result (Judg.18). In the marching order of Israel, Dan was the lead tribe of the group of three who encamped "on the north", the place most closely associated with Satan and antichrist (cf. Is.14:13 and Dan.11), and was positioned directly opposite the lead tribe of the eastern group, Judah (thus scripture places in direct geographic opposition the tribe of the Messiah and the tribe of antichrist: Num.2:3; 2:25). And along with the tribe of his brother, Naphtali, Dan belongs to the group of tribes who utter the curses of Mt. Ebal instead of the blessings from Mt. Gerizim (Deut.27:13).

Dan's gemstone (on the high priest's breastplate: Ex.28:20) is the chrysolite (i.e., "gold stone"; cf. SS.5:14; Ezek.10:9), or, in Hebrew, the *tarshish*, a name that calls to mind the ships of Tarshish and their commercialism (cf. Judg.5:17), both of which have a

decidedly Phoenician connection (1Kng.10:22; 2Chron.9:21; Is.60:9; Jer.10:9; Ezek.38:13; cf. Ezek.28 where the king of Phoenician Tyre is symbolically both Satan and antichrist). Thus in its essential symbolism within the group of the twelve, Dan's gemstone has a decidedly worldly and materialistic association (contrast this to the red sardius of the tribe of Judah which calls to mind the symbolic blood of sacrifice that would be poured out by our Savior for the sins of the world). Dan was the first of Jacob's sons from a non-wife, whose mother Bilhah was Rachel's maidservant (Gen.30:3-4), and it was Bilhah with whom Reuben slept, occasioning the loss of his birthright (Gen.35:22; cf. 1Chron.5:1). The first person to suffer capital punishment under the Law of Moses – for blaspheming God – was a Danite (Lev.24:11).

Finally, there are indications from scripture that Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed our Lord, was of the tribe of Dan. Along with Dan, Judas is also "one of the twelve", and like Dan, Judas is ultimately left off the list of the twelve (being replaced in his case by the apostle Paul). The most likely etymology for Judas' surname, Iscariot, is "man of Karioth". Now there was in Judah a town by the name Kiriath-Jearim. The book of Joshua also identifies this place as "Kiriath-Baal", "city of Baal", the pagan god of the Canaanites (Josh.15:60). According to Judges 18:12, the Danites who migrated north camped just to the west of Kiriath-Jearim, and "this is why the place west of Kiriath-Jearim is called Machaneh-**Dan** to this day". Based on what is known of the Danite allotment (Josh.19:40-46), it is generally concluded that this camp would thus have been within Danite territory, with Kiriath-Jearim, officially a town belonging to Judah, marking the triple boundary between Judah on the east, Dan on the west, and Benjamin on the north. Thus Judges 18:12 not only draws a close connection between Dan and the town of Judas, but also indicates that, in reality, there were *two* localities of note here, Kiriath-Jearim proper, in Judean territory, and Machaneh-Dan ("Dan's Camp"), directly across the border in Danite territory. Given that it was rather common among the generation of the Babylonian captivity to tie their genealogies to the Israelite place-names of their ancestry (cf. Neh.7), the existence of "two Kiraths" is significant in the case of Judas, for the Hebrew plural of Kirath is, indeed, Kiriath. That is to say, the suffix "-cariot" of the full surname "Is-cariot" (Hebrew *ish-karioth*) will then mean "man of the [**two**] Kiriath", and most likely refer to Judas' ancestral home as within the original territory of Dan (otherwise only the main settlement in Judah would need to be mentioned; cf. Neh.7:26-29: "the men of . . . Kiriath-Jearim"). In any case, we see in Judas a parallel to the tribe of Dan during the Tribulation, where the apostasy of one of the select group of twelve (disciples and tribes of Israel respectively) results in the temporary omission of that twelfth place (later replaced respectively by Paul and by Dan restored), a parallel which Judas' Danite connection makes all the more powerful.

This association of Dan with Judas, the betrayer of our Lord, and with antichrist, the one who will falsely represent himself as our Lord, does not invalidate the faith and faithfulness of those from the tribe of Dan who followed our Lord in the past, who are doing so presently, or who will do so in the future. God honors all those who honor Him (1Sam.2:30), and the promises of covenant made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (whose son Dan is), stand firm forever through the power, the faithfulness, and the integrity of God (Rom.11:28-29). And we know from the description of the millennial Jerusalem (Ezek.48:32), and of the distribution of the land of Israel under Messiah's reign

(Ezek.48:2), that Dan will be fully restored to all the rights of a tribe of Israel, despite his past associations and omission from the list of the 144,000.

None of this is to be taken to mean that it will be known to the world that antichrist is from Dan. The genealogical realities of most of Israel's tribal associations are today known only to God, and we are specifically told in scripture to beware of getting side-tracked by "endless genealogies" (1Tim.1:4; cf. Tit.3:9). Moreover, to the extent that antichrist promotes his (maternal) Jewish heritage, it is likely that, as a false Messiah, he would claim to be descended from Judah, and it is more than likely that such a claim would be believed by the unregenerate world (compare the wrong impression Christ's unbelieving contemporaries had of His genealogy because of their false assumption that Galilee was His place of birth: Jn.7:42). In the Danite pattern of apostasy and idolatry, and in Judas' pattern of falsity and betrayal, antichrist will use his Jewish origins and Messianic claims to gain favor with the nation of Israel (cf. Dan.9:27), but, in the end, will be the greatest betrayer of Israel and the greatest persecutor of Israel that the world will ever see. Thus there is no rational brief for antisemitism to be found here on the basis of antichrist's maternal Jewish roots, for he is the one who will attempt to destroy Israel, even as he mimics and opposes Israel's true righteous ruler, the Messiah.

c. Antichrist's national origin: Any attempt to identify antichrist's country of origin and citizenship (as opposed to his genetic ancestry discussed above) must of necessity first identify prophetic Babylon, for it is Babylon that is his home, and the power-base from which he ascends to world dominion:

1) Babylon is the home country of antichrist: Rather than referring to the historical Babylon of antiquity, "Babylon" in the New Testament is the symbolic name given by scripture to the country of antichrist (e.g., Rev.17:5: "mystery Babylon the great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the world"; cf. 1Pet.5:13: "she who is elect together with you [i.e., the local church] in Babylon [i.e., Rome], greets you"). By all accounts, Babylon will be an extremely powerful, indeed, the most powerful country in the world, analogous in her dominance to Rome in her heyday. Babylon is the nation which antichrist uses as a base of power to leapfrog to control of his own new "Roman" confederacy of Europe (of which Babylon is not technically a part), and from there to control of the entire world (following the second defeat of the southern alliance, his main opposition during the first half of the Tribulation: Dan.11:25-30 in the Hebrew). It is true that prior to the return of our Lord, antichrist will destroy Babylon (Rev.17:16-19:3), but that the beast is from Babylon and rises to world dominance primarily through her influence and power is not changed by the fact that she is later destroyed at his hand and at his command. Indeed, this is precisely what Isaiah prophesied:⁽²³⁾

(3) And it will come to pass on the day (i.e., during the Millennium) when the Lord gives you rest from your pain, and from your turmoil, and from the hard labor which was levied upon you, (4) that you will take up this taunt concerning the king of Babylon (i.e., antichrist), and you will say, "How the oppressor (i.e., antichrist) has come to an end! How the golden [city] (i.e., Babylon) has ceased to be! (5) The Lord has shattered the staff of evil-doers, the rod of those who ruled [over us], (6) which smote the peoples in her arrogance with unrelenting scourging, which ruled the nations in her anger with

unrelenting persecution. (7) The whole world is now at rest, at peace. They break forth in song. (8) Even the fir trees rejoice over you, the cedars of Lebanon: 'Since you have been laid low, no one comes up to cut us down'. (9) Sheol below is astir because of you, at the prospect of your arrival. It rouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the [former] princes of the earth. It makes all the [former] kings of the earth rise from their thrones. (10) All of them will answer and say to you, 'Even you too have [now] become weak like us'. (11) All your pride has been brought down to Sheol, [all that] noise of your harps. Below you maggots are spread out like a bed, and worms are your bedcovers. (12) How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, O son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, O you who laid the nations low. (13) For you said in your heart, 'I will ascend heavenward. I will set my throne above the stars of God. And I will take my seat on the mount of assembly on the sides of the north. (14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High God'. (15) But indeed you will be brought down to Sheol, to the sides of the pit. (16) Those who look at you will contemplate you; they will consider you: 'Is this the man who confounded the earth, who shook [the foundations of] the nations? (17) He made the world like a desert, and trampled its cities underfoot. He did not let its prisoners go home.' (18) All the kings of the earth, all of them, lie in dignity, each in his own tomb. (19) But you have been cast out of your grave like an abominable branch (i.e., in contrast to *the* Branch), clothed with your slain [victims], those pierced by the sword, those who go down to the stones of the pit, like a corpse trampled underfoot. (20) You will not share with them in your burial. ***For you have destroyed your [own] land. You have killed your [own] people.*** The seed of evil doers will not be called to remembrance again forevermore."

Isaiah 14:3-20

The introduction to this "taunt" clearly identifies "the king of Babylon" as the subject (v.4), and the future day of restoration as the time for its appropriate use (v.3). Further, the description of the ruler of Babylon as contained within these verses cannot find their complete fulfillment in any such historical ruler.⁽²⁴⁾ The king portrayed here was ruler of a "golden city" which oppressed Israel (v.4), and which ruled harshly over all the nations of the earth (vv.5-8). This king's aspirations and (dark) deeds were so exceptional (i.e., he "laid all the nations low) that all the prior rulers of the earth are anxious for his entrance into Sheol below (vv.9-11). He is described as falling from the greatest of heights, from heaven itself, as if he were "the morning star" (v.12a), and we have already seen how that the true "Morning Star" is our Lord Jesus Christ, so that anyone else assuming such a title is by definition a fraud. The ruler in these verses aspired to the highest heights, to a rule beyond any prior earthly rule, to be like God Most High (vv.13-14), to lay claim, in a word, to all Messianic honor, privilege and power. But, in the end, he is the one who is laid low, proving beyond all doubt that he was not the One to come after all (v.15). This ruler "confounded the earth", shook the nations to their very foundations, made the world like a desert, trampled its cities underfoot, but now has himself been humbled. Rather than bring liberation to the captives of the world (as the true Messiah will), he kept them in captivity. And as a result of all his horrendous deeds, unlike the true Branch (cf. Is.4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer.23:5; 33:15; Zech.3:8; 6:12), this ruler is cast out like a branch that is an abomination (cf. Matt.24:15; Mk.13:14; Dan.11:31; 12:11; Rev.13:14-15).

Clearly, these verses have a primary application to antichrist, the false Messiah, and most germane to our discussion here is the highlighted portion of the last verse quoted. For this passage identifies this individual, antichrist, as "king of Babylon" (v.4), and reproaches him with one of his most outlandish deeds, namely, the destruction of his own country and of his own people (v.20; cf. Hab.2:8-12). Therefore, as we have stated above, the fact that antichrist does destroy Babylon prior to Armageddon (Rev.17:16-19:3) not only does not disqualify him as king of mystery Babylon, but rather, in accord with Isaiah 14:3-20, positively identifies Babylon as his native land (he is "king of Babylon"; he has destroyed his own people and his own country).

We also find other prophetic passages which are in line with this identification of antichrist and Babylon. In Ezekiel chapter 28, antichrist is also represented as the "king of Tyre" (v.12), an alternative representation of mystery Babylon stressing her commercial dominance as exemplified by that premier Phoenician city state (note, for example, the closeness in language between the lament for Tyre in Ezekiel and the lament for Babylon in Revelation 18, and compare Isaiah 23). Like Babylon, Tyre is also pillaged and destroyed by fire (Zech.9:3-4).

Throughout the book of Jeremiah in particular, we find the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, serving as an antitype for the beast (see in particular Jer.25:8-9; Jer.50-51 and especially 51:34; cf. also Ezek.29:17-20.). As the king of Sheshach, a cryptogram for mystery Babylon, antichrist drinks last of all from the cup of the Lord's wrath (a reference to Armageddon: Jer.25:26; cf. Rev.14:19). Perhaps most significantly, in Jeremiah 51:1 we find the Lord stirring up a destroyer against "Babylon and the people of Lebh-Qamay". "Lebh-Qamay" is also a cryptogram for Babylon (specifically, for the people of the neo-Babylonian empire who were known to Jeremiah as the Chaldeans; cf. Jer.50:1 [not NIV]).⁽²⁵⁾ Now this cryptogram, when read as Hebrew, yields the meaning, "the people of *those who rise up against Me*", but the Masoretic pointing of this otherwise unknown phrase need only be changed in regard to one vowel point in order to read it as "Lebh-Qamiy", "the people of *him who rises up against Me*". That is to say, no emendation of the original Hebrew text per se is required to make this verse refer specifically to antichrist, only a minor alteration of the eighth century A.D. interpretation of the Masorete scholars who pointed the text. In this context of divine judgment upon Babylon, the first rendering ("people of those who rise up against Me") makes little discernible sense, whereas the shift to the singular to identify the ruler of Babylon is something paralleled in all of the passages we have seen where Babylon's fate is predicted (i.e., she is always mentioned in concert with her ruler, although he is never said to be destroyed along with her; cf. Jer.51:12). Identification of the king of Babylon as the one who preeminently rises up against the Lord is certainly consistent with the "I wills" of Isaiah 14 quoted above, and with everything else we know about antichrist's unprecedentedly blasphemous conduct (e.g., Dan.7:8; 7:20; 7:25; 8:25; 11:36-37; 2Thes.2:4; Rev.13:5-6; 16:14; 17:13-14; 19:19 and see section II.2 immediately below). Taken together with the other passages given here, the association of antichrist with Babylon, and specifically, as her king, indicates clearly that mystery Babylon is his country of national origin.

Finally, as we have pointed out above, antichrist is also synonymous with Gog, the future invader of Israel treated in Ezekiel chapters 38-39. This Gog is said to be "of the land of Magog," a place which, while it is indeed a nation in its own right (a people of the far north from Israel's geographical perspective: Gen.10:2; 1Chron.1:5), is, in this prophetic context, a synonym for mystery Babylon. This identification of mystery Babylon with Magog is clear not only from the unique eschatological details given Ezekiel chapters 38-39 (necessarily future in their application as is clear even to the casual reader), but also from the commanding role that Magog and her ruler Gog are given in that context. That is to say, Gog is "chief prince" of the two other major nations whose role in the invasion is paramount, namely, Meshech and Tubhal (and Magog is not even mentioned when Gog's rulership of these two primary nations is repeated in Ezek.39:1). Many other significant nations are included in this confederacy in a subordinate way (i.e., Persia, Put, Cush, Gomer, Beth-Togarmah: Ezek.38:5-6; and, to a lesser extent, Sheba, Dedan, and Tarshish: Ezek.38:13), while still other unnamed nations participate as well (Ezek.38:6b). Thus Gog's home nation, Magog, represents a sort of "super-nation" from which Gog rules and directs this coalition of worldwide scope (a situation perfectly analogous to antichrist and mystery Babylon).⁽²⁶⁾ Given all this, the fact that the word "Magog" is also potentially a cryptogram for Babylon is doubtless both significant and deliberate (for this is a phenomenon well attested for use specifically with mystery Babylon in the book of Jeremiah as we have just seen above).⁽²⁷⁾ The name "Gog" then will be a back-formation from Magog (which can bear the meaning "place of Gog"),⁽²⁸⁾ whose main function is to identify this future ruler (antichrist) intimately with Magog, mystery Babylon.

2) Babylon is a definite, geographical place: As the home country of antichrist, Babylon is a finite geographical location. For although the name "Babylon" as used in this prophetic context is, as we have seen, symbolic (i.e., mystery Babylon is the name of the future empire which will be in many ways analogous to the Roman empire of John's day), it is, nevertheless, a genuine place. For example, when Peter uses "Babylon" to refer symbolically to the Rome of his day, he is nevertheless referring to a distinct location (1Pet.5:13). While it may seem overly pedantic to stress to this point, it is nonetheless important to do so because of the fact that so many contemporary interpretations of Revelation see Babylon as a mere "system" (of religion or economics or etc.), and make a point of denying her a specific geographical locale. Scripture, however, tells us a different story:

a) In Revelation 17:18, Babylon, the harlot, the one who "rules over the kings of the earth" is described as "the great city". The Greek word for city here is *polis* (πόλις), a term that, if anything, generally conveys something more than a single urban area (Athens, for example, was a *polis*, a city-state which encompassed the entire peninsula of Attica, far beyond the confines of the city of Athens proper, and containing other towns and cities).

b) Babylon is capable of being (and in fact is) physically destroyed, in a way that only a definite, tangible entity can be destroyed (Is.13:1-22; 14:20-23; 21:1-10; 46-47; 48:14;

Jer.50-51; Hab.1-2; Zech.2:7-9; Rev.16:19; 17:16-17; 18:1-24; 19:1-3; cf. Is.23:1-18; Ezek.26-28).

c) Believers are commanded to "flee Babylon", something that is only possible (and only necessary) if Babylon is a specific, geographic location (Is.48:20; Jer.50:8; 51:6-9; 51:45; 51:50; Zech.2:6-7; Rev.18:4; cf. Is.13:14; 52:11-12; Jer.50:16).

d) Theories of interpretation which draw a distinction between the Babylon of Revelation chapters 16-17 and a supposedly distinct one in chapter 18 have no reasonable basis. The thematic consonance of Babylon described in both places is clear. For example, 1) the dress in which Babylon appears at Revelation 17:4 is essentially duplicated at Revelation 18:16; 2) the maddening wine of adultery dispensed by Babylon from which the nations drink at Revelation 17:2 is mentioned again at Revelation 18:3; and, 3) the harlot analogy of Babylon figures large in both sections as well (compare Rev.17:1-6; 17:15-16 with Rev.18:3; 18:9; 19:2; cf. Rev.14:8). In fact, all the descriptions of mystery Babylon are remarkably consistent throughout scripture, so that when we place either section of Revelation along side the broader picture, we find a seamless uniformity (this is true even when she is described under her alternative name of Tyre: cf. esp. Is.23; Jer.50-51; Ezek.26-28).

Finally, inasmuch as chapter divisions in the New Testament are a relatively modern invention (16th century – courtesy of Henri Estienne, a.k.a. "Stephanus"), we should be extremely wary about placing any interpretive weight on the progression of chapters (i.e., from 17 to 18). The fact that the details of Revelation chapter 18 follow directly upon those of chapters 16 and 17 with no break indicated in scripture beyond the extra-biblical chapter divisions makes it clear, *prima facie*, that this discussion of Babylon is entirely of a piece with what has preceded. Simply put, there is not a shred of either textual or literary evidence to suggest drawing any sort of distinction between these two sections of Revelation so as to produce "two Babylons".

e) Lastly, there is no true indication anywhere in scripture that Babylon is **not** a place. If she were an economic or religious system, as is sometimes claimed, it would be difficult indeed for the beast to destroy her in the near instantaneous manner described in Revelation 16-19 (et alibi) – if, indeed, such a thing would really be possible at all.

3) Babylon is distinct from and to be distinguished from the "Ten-Kingdom Empire": Another common misconception in the contemporary interpretation of Revelation is the mistaken idea that mystery Babylon and the empire of antichrist are essentially one and the same thing. Such, however, is not the case. Once one accepts the fact that Babylon is a real place (the home and original power-base of antichrist), the critical passages which describe the destruction of Babylon make it clear that the empire of antichrist is still intact after this event (indeed, antichrist's subordinate kings play a large part in Babylon's demise):

Now as for the ten horns which you saw and the beast, these will come to hate the harlot [Babylon] and will render her desolate and naked, and they will eat her flesh and will

burn her up with fire.
Revelation 17:16

Thus antichrist and his empire are alive and well when Babylon is destroyed prior to the Second Advent, and are only destroyed themselves at the Second Advent, following Babylon's fall (cf. Dan.2:34-35; 2:44). Clearly, then, Babylon is an entity apart from the ten-kingdom empire of antichrist. As we shall see below, this distinction between Babylon, antichrist's home country, and the ten-kingdom empire over which he later gains control helps us to understand how scripture can refer to this unusual greater kingdom of the beast as "a divided kingdom" (Dan.2:40-43), and as "different from all other kingdoms" (Dan.7:23).

4) Since Babylon is distinct from the Ten-Kingdom Empire, she is most likely not located in Europe et al.: In Revelation chapter seventeen, the prostitute Babylon is portrayed as riding upon the beast (the empire of the beast: cf. Dan.7:2-27), an allegory which shows, among other things, both the independence of Babylon and the empire one from another, and the fact of their close relationship. The empire over which the beast gains control during the first half of the Tribulation (using Babylon as his base of power – she rides the beast) is made up of ten major kingdoms (i.e., the "ten horns" of Dan.7:7-8; 7:19-20; 7:24; Rev.12:3; 13:1-3; 17:3; 17:7; 17:12; 17:16). Although the exact identity of these kingdoms is never expressly given in the Bible, two key passages of scripture, Daniel 9:24-27 and Revelation 17:8-11, make it clear that these nations are, in general terms, loosely synonymous with the area ruled by the Roman empire of John's day (and for this reason the empire of the ten horns is sometimes referred to in the interpretation of Revelation as "the revived Roman empire"):

(24) Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to complete the rebellion and consummate sins (i.e., to bring apostasy to the full), to atone for iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness (i.e., the saving work of Christ), and to seal up vision and prophecy and anoint the holy of holies (i.e., the coming of the Kingdom). (25) So know and understand that from the issuing of a decree to desist [from rebuilding Jerusalem] (in ca. 485 B.C.: Ezra 4:6-23), and for the rebuilding of Jerusalem (forty-two years later in ca. 443 B.C.: cf. Ezra 7:11-28; Neh. chap.1-6) until Messiah the prince there will be seven weeks (i.e., between the decree and the rebuilding) and sixty-two weeks (i.e., between the rebuilding and the birth of Christ in ca. 2 B.C.).⁽²⁹⁾ [Jerusalem] will be repopulated and rebuilt with streets (i.e., residential reconstruction) and fortifications (i.e., military reconstruction) [and will remain so] even during difficult times (e.g., the occupation of Antiochus Epiphanes). (26) And after the sixty two weeks, Messiah will be cut off and have nothing (cf. Is.53:8), and **the people of the prince who is coming** (i.e., antichrist) will destroy both the city and the holy place. And his end will come with a flood (i.e., the "flooding away" of his armies at Armageddon; cf. the same Hebrew word, *sheteph*, שֶׁטַף, in Dan.11:22; Nah.1:8), and until that end there will be wars – [appalling] devastation has been decreed. (27) Then he (i.e., antichrist) will confirm an agreement (or "covenant"; Hebrew, ברית, *beriyth*) with the powerful [in Israel] during [that] one [remaining] week (i.e., the 70th week, the Tribulation), but in the middle of the week (i.e., just prior to the Tribulation's mid-point) he will put a halt to sacrifice and offering (i.e., eliminating Moses and Elijah and

interrupting the temple rites). And on account of the extreme [nature] of [his] abominations, he [will] be causing desolations (i.e., desertion and estrangement from God), even until the end when what has been determined will be poured out upon the one characterized by [this] desolation (i.e., the beast as archetype and cause of the alienation and rebellion from God which he fosters).

Daniel 9:24-27

In addition to the prominence of this "prince" during the final week (the Tribulation) and his interruption of the temple rites, both of which are clear indications that this is antichrist (cf. Dan.11:21-45; 2Thes.2:3-12), the identification here of both him and Messiah as "princes" (the use of the identical Hebrew word, *naghidh*, נגיד, suggests a true Prince and an "anti-prince"), and the phrasing of his agreement with Israel as a "covenant" (the same Hebrew word, *berith*, ברית, suggesting here an "anti-covenant" opposed to the true covenant) are also clear indications that this person is indeed none other than antichrist. For we have already considered antichrist's deliberate (false) claims of Messiah-ship, and in his treating with Israel it is more than conceivable that he will portray his formal arrangements with her in a similar, Messianic way, suggesting that it is a scriptural fulfillment of the "new day" for Israel (cf., Is.55:3; 61:8; Jer.31:31-33; Ezek.16:59-63; 20:37; 34:25; 37:26; Hos.2:14-20; Mal.3:1). Daniel 11:22 actually combines both of these ideas with its labeling of antichrist as "the prince of the covenant" (*naghidh berith*), removing any doubt about the identity of the individual in question here.

The critical portion of these verses for our specific purpose here is the identification of antichrist as the eschatological prince of the people who were to destroy Jerusalem. Since it was the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D., the connection of antichrist with Rome is therefore beyond question. Furthermore, since nearly two thousand years will separate that destruction from the appearance of antichrist on the stage of history, the "Roman empire" of which he will be prince must be, in some important sense, a restoration of the earlier empire (thus in part explaining the amazing recovery of the beast from its "fatal wound" as this applies in part to the ten kingdom empire, namely, as a revival of Rome: Rev.13:3; 13:12; 13:14; cf. Rev.17:8-10). Inasmuch as the Roman people, the Latin language, and the imperial system of Rome are not likely candidates for any sort of restoration, it seems fairly certain that this revival of empire must be meant in the territorial sense, so that the ten kingdom empire will be a revived Rome primarily in the sense of occupying territory roughly contiguous with that of the historical Roman empire (this is why the ten kings are said to arise out of the fourth beast in Dan.7:23-24). Apropos of our point here is the necessary conclusion that Babylon cannot, therefore, be situated within the same territory as that of revived Rome (since, as we have established, she is fundamentally distinct from the ten-kingdom empire), and thus this consideration eliminates a European, Mediterranean, or Near Eastern location for her, inasmuch as Rome dominated all of these areas.

(8) The beast, which you saw, was (i.e., "existed"), and is not (i.e., came "not to exist"), and is going to rise from the Abyss (i.e., the revival of Rome on the one hand and apparent resuscitation of antichrist on the other), and is going to its destruction. And

the inhabitants of the earth, [those] whose names have not remained written in the book of life [where they were written] from the beginning of the world, will be in awe when they see the beast, because he was (i.e., "existed"), and is not (i.e., came "not to exist"), and will again be present on the scene (i.e., seem to return to life in the case of antichrist, and be reestablished in respect to the empire). (9) This calls for a mind having wisdom: the seven heads [of the beast (cf. v.3 and 13:1)] are seven mountains whereon the woman sits. They are also seven kings. (10) The [first] five [of these kings] have fallen. The [next (i.e., the sixth)] is now [alive]. The last (i.e., antichrist) has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain for a short time (i.e., the Tribulation). (11) And [as to] the beast which was and is not, this is the eighth [king] and he is [also] one of the seven, and he is going to [his] destruction.

Revelation 17:8-11

While the seventh king "who has not yet come" is antichrist, the preceding six kings are Roman emperors. For the sixth king "**now** is alive", while five have died. Nero was the Roman "king" or emperor alive when John wrote Revelation, and he was preceded by the five prior Julio-Claudian rulers, Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. Inasmuch as the Julio-Claudian line of succession came to an end with Nero (and has long since disappeared into the dust of history), antichrist can only be said to be "the seventh king" in the sense of being, in effect, the next ruler of restored Rome, gaining control of her territories after his rise to power in his own country, Babylon. The second part of this proposition, namely, that while antichrist rules new Rome he is not properly "of" new Rome, is made clear by the text of verse eleven which states that he is "the eighth [king]" at the same time that he is "of the seven" previously mentioned kings.⁽³⁰⁾ The only way that this can be true is if antichrist is both a king in the line of the Caesars (i.e., "the seventh king", showing his control of revived Rome), and at the same time a king in his own right outside of any Roman empire (i.e., "the eighth king", king of Babylon). While "eighth" here is employed to mean essentially "outside of the seven", it also has significance in respect to the seven heads in their capacity as seven kingdoms, for we know from Daniel 7:7-24 that of the ten horns of Rev.13:1, 17:3 and 17:16, three are kingdoms gained by outright conquest, making the seven heads and seven remaining horns to which they correspond the basis of antichrist's power in Europe. Since each of these horn-head kingdoms has a king allied to antichrist, he is also "the eighth" in the sense of being the supreme king who rules over all the rest. This passage thus shows that Babylon is not part of the territory of historical Rome, for antichrist and his realm (Babylon) are clearly marked out by these verses as being separate from revived Rome.

5) Characteristics of Babylon: We have already established that Babylon is a real place, an actual nation distinct from the ten-kingdom empire of revived Rome, and that she is, therefore, not a part of the territory ruled by the Roman empire of John's day. A listing of the characteristics of mystery Babylon as described in scripture will now allow us to form a strong impression of which present-day nation is the most likely future candidate to match the description of antichrist's home country. For while it is true that much can happen historically between the time of writing and that future day, that day is nevertheless rapidly approaching, and the current disposition of world powers is at least not likely to become unrecognizable within the next two decades or so.

a) Symbolism: Considering the large number of symbolic references to Babylon throughout scripture, the choice of this name for the seat of antichrist's power during the Tribulation is hardly surprising. Historical Babylon was, of course, the original anti-God city "east of Eden", the home of the tower of Babel and of the first major assault on human freedom after the great flood in the form of a satanic attempt by Nimrod (a type of antichrist, as we have seen) to establish a one-world government (the very thing which antichrist will achieve).⁽³¹⁾ Babylon was also the capital of the first major empire to be established after the separation of the nations which followed, and its founder, Nebuchadnezzar (also a type of antichrist in his capacity as the preeminent king of Babylon, as we have seen) is the "head of gold" in Daniel's prophecy of the great statue which predicts the rise of Rome and of revived Rome, the ten-kingdom empire of antichrist (Dan.2:36-45).⁽³²⁾ Furthermore, historical Babylon was responsible for destroying the first temple and for the seventy year period of exile from the land, while eschatological, "mystery Babylon" will be antichrist's original source of strength through which he will persecute Israel and the Church (cf. Rev.16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2). Finally, Peter's reference to the church at Rome as "she who is in Babylon" reflects this notion of an overarching center of power in control of the empire that is in some sense separate from it, a picture which is consistent with the future Babylon which will hold sway over the revived empire, "riding the beast" (compare 1Pet.5:13 with Rev.17:1; 17:3; 17:7; 17:9; 17:15; 17:18). The reader is asked to recall the pertinent discussions above and in part 1 of this series in regard to Tyre (as the chief city of Phoenicia) and Nineveh (as the capital of Assyria); these two cities likewise are used to draw parallels to that future "mystery" kingdom which we are exclusively terming "Babylon", the former in her capacity as the supreme commercial power, and the latter in her capacity as the supreme military power.⁽³³⁾ Antichrist, after all, is portrayed as "the king of Tyre" in Ezekiel chapter 28 (see section II.1.c.1 above).

b) Excessive Wealth: According to Old Testament prophecy, Babylon will be "the golden city" (Is.14:4: KJV and Hebrew), "abounding in treasures" (Jer.51:13), and overly proud as a result of her great wealth (Ezek.28:5). She will dwell in "luxurious palaces" (Is.13:22), and like her sisters in symbolism, Tyre and Nineveh respectively, she will enjoy excessive wealth (Zech.9:3), an endless supply of silver and gold (Nah.2:9). In the end, her riches will not be able to ransom her life (Is.47:11), all her great wealth will be plundered and destroyed (Jer.51:58). This picture agrees perfectly both with the description of Babylon the harlot in Revelation 17:4, who is dressed purple and scarlet, and glitters with gold, precious stones, and pearls (cf. Rev.18:16), as well as with the description of the destruction of that nation in chapter 18, where the merchants of the earth who "grew rich from the abundance of her excesses" (Rev.18:3) will catalog her excessive purchases and possessions (cf. Rev.18:11-16), and lament the loss of "such great wealth" (Rev.18:17).

c) Unequaled Commerce: Apart from the fact of her great wealth and luxury, Babylon will also be a trading nation, known for her commercial activities. In an entirely prophetic context, Zechariah 5:11 tells us that "wickedness" is to be taken to the land of Shinar (i.e., Babylonia). This passage refers primarily to the centralizing of satanic evangelism in mystery Babylon (treated below), but the fact that wickedness is carried in a "measuring basket" gives a clear coincidence of hyper-commercialism and evil.⁽³⁴⁾

Nahum 3:16 mentions the Assyrian merchants who like locusts strip the land bare and fly off. But it is Tyre, the commercial titan of antiquity, who best represents the future mystery Babylon in this respect. Tyre is said to be the "marketplace of the nations" in Isaiah 23:3, and it is this unequaled commerce that has gained her great wealth for her (Ezek.28:4-5). Her merchants are "princes" and her traders "renowned on the earth" (Is.23:8), and this last reference is applied directly to mystery Babylon at Revelation 18:23. Tyre's selling of Jews as slaves foreshadow's antichrist's persecutions inasmuch as this sin is judged on the day of the Lord (Joel 3:4-8; Amos 1:9-10). The evil nature of mystery Babylon's commercial activities also calls to mind the trend of the third seal (Rev.6:5-6, discussed in part 2B of this series), antichrist's hyper-control of economic activity to the detriment of all but his chosen few, a trend which reaches its apex of evil in the mark of the beast, without which no will be able to buy or sell (Rev.13:16-18; cf. Nineveh "full of plunder": Nah.3:1). This artificial and persecutory system will contribute to the great influx of ill-gotten wealth which Babylon will garner during the Tribulation. Therefore it is not surprising that her trading activities are characterized as prostitution (Is.23:15-18; cf. Ezek.26-28; Am.1:9-10; Zech.9:2-4). Finally, even casual readers of Revelation chapter 18 are left in little doubt about the extensiveness of Babylon's wealth and trade, especially of her voracious appetite for imports of the finest quality (cf. esp. Rev.18:11-20).

d) Preeminent Power: Mystery Babylon is often referred to in Revelation as "Babylon **the great**" (Rev.14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2; 18:10; 18:21), a title which goes back to the "head of gold", the first great empire, Nebuchadnezzar's historical Babylon (Dan.4:30). As such, this title suggests that the future Babylon will stand head and shoulders above all other powers on the earth, and it is consistent with other descriptions of that coming power. Babylon will be

- the "destroying mountain which destroys the entire earth" (Jer.51:25).
- possessed of an invincible army (Hab.1:8-11; cf. Assyria: Nah.2:3-4; and Tyre: Ezek.27:10-11).
- the "most glorious of kingdoms" and "the glory of the Babylonians' pride" (Is.13:19).
- the "queen of kingdoms (Is.47:5)".
- the "bestower of crowns" (Is.23:8).
- the blasphemous "I am" of the nations (Is.47:8).
- a "ruthless and impetuous people who sweep over the whole earth seizing dwellings not their own" (Hab.1:6; cf. Assyria: Nah.2:11-12).
- "feared and dreaded" a people who are "a law unto themselves" and who "promote their own honor" (Hab.1:7), "guilty men whose strength is their god" (Hab.1:11).

- the "hammer of the whole earth" (Jer.50:23).
- the "rod and staff which smites the nations" (Is.14:5-6).
- the "war club that smashes nations" at God's behest (Jer.51:20-21; cf. Rev.17:17).
- the "boast of the whole earth" (Jer.51:41).
- one who attracts a wide variety of immigrant peoples (Is.13:14).

From the above compilation of passages, mystery Babylon's political supremacy, military dominance, and aggressive imperialism are plain to see (cf. Nineveh: Nah.3:2-3; 3:19). No other nation on earth will be the like of her during that future time. It will not be a question of any true "balance of power" when antichrist begins his run toward world conquest first at the helm of Babylon, then quickly transferring his flag to the ten-kingdom revived Roman empire of which he gains control through her dominance. One particular aspect of Babylon's military might is important to consider separately, because it clearly marks her out as a future eschatological power. Although historical Babylon was, for all intents and purposes, a landlocked empire that relied almost exclusively on her army, mystery Babylon of the Tribulation is described as a maritime nation (Is.21:1; Jer.51:13; cf. Rev.18), and will be a naval power of unprecedented strength. For it will be via the projection of her military power through this means that antichrist will finally vanquish the southern alliance, removing thereby the last major impediment to his world dominance (Dan.11:30; 11:40; cf. Num.24:24; and cf. the analogy of Tyre-Babylon: Is.23:4; Zech.9:2-4). It stands to reason that the aggressive, rapacious, imperialistic commerce with which Babylon is credited will require an unmatched navy to safeguard, foster, and enforce.

e) Unprecedented Evil: More so than any other nation in world history, mystery Babylon will indulge herself in luxuries characterized by wickedness. Even those pleasures she takes which are ordinarily acceptable or at least not sinful in and of themselves will become so by reason of their extraordinary excess and their ill-gotten origin. Antichrist's evil system of economic exploitation has been covered in part in our treatment of the "black horse", the third seal of Revelation chapter six (see part 2B of this series, section IV.3), and will be treated later in greater detail (see section II.3 below; cf. Dan.11:24; 11:39). Part and parcel of this exploitative system will be the idolatry and sorcery which will characterize antichrist's political movement (for that movement will be an inextricable blend of politics, economics, and religion), a feature of his rule that, while it will begin in Babylon, will reach its culmination when he takes his seat in the temple of God proclaiming himself to be God and forcing the whole world to worship him (Dan.8:11; 2Thes.2:4; Rev.13:11-18; cf. Dan.11:31; 12:11; Matt.24:15; Mk.13:14). The inherent evil of mystery Babylon is another prominent theme in scripture, especially as it relates to her luxuriating at the expense of others. She is a wanton creature, lounging in her security (Is.47:8), from whom proceeds a noisy voice of revelry (Jer.51:55; cf. Is.14:11), trusting in her evil and oblivious to God (Is.47:10), dissolute and pampered with luxuries (Is.47:1), arrogant (Jer.50:32), greedy (Hab.2:5), guilty of extortion, theft, and unjust gain (Hab.2:6-9). Like Nineveh, she is "a city of lies" (Nah.3:1).

Spiritually, mystery Babylon is "a desert by the sea" (Is.21:1), and a "land of idols" (Jer.50:38; cf. Nah.3:4). And as we know, greed and covetousness are prominent forms of idolatry (Col.3:5; cf. Gal.5:17-21; Eph.5:5). Instead of putting the one true God first in her thinking, Babylon "worships" money, pleasure, fame, power, possessions, all the objects of greed. The blossoming of this foundation of idolatrous thinking into the idolatrous religion of antichrist in the Tribulation's second half will be an entirely natural progression. The inhabitants of this land will be "guilty men whose own strength is their god" (Hab.1:11), who sacrifice to the "net" whereby they exploit others so as to live in the lap of luxury (Hab.1:16-17). One significant aspect of Babylon's blasphemous material idolatry is the prevalence within her of sorcery, witchcraft and the like (Is.47:9-15; Nah.3:4; Rev.18:23; cf. Is.13:17). This should be taken to mean not only what we consider occult in the usual sense, but also Babylon's reliance upon the technological "magic" that so impresses us today. Technology, it is true, is entirely material, and neither good nor bad in the abstract, but Babylon will rely upon it instead of upon God, upon the power of mankind's "secret wisdom" manipulating the material realm instead of upon God's complete control over everything material from the spiritual realm. Just as the "wise men and magicians of Babylon" were always the king's counselors (cf. the court magicians of Pharaoh: Ex.7:11-13; 2Tim.3:1-9), so magic and technology will form a similar witches brew in the future mystery Babylon, aided by a good measure of satanic power. In addition to being the world's commercial and military juggernaut, Babylon will also surpass the nations in her technological prowess, and will glory in it.

f) Irresistible Cultural Influence: Not only will mystery Babylon be irremediably evil in her own right, but she will also contribute the spread of evil world-wide as no nation or empire has ever done before. The nations are said to "stream to her", so influential is she (Jer.51:44). This is a key part of the meaning of Revelation 17:1 where we are told that she "sits on many waters", which waters are later interpreted for us at Revelation 17:15 to mean "peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages". In other words, mystery Babylon's cultural influence will affect every stratum of society around the world to an unprecedented degree. This is the "golden cup" from which she makes the whole world drink with the result that the nations "go mad" (Jer.51:7; cf. Rev.17:2), the same cup that is filled with "abominable things and the filth of her adulteries" (Rev.17:4). But the key theme in regard to mystery Babylon's role as purveyor of every form of evil worldwide is that of prostitution, for she is "the great prostitute" (Rev.17:1; 17:5; 17:15-16; 19:2; cf. Is.23:15-17; Nah.3:4), and "the mother of prostitutes" (Rev.17:5), "with whom the kings of the earth have committed adultery" (Rev.17:2a; 18:3; 18:9), so that all the unbelieving inhabitants of the earth become "drunk with the wine of her adulteries" (Rev.17:2b; cf. Hab.2:15-16).

This a very straightforward analogy (not to mention a graphic one), and it does much to characterize mystery Babylon's behavior for us. Like the adulteress of Proverbs, the path to her house leads to destruction (Prov. chap. 5, 7). Therefore it is not at all surprising that everything about her gives the appearance of beauty and attractiveness, otherwise she would be much less successful in reeling in her marks. But her beauty is only apparent (cf. Matt.23:27-28), heightened on the one hand by her excessive and suggestive presentation, and facilitated on the other by the "maddening wine" she gives her victims to drink. In the analogy, both on the leadership level (the "kings of the

earth": Rev.17:2a), and on the cultural level (the "inhabitants of the earth": Rev.17:2b), mystery Babylon will be purveying a very attractive message (in the form of antichrist's new movement; see section II.3 below). This message will seem intoxicating but will, in reality, be extremely deadly (the "maddening wine" of her adulteries). It will be exciting but not truly wholesome in any way (the "sex" of prostitution without any legitimate relationship). It will be attractive in the extreme on the outside – but on the inside will be filled with the bones of the dead. It will be, therefore, a sort of bewitching sorcery, both metaphorically and literally (Nah.3:4; cf. 2Thes.2:9-12; Rev.13:11-17). In short, mystery Babylon will be the illicit peddler of antichrist's influence, giving him the essential help he needs to expand his control around the world. Babylon's reward in the short term will be the untold riches discussed above, the luxurious trappings of the prostitute described in Revelation chapter 17. But in the end, she and all she has will be destroyed at antichrist's own hand, when God puts it into the hearts of the beast and his ten kings to do so (Rev.17:17).

6) Probable Identification of the Future "Mystery Babylon": The first thing to note here is that mystery Babylon does not yet exist per se. That is to say, until the Tribulation begins, and the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit in regard to lawlessness ceases to impede the plans of antichrist, even that nation which is destined to become Babylon is not yet Babylon in fact. This is no small point. For the end of divine restraint and horrendous consequences for the world which follow (many of which we have already examined in this series) will cause many changes, both to nations and to individuals. During the Great Apostasy there will a shocking number of believers who will fall away. Before they actually do apostatize, they deserve every consideration from us. For no matter how sure we are of the spiritual danger gathering around any specific individual now, much can happen before that time of trouble to come. Just so in mystery Babylon's case, no matter how clear it may be to us which present day country will, in all likelihood, play that role in the future, we must be careful to distinguish present trends from future realities, and must remember that nothing is impossible for God. It is with this caveat in mind that the following identification of the probable future mystery Babylon is offered here.

Revived Rome is centered in Europe, the biblical north, and does battle with the southern alliance headed by Egypt during the Tribulation's first half (see below), while the "kings of the east" are not directly involved in the military activity of the Tribulation until Armageddon (Rev.16:12). Thus three of the four biblical quadrants of the earth are accounted for in the prophetic history of that time and are thus excluded *prima facie* as locations for Babylon.⁽³⁵⁾ Only the western quadrant remains (a.k.a. the "islands" or "coast-lands"). Once one has restricted the search to the western hemisphere, assuming our time-table for the likely onset of the Tribulation to be correct, it takes no great leap of interpretation to identify what is today the United States as the nation which will play the role of mystery Babylon once the seventh seal is opened.⁽³⁶⁾

It should be stressed at the outset of this discussion that there are many features of mystery Babylon which are not yet, and indeed cannot yet be true of the United States (or of any other nation past or present, for that matter): mystery Babylon is *yet future*, so that even its present ancestor (the United States, if the analysis here be correct)

cannot now be held responsible for her future actions, even in those cases where some of the trends discussed above may already be apparent. To use a loose historical analogy, Weimar Germany of the 1920's and early 1930's was in most respects a very different "animal" from the Germany of the Nazis which supplanted it (despite some disturbing trends already visible before the fall of that former republic). The change of regime and the imposition of an intrinsically evil totalitarian system made all the terrible difference.

It is true that many of the features of Babylon catalogued above are not yet true of this country, and that whatever nation turns out to be mystery Babylon will develop these features in full *only* after the present Holy Spirit restraint on lawlessness is removed (i.e., the "house" for "wickedness" must first be prepared: cf. Zech.5:5-11).⁽³⁷⁾ It would, nevertheless, be folly on the part of all Christians who truly love this country (or at the least very dangerous wishful thinking) to assume that it is ipso facto an impossibility for the United States ever to **become** the future mystery Babylon, either because of the presence of perceived positive spiritual features at the present time, or because of the absence in full of some of the negative characteristics listed above. Few things will be as important for antichrist as coopting otherwise well-intentioned individuals into his all-encompassing political movement, and this will not be the first time that a general failure to appreciate the dangers inherent in seductive mass-movements has left people of all stripes vulnerable. This phenomenon is sufficiently familiar to students of 20th century history, and the examples of Communism and Naziism did not have the benefit of the unrestricted range of satanic power that will be available to antichrist during the Tribulation. Given the unprecedented number of Christians who will fall away from the Lord during the Great Apostasy of the Tribulation's first half (studied in the preceding part 3A of this series), it stands to reason that just such a spirit of denial will be instrumental in subverting the hearts of many believers in this country. As students of the Word of God, therefore, it is incumbent upon us to follow the truths of scripture wherever they lead, even when (and perhaps especially when) they lead us to conclusions that for whatever reason we may find uncomfortable. We hope and pray that this particular cup will pass from us, but we have to be willing to face the facts of scripture whatever the cost. If it ever does come to a choice between God and country, there can be absolutely no question where the only path to salvation lies.

Mystery Babylon the great is said to be "the mother of prostitutes and of the earth's abominations". This is an important and revealing description for making a positive identification, for this combination of phrases tells us that Babylon is the source or origin of much of what is offensive to the Lord in the religious, economic, political, and social arenas (to name but a few areas). Antichrist's system of world rule, as we shall see below, will inject pure evil into all the various categories cited above (e.g., Babylon will be the launching pad for his universalist religion, his economic controls, his military conquests, and his evil social engineering). What will begin to be readily apparent from the point of his rise to power onward can be said to be present today only in some very limited respects. Despite the obvious influence of its various denominations, the United States is not presently foisting a single system of religion upon the rest of the world, but antichrist's Babylon will; despite its dominance as the world's greatest economy, the United States is not presently imposing a self-serving economic system, but antichrist's Babylon will; despite its political muscle as the only true superpower, the United States

is not presently subordinating the rest of the world's nations into an imperial system of control, but antichrist's Babylon will; and the United States is certainly not reshuffling world society for the benefit of a privileged few, but that is precisely what antichrist will do for sake of greater personal control. Even in the area of cultural influence, while it may be said that the degeneration of morality pervading nearly everything of a cultural nature emanating from the United States is consistent with the depraved nature of mystery Babylon, there are still countervailing forces at work, whereas in antichrist's Babylon, every voice which opposes his policies and standards will be eventually silenced (apart from divine intervention). What is important in this comparison and tentative identification are not the present realities or even present trends so much as the negative *potential* for the future. Only the harshest and most strident critics of this nation would suggest that the United States is irrefutably visible in all the characteristics of Babylon listed above. But as things currently stand in geopolitical terms, this country is the only nation with the power and the potential to be Babylon. At the moment, the United States is merely a "loaded gun", so to speak, but with antichrist's ascension to power it will become an unequalled weapon which has fallen into the wrong hands, comparable to the totalitarian regimes of the early to mid-twentieth century, but more powerful by an order of magnitude, and without any serious rival (a situation that will grow even worse for the world after antichrist has gained control of the ten-king empire, revived Rome).

Nor will past meritorious services disqualify mystery Babylon-to-be from future iniquity. Historical Babylon too was used of God to strike down evil nations, but was later destroyed for her destruction of Israel (Jer.51:24; cf. Rev.17:6; 18:24; 19:2). Nor does past spirituality or eras of spiritual revival equate to immunity from future iniquity. Assyria repented at the preaching of Jonah, but later generations became hardened (Matt.12:41; cf. Is.10:7-19).⁽³⁸⁾ Nor will the fact that mystery Babylon will only be responding to the dictates of antichrist relieve her of responsibility. Though she "rides the beast" (Rev.17:1-3), Babylon is held fully responsible for the persecutions which emanate from her (and would be impossible without her: Rev.16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2).

As believers we are called upon to be discerning of the time (Lk.12:56). In the case of identifying mystery Babylon, this will involve watching for the development of the trends discussed above. Key to this development is the issue of moral character. Zechariah 5:5-11 indicates both that mystery Babylon will be the point from which the unrestrained lawlessness of the Tribulation will originally emanate, and also that there is a preparation phase which predates the dropping off in Babylon of the basket containing this concentrated and unprecedented "wickedness". For of all things presently in play (before the removal of Holy Spirit restraint) it is the degeneration of morality in the population at large which will give antichrist his biggest opening:

The wicked strut about on every side, when vileness is exalted among the sons of men.
Psalm 12:8 NASB

Indeed, it is this moral, social, and "cultural" arena where we see the groundwork for the development of mystery Babylon being most assiduously laid by the evil one and his minions, human and angelic. In the recent attacks this nation has suffered, few dared

express the opinion that our collective degeneracy might have anything to do with those events, and those who did were instantly reprov'd and quickly silenced (cf. Is.22:5-14).

Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? Does a lion roar in the thicket when he has no prey? Does he growl in his den when he has caught nothing? Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground where no snare has been set? Does a trap spring up from the earth when there is nothing to catch? When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? ***When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?***
Amos 3:3-6 NIV

Such moral assurance in an increasingly immoral milieu cannot help but remind students of scripture of the attitude in Judah before the Babylonian invasion where only soothing voices were allowed to be heard and those who truly spoke for the Lord were persecuted:

The visions of your prophets were false and worthless; they did not expose your sin to ward off your captivity. The oracles they gave you were false and misleading.
Lamentations 2:14 NIV

No matter how much we love our country, nations are made up of people, and people change. The pressures of the Tribulation will be so intense (as we saw above in our treatment of the Great Apostasy), that by the Tribulation's mid-point there will be few if any inhabitants of this country remaining who will not be either faithful believers or active servants of Satan. Under such circumstances, the only nation state that will not be entirely in the devil's control will be that of Israel (and even there the picture will be complex as we shall see below). Therefore it is well for the reader to distinguish between the situation prior to the Tribulation's beginning and that after it commences, for the shift in character in all nations and among almost all people (the elect excluded) will be dramatic and unprecedented following the removal of the Holy Spirit's restraint on lawlessness and the massive intensification of the devil's activities on earth, preeminently manifest in the rise of antichrist (along with his political, economic, social and religious system).

Finally in this regard, since it would seem that there is insufficient time remaining for the growth of an alternative power center to match the necessary characteristics of mystery Babylon in the way that the United States does (barring some major catastrophe of unprecedented proportions), it is not out of place to ask the question, "then why not leave?". Scripture does give many indications that there will indeed be a right time to "flee Babylon", but that will come late in the Tribulation's second half (and we shall cover this point in detail in part 5 of this series). While there is a right time to flee, there is also a wrong time. Given that antichrist will, by Tribulation's end, control virtually the entire face of the earth to one degree or another, the obvious first reply to the question above is "flee to where?". Although time and space do not permit a full exposition of this topic here, suffice it to say for the moment that there are some indications in scripture that mystery Babylon will be like the eye of a storm from which the persecutions of the Great Tribulation emanate, and will thus provide a measure of sanctuary until the time of her own destruction prior to the Second Advent. If this be the

case, then believers of that coming time who place the Bible first in all their applications will be faced with staying on in the face of what may be a rather large exodus, then departing at the very time when the crisis appears to have finally passed (i.e., the proper time to depart will be counterintuitive as well when judged by human sight alone: cf. 1Thes.5:2-3).

2. The Character of Antichrist: Having established antichrist's paternal, maternal, and national origin, we shall now look into what scripture has to say about him as an individual. By way of introduction, it will be helpful to offer here a translation and explication of Daniel 8:23-25, a prophecy in Hebrew poetic form devoted to antichrist, which contains some of the key features of the beast's personality:

(23) And at the end of their kingdom (i.e., during the Tribulation), when rebels are being confirmed [in their apostasy], there will arise a stern-faced king (i.e., antichrist), well-versed in deception. (24) And he will become exceptionally powerful – but not through his own power. And he will be astoundingly successful in his corrupting [activities]. And he will even undertake to corrupt the mighty men (i.e., believers) and [a part of] the holy people (i.e., Israel). (25) And on account of his cunning, [his] conspiracy will prosper under his direction. And he will [greatly] magnify himself in his own thinking, and by his seductive ways he will corrupt many. He will even take his stand against the Prince of princes, and will be shattered apart from human agency.

Daniel 8:23-25

- "at the end of their kingdom": In addition to the content here, which prima facie describes antichrist, there are numerous indications in the context that these verses are meant primarily as a prophecy about the beast. After receiving a heavenly command to explain this prophecy to Daniel, Gabriel, at Daniel 8:17, proclaims that this vision relates to "the time of the end" (a clear reference to the Tribulation: cf. Dan.12:4 where the same Hebrew phrase is used). This point is repeated with even more emphasis two verses later at Daniel 8:19 where Gabriel attributes the vision to "the latter [time] of [God's] wrath" (i.e., the Tribulation; cf. Rev.15:1). and says "for [this will all happen] at the appointed time of the end" (i.e., the Tribulation). Finally, at the conclusion of this angelic visit, Daniel is told to "seal up the vision, because it [pertains] to many days hence (i.e., the distant future)": Dan.8:26b.
- when rebels are confirmed [in their apostasy]": As explained in the previous installment of this series, this is a reference to the Great Apostasy, an event which will reach its peak during the first half of the Tribulation.
- "there will arise a stern-faced king": This refers to the revelation at the start of the Great Tribulation of antichrist (for whom, as we have seen above, Antiochus Epiphanes, the more contemporary type in the broad context here, is the antitype). The Hebrew phrase *'az panim*, "stern-faced", refers to the unequalled brazenness and audacity of antichrist (cf. Deut.28:50; Prov.7:13; 21:29). He will proclaim his astounding lies with

no shame or conscience and with total commitment and persuasiveness. The beast will easily justify the monumental evils he commits, and without blushing.

- "well-versed in deception": The beast will be a consummate actor and a practiced conspirator. The Hebrew phrase *mebiyn chidoth*, literally "understanding riddles", captures at once his satanically empowered evil intelligence and the exceptionally deceptive uses to which he will apply it (cf. Dan.11:27).
- "he will become exceptionally powerful – but not through his own power": Not only is antichrist sired by the devil; he will be empowered in all his undertakings by the evil one (cf. 2Thes.2:9-10).
- "he will be astoundingly successful in his corrupting [activities]": The beast's success in deceiving and enlisting both unbelievers and apostate believers to his cause will proceed apace throughout the Tribulation's first half, breaking into a world-wide flood as antichrist is fully "revealed" at the start of the three and a half year "Great Tribulation" (cf. Rev.13:1-8).
- "he will even undertake to corrupt the mighty men and [a part of] the holy people": This is a specific reference to and overview of the Great Apostasy. The "mighty men" are our Lord's "heroes", that is, anyone who is (or was) fighting and winning the good fight of faith until overcome by antichrist (1Tim.6:12; cf. the ultimate rewarding of believers called "mighty men" in Is.53:12). "Holy people" refers specifically here to those among Israel who likewise are swept away in the Great Apostasy.
- "on account of his cunning, [his] conspiracy will prosper under his direction": Here we see the beast's animal-like craftiness facilitating the treachery he sponsors in order to come to power (cf. Dan.11:23 where *mirmah* has the same meaning of "conspiracy").
- "he will [greatly] magnify himself in his own thinking": The arrogance of antichrist will outstrip the bounds of normal human restraint (cf. 2Thes.2:4).
- "by his seductive ways he will corrupt many": The beast's politico-religious movement in particular will offer potential followers a seductively easy road to all their dreams and aspirations (undermining whatever conscience and mores they possess).
- "He will even take his stand against the Prince of princes, and will be shattered apart from human agency": In his arrogance, antichrist will even think himself capable of opposing Christ (at Armageddon), but, just as the beast is only able to accomplish what he does through the power of the devil, so in the end he will be destroyed by the power of God.

a. The Symbolism of the Beast:

And the beast which I saw resembled a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth was like that of lions.

Revelation 13:2a

This passage is not only "modeled" after Daniel's picture of the four beasts (as some interpreters would have it) – it is a further and more explicit description of the fourth beast who is "different from the others" (Dan.7:7; 7:19; 7:23-24). In Daniel's vision, the first beast resembles a lion, the second a bear, and the third a leopard. The beast described in Revelation chapter 13 quoted above possess attributes of all three of these beasts, and this is in no way contradictory to Daniel's vision where the particulars of the terrifying fourth beast's overall appearance are never given. Daniel's fourth beast and the beast of Revelation are thus one and the same, with no inconsistencies between the two or their symbolism. Most of the particulars given in Revelation chapter 13 (and elaborated upon in chapter 17) can be left for treatment when those passages are covered later in this series. It is only necessary here to consider those aspects of the symbolism which relate to the beast's character. While he has feet like a bear and a mouth like the mouths of lions, antichrist *himself* most resembles a leopard (and this is even more clear in the Greek where the comparative *homoion* indicates a closer resemblance than that used to compare his feet and mouth to those of the bear and lions respectively: cf. Rev.1:13). The leopard in Daniel chapter 7 stands for Alexander and his empire, and so while antichrist and his kingdom will have the lion-like "bite" of Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian empire, and the bear-like tearing power of Cyrus and his Persian empire, it is to Alexander and his empire that the beast and his kingdom will exhibit the strongest resemblance.

The leopard in Daniel 7:6 is said to have four wings', making this leopard especially swift (cf. Hab.1:8). Rapidity will characterize all of antichrist's activities (and the activities of his kingdom and politico-religious movement). The very speed of his rise and of his conquests will impress the world and intimidate his foes. Other personality traits of the beast to be gleaned from his resemblance to a leopard according to the biblical picture of that animal are cunning (cf. Jer.5:6; Hos.13:7), ferocity (cf. Is.11:6), and a solitary nature (cf. S.S. 4:8). In general terms, we may say that this comparison paints antichrist as a terrifying, decisive, dangerous, violent, treacherous, wily individual, restless in a cat-like way in his desire to further his evil schemes (cf. Hab.2:5). These are characteristics which remind students of history not only of Alexander, but also of other commanders who lusted for world domination like Caesar, Napoleon and Hitler, but it needs to be stressed here that antichrist will exhibit these characteristics and abilities to a uniquely exceptional degree (even by comparison with that egregious company). One final characteristic of the leopard that should not be overlooked here is its exceptional, hypnotic beauty (cf. Jer.13:23). The beast will balance all of the intimidating aspects of his character with his dazzling outward appearance (not only physical beauty, but also magnetic personality, charisma and presence), factors which will play no little part in antichrist's seduction of the majority of the world's inhabitants.

b. Characteristics of antichrist: Besides what can be gleaned from the symbolism just explored, there are numerous scriptures which directly describe antichrist's character and so reinforce and expand the picture given above. Several key passages will serve to illustrate the salient points:

Behold, he (i.e., antichrist) is swollen up [in arrogance]. What he desires in his heart is not right (but the righteous [person] will be preserved by his faith). If you think that wine deceives, [how much more will he!] [He is a] presumptuous man, and never at rest. He has enlarged his appetite [as wide] as the grave, and like death he is never satisfied.
Habakkuk 2:4-5

Among the characteristics of the beast evident here are his extreme arrogance (cf. Is.14:11-14; Dan.7:8; 7:11; 7:20; 7:25; 2Thes.2:4), the restlessness and unrestrained nature of his greed for personal advancement, acquisition, conquest and exploitation (cf. Is.14:8; Hab.2:17; Rev.6:7-8a; 11:18), and his exceptional deceitfulness (Dan.8:23-25; 11:21; 11:23; 11:27; Hab.2:2-20). Habakkuk, it is true, is initially focused on the historical Babylonians (cf. 1:5-11), but the prophetic use to which Babylon is put in foreshadowing the mystery Babylon to come, the contextual signal at the beginning of chapter two that we have now moved to a prophecy about the end times (Hab.2:3a: "For [this] vision [will take place at its] appointed time; it aspires to the **end** [i.e., the end times]"), and the fact that in Habakkuk 2:4 the "they" referring to the historical Babylonians shifts abruptly to "he", all point decisively to the application of these verses to antichrist (quite apart from the content of Hab.2:4-19).

I was considering these [ten] horns when, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them. And three of the previous horns were rooted up from before it. And, behold, this horn had eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking presumptuous things (i.e., against God).
Daniel 7:8

As suggested here, an arrogant boastfulness directed blasphemously against God Himself is one of the more prominent features of antichrist's behavior (Rev.13:5-6; cf. Dan.7:11; 7:20; 7:25; Rev.13:1; 17:3). This excessive arrogance and boastfulness will certainly be in tune with the spirit of those times (cf. 1Tim.4:1-2; 2Tim.3:1-9; 2Pet.2:1-22; 3:3-7; Jude 1:3-16), but in antichrist's case the degree and horrendous nature of his blasphemies will be unprecedented, as this behavior will be part and parcel of the beasts' blasphemous assuming to himself of the mantle of divinity (Dan.11:36; 2Thes.2:4).

And there will arise in his place a [man of] contempt upon whom they will not bestow the honor of the kingship [in a normal fashion]; rather, he will come [to power] through seductive [methods], and will take control of his kingdom by means of duplicity.
Daniel 11:21

The Hebrew *niphal* participle, as in the case of *bazah* (בזה) above (translated "[man of] contempt"), may sometimes have a sense approaching that of a gerundive (explaining KJV's "vile person", NASB's "despicable person", and NIV's "contemptible person" as translations for *nibhzeh*). But the *niphal* can also sometimes have a middle sense, meaning in this case not that antichrist will be despised or the object of contempt (sadly,

the opposite will be true in the main), or even that from the divine point of view he will be worthy of nothing but despite and contempt (which is certainly true), but rather that the attitude of contempt for everything truly worthy of respect will be one of his most conspicuous characteristics.⁽³⁹⁾ This designation is undoubtedly part of a deliberate contrasting of antichrist to the Christ, who is Himself described in Isaiah 53:3 by means of the exact same participle form as "despised" (the true passive sense being the one preferred in that context). While our Lord offered Himself up to a life of despite for our sakes, antichrist will actively and vehemently despise every aspect of God's mercy, caring only for himself. In the following verse, Daniel 11:22, antichrist is also called "the prince of the covenant", a reference which identifies him as the one who will make the tribulational treaty with Israel (Dan.9:25-27). Our Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the true "covenant" of life through whom Israel and all believing humanity have gained eternal life (Is.42:6; 49:8; cf. Matt.26:28; Lk.22:20; Heb.7:22; 8:6; 9:15; 12:24; 13:20). The beast, on the other hand, although he will present himself as the savior of Israel through this "covenant" will not only have contempt for God's true "holy covenant" (Dan.11:28; 11:30; 11:32), but will even show despite for this worldly instrument of his own making, abrogating it "in the middle of the week" (Dan.9:27). Inasmuch as antichrist will thus be one who "despises the covenant" (his own and God's), it is worthwhile to mention that in the Hebrew numbering system this phrase, "*nibzeh beriyth*" (נִבְזָה בְרִית), which is itself a very close paronomasia upon Daniel 11:22's "*naghidh beriyth*", i.e., "the prince of the covenant" (בְּרִית נָגִיד), adds up to 666.⁽⁴⁰⁾

c. Gleanings from the Policies of antichrist: The second half of the last passage quoted, Daniel 11:21b, does much to reveal the essence of the antichrist's political methodology, and in that methodology we see something of his true character. The beast's every action will be characterized by treachery and seductiveness. That is to say, nothing he says can be counted upon to be true; nothing he promises will be reliable in any way; and everything he does and says and promises will be tailored for maximum enticement, uncovering, affirming and confirming the secret desires of those with whom he treats. Ultimately, like his father the devil (cf. Jn.8:44), antichrist will have no true regard for anyone or anything except himself (although he will possess the ability to "sell" his lies more effectively than anyone else in prior world history). The self-centered core that lies below the beast's treacherous and seductive nature can be seen from his destruction of mystery Babylon, without whose aid he never would have been able to come to power in the first place (Is.14:20), in his technique of hostage taking and population resettlement on a grand scale, despite the mass suffering these war crimes will cause (cf. Is.14:17), and in his cruel economic and social policies (discussed under the first four seal trends in part 2B of this series), policies which ultimately will benefit only himself and his most trusted few (Dan.11:39), but which will cause widespread deprivation, misery, and death.

In fact, the alteration in laws, customs, economic, religious and social structures which antichrist will initiate will be so outrageous and so hubristic – beyond anything yet seen in human history (Dan.11:24; 11:37) – that antichrist is characterized in scripture as the "man of lawlessness" (2Thes.2:3; 2:8; 2:9; cf. 2Thes.2:7). This characteristic of the beast to have complete contempt for any sort of tradition or morality or value-structure, no matter how valid, is also evident from his classification by scripture as the "man of

contempt" (covered immediately above: Dan.11:21), and from the prophecies that he will attempt to "change the times and laws", that is, barriers set up both by divine law and human tradition (appropriate to the "times") designed to forestall behavior which exceeds accepted and conventional norms (Dan.7:25; cf. Est.1:13; Dan.2:21). The beast will ride roughshod over cultural and national norms, ripping up the internal social fabric of countries and societies worldwide, in an internationalist leveling of standards written and unwritten into a system which he will attempt to impose for his own benefit without the slightest concern for the suffering, injustice, and confusion this will cause (Dan.11:36).

d. The Charisma of antichrist and his Empowerment by Satan: We have already discussed antichrist's empowerment by the devil in our discussion of his satanic paternity. The key passages on this point (Dan.8:24; Dan.11:39; 2Thess.2:3-10; Rev.13:1-18) show unequivocally that antichrist will owe the "success in everything he undertakes" (Dan.8:12; cf. Dan.11:36) directly to the power, support, and supernatural intervention of the devil:

And he (antichrist) will become exceptionally powerful – but not through his own power.

Daniel 8:24

He (antichrist) will treat with [conspiratorial] gatherings in the [preeminent] powers (i.e., nations of military and monetary strength; cf. Ezek.31:11; Jn.12:31; 2Cor.4:4) with the help of [his] foreign god (i.e., the devil) whom he will greatly honor, and he will put these [individuals] in charge of the majority [populations], and will also distribute territories [to them] as a reward.

Daniel 11:39

. . . [antichrist] whose appearance [will come about] through Satan's empowerment [and will be] accompanied by every [sort of] false miracle, both signs and portents, and by every [sort of] unrighteous deception [designed] for those who are perishing.

2nd Thessalonians 9-10a

And the dragon (i.e., Satan) gave to him (i.e., antichrist) his power and his throne and great authority.

Revelation 13:2b (cf. Rev.13:4; 13:14-15)

The public favor that antichrist will enjoy will come in part from his seductive methods, in part from the rewards he bestows on his most dedicated followers (Dan.11:39), and in part from his deeds which will impress the unbelieving world (especially his apparent resuscitation: cf. Rev.13:3-4). But there is no question that antichrist will also be a "larger than life" figure of exceptional charisma (Dan.7:20b; Rev.17:8; cf. 2Thes.2:10).

And one of the [beast's] heads [looked] as [if] it had been fatally smitten yet its mortal wound had been healed. And the entire earth *was in awe* of the beast. And they worshiped the dragon because *he had given his authority* to the beast. And *they worshiped the beast*, saying, "Who is like the beast? And who is able to make war

with him?".
Revelation 13:3-4

The beast will exhibit a degree of personal magnetism not seen on earth since before the flood when "the sons of God" cohabited with human women to produce the Nephilim (Gen.6:1-4; 2Pet.2:4-5; Jude 1:6-7).⁽⁴¹⁾ It is entirely understandable, moreover, that antichrist's attractiveness will rival and even excel that of his Nephilim predecessors, inasmuch as he will not be the progeny of just any rank and file demon, but the son of the original "covering cherub", Lucifer, who, before his fall into darkness, was the most glorious angel of light (Ezek.28:12-17; cf. Is.14:12; 2Cor.11:14).

Furthermore, rather than being a surprise, the abilities, magnetism, and successes of antichrist will seem to those who are weak in or totally ignorant of scripture to be solid credentials backing up his claim to be the true Messiah (in addition to the false signs and miracles performed by him and on his behalf: cf. Matt.24:24; 2Thes.2:9; Rev.13:14-15; 16:14; 19:20). Nor will the fact of his severe treatment of all who oppose him do anything but increase the world's admiration for him (compare the esteem that many cruel dictators of the past have won in the eyes of their followers, and the phenomenon that people tend to admire those who govern harshly: cf. 2Cor.11:20). So although the divine assessment of antichrist is scathingly condemnatory, that does not at all mean that he will be viewed in this negative way by the world, at least at first (or even at last in the eyes of his staunchest supporters). For, if it were possible, "even the elect" would be deceived by him, so powerful will be his charm and so effective his deceptions (Matt.24:24). Just as the evil kings of Israel's northern kingdom are painted clearly in scripture for what they were in God's righteous estimation, yet they did most likely enjoy support from the population (as is evidenced by the ten tribes' complicity in their idolatrous ways), so also is it likely to be in the case of antichrist. But despite the accolades he will win from the world, believers need to keep our Lord's opinion in mind at all times: antichrist is "one . . .who plans evil against the Lord and counsels destruction (*beliya'al*)" (Nah.1:11).

3. The Rise of Antichrist: Inasmuch as Daniel chapter eleven is our most detailed source for the military and political events of the Tribulation's first half and covers those events in a roughly chronological sequence, we will rely upon it heavily for the remainder of this study.⁽⁴²⁾ Chapter eleven details, among other things, the specifics of antichrist's rise to power within his native land, his subsequent seizure of the revived Roman empire, his conquest of the southern alliance, his oppression of Israel, and many of his methods of control. It should therefore be pointed out here that both the main purpose of that chapter and the bulk of its content are focused upon antichrist.

It is often overlooked among exegetes of this critical chapter that Daniel chapter ten, the "set-up" for and introduction to chapter eleven, directs the reader's attention regarding the application of that prophetic chapter directly to the end times from the very start:

In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a prophecy (i.e., chapter eleven) was unveiled to Daniel who had the name "Belteshazzar". And the prophecy was true, and [it concerned] **"[the] Great Conflict"** (or "War"; i.e., the Tribulation itself; cf. Matt.24:7;

Rev.12:7; 19:11-21). And he understood this prophecy, for its interpretation came to him in a vision.

Daniel 10:1

"For I have come to give you insight into what will happen to your people **at the end of days**. For [this] vision [pertains to] those days of the [distant] future."

Daniel 10:14

Taking these passages in reverse order, as we saw above in our treatment of Joseph's prophecy in Genesis chapter 49, "end of days" in the second passage above is a prophetic expression which invariably refers to the end times (just as the angel's statement in the final sentence above shows for this context as well). That is to say, what we have here is a reference not just to the future, but to the *eschatological* future (i.e., to the final phase of human history which begins with the Tribulation: Is.2:2; Jer.30:24; 48:47; 49:39; Ezek.38:16; Hosea 3:5; Micah 4:1; cf. Dan.8:19 "end of wrath", and Ezek.38.8 "end of years").⁽⁴³⁾

The phrase "the Great Conflict" (or "War") in the first passage quoted above (Hebrew: *tsabh`a ghadhol*, גְּדוֹל צָבָא) does not, of course, refer to either World War, but to the Tribulation itself, the greatest period of military conflict in world history (both human and angelic), when the two greatest coalitions of all time will do battle during the Tribulation as the great "nation-kingdom" of antichrist's dual-empire (Babylon ruling over revived Rome) clashes with the "nation" and "kingdom" of the massive southern alliance (Matt.24:7), during the course of which Satan and his angels will be cast to earth after their "war" with Michael and his angels (Rev.12:7), and at the end of which antichrist and his armies will be annihilated by our returning Lord Jesus Christ (Rev.19:11-21). So while the first half of chapter eleven does deal with Alexander's conquests and the subsequent campaigns of the Seleucid kings (vv.2-20), all relatively near-term events from Daniel's perspective when compared to the still future Tribulation, it is clear that the main thrust and purpose of the prophecy is to explain the even now yet to come reign of antichrist. The purpose of this long prologue is primarily to bring the time-line down to Antiochus Epiphanes, the most egregious of these Seleucid kings and, as we have seen above, the most important representative type of antichrist. Many interpreters, failing to appreciate the typology in play here, have argued for the postponement of this chapter's application to antichrist until verse thirty-six.⁽⁴⁴⁾ But even these commentators generally acknowledge that by verse thirty-six antichrist is indeed already being described, and that the same "king" is clearly in view in both sections of the chapter. Limiting verses twenty-one through thirty-five to Antiochus Epiphanes and failing to see their dual application to antichrist as well is an unnecessary and unfortunate mistake. Quite apart from the content of verses twenty-one to thirty-five which point definitively to antichrist in his own right (he is, after all, the "prince of the covenant"; cf. the discussion of Daniel 11:21 in section II.2.b above), the flow of the narrative clearly binds these two putatively "independent" sections into one contiguous whole. It will thus be helpful at this point to give in outline form a synopsis of the second half of Daniel chapter 11 before we proceed:

- verse 21: Synopsis of the beast's career part 1: His rise to power and his methodology in seizing control of mystery Babylon.
- verse 22: Synopsis of the beast's career part 2: Mobilization for and destruction at Armageddon. Identification of antichrist as the prophesied "prince of the covenant".
- verse 23: Return to the chronological order by reprising antichrist's methods in gaining control of mystery Babylon.⁽⁴⁵⁾
- verse 24: Seizure of the seven kingdoms (revived Rome); consolidation of power and preparations for attacking the southern alliance.
- verses 25-28: The first campaign against the three kingdoms (the southern alliance).
- verses 29-30a: The second campaign against the south.
- verses 30b-35: The attempted assassination of antichrist, his putative resuscitation, and his resultant persecution of Israel.
- verses 36-39: The reign of antichrist during the Great Tribulation.
- verses 40-43: Reprise of antichrist's victory over the southern alliance during the Tribulation's first half giving a more detailed account of the second campaign.⁽⁴⁶⁾
- verse 44: The departure of antichrist from Israel to secure his kingdom following the fifth bowl judgment.
- verse 45: The defeat of antichrist at Armageddon.

We have already covered the phrase "man of contempt", as well as the typology which connects the beast to one of his most important historical types, Antiochus Epiphanes, the putative subject of Daniel 11:21-35. What primarily concerns us in this first section of our study (Dan.11:21-23) is antichrist's initial rise to power in his home country:

(21) And there will arise in his place a [man of] contempt upon whom they will not bestow the honor of the kingship (i.e., he will not come to power in a legal, conventional way). Rather, he will come [to power] through seductive [methods], and will take control of his kingdom (i.e., mystery Babylon) by means of duplicity. (22) Now it is from him that the flood waters (i.e., armies: Dan.9:26; 11:40; cf. Is.8:7-8; 28:15-22; Nah.1:8; Rev.12:15) will pour forth and be shattered (i.e., at Armageddon), for he is even "the prince of the covenant" (i.e., the author of the pseudo-Messianic peace treaty with Israel: Dan.9:27). (23) After men have leagued themselves to him, he will set his

conspiracy in motion and will grow [in power] and become [very] strong, even though his faction is small.

Daniel 11:21-23

Although the beast will first come to rule mystery Babylon (the nation, in the typology here, that parallels Antiochus' kingdom), the way in which he comes to power will be at odds with the normal manner of succession. Given the Byzantine machinations and conspiracies that governed successions in the kingdoms of the Diadochi generally, this is quite a statement. Moreover, these verses spell out that antichrist's seizure of power will be

1) "through seductive methods" (Hebrew *beshalvah*, בשלוה, a phrase which focuses on antichrist's methods and specifically his ability to put all potential opponents at ease and off-guard with the unexpectedness of his actions; cf. *basheliy* in 2Sam.3:27),

2) "by means of duplicity" (Hebrew *bachalaqlaqoth*, בהלקלקות, a phrase which brings out the slipperiness and deceptiveness of all of antichrist's pronouncements, and especially his flattery of every audience and segment of society, designed to disarm one and all for his own evil purposes; cf. Dan.11:34), and

3) by setting in motion "a conspiracy" (Hebrew *mirmah*, מרמה, a word which emphasizes the treachery involved in his coup, undertaken in concert with a band of followers who have "leagued themselves to him", cf. 2Kng.9:23).

These statements make it clear that the beast's accession to power will come via some sort of coup d'état, or, at the very least, in a manner far outside the norm for his native country of mystery Babylon.⁽⁴⁷⁾ For believers who are carefully observing the signs of the times, the non-traditional, conspiratorial, and illegal manner in which the beast initially gains power will be a clear indication that he is, in fact, the antichrist.

Evident in the passage above is a seizure of power not unlike many such which have occurred in the past, the Bolshevik and Nazi seizures of power providing two particularly instructive parallels. A small group of dedicated and highly organized conspirators clustered around a charismatic leader prepared to use any and all means of deception and propaganda in order to seize power at an opportune moment is a scenario particularly familiar to students of twentieth century history.

a. The Leader: In the descriptions of antichrist treated above we should note that many of the details we are given portray the beast as he truly is rather than as he will appear to the world. This dichotomy will be especially pronounced during the period of antichrist's rise to power, before he abandons all restraint at the outset of the Great Tribulation (i.e., it is "then" that antichrist will "do [exactly] as he pleases": Dan.11:36). What this means is that although the beast will in fact be "stern of face" and "well-versed in deception" (to use the description given in Dan.8:23 as an example), this is not at all the way he will appear to the world. The negative realities of his character and evil nature of his purpose will be hidden under a guise of "sweetness and light" to a degree not yet witnessed, and it will take a high level of spiritual discernment in company with a solid depth of biblical knowledge to see through his facade. One aspect of the beast's

public persona which should not be underestimated in the process of his introduction to the world and rise to prominence is his messianic claim. He is, after all, the anti-*Christ*. Jesus was quite young (barely 30) when He began His public ministry, and in keeping with his pattern of "breaking the traditional mold" on the one hand and of imitating Christ on the other, we may expect antichrist to be, if anything, even younger. A millennial birthday, while void of any true significance, would certainly be an asset in the devil's offering of his substitute Messiah as a true prodigy (and such a birth date would also conform well to the 2026 projection for the Tribulation's commencement).⁽⁴⁸⁾

So we may posit in the early days of the Tribulation (or perhaps even before it begins) the appearance of an extremely charismatic young man who at least hints at being Jesus Christ (and later proclaims it). We may well imagine that through an outwardly simple and ascetic lifestyle, a show of celibacy, and even an appearance that approximates what the world expects when they imagine "what Jesus would look like" the beast will easily draw many into his charade. The working of satanically empowered "miracles" will contribute greatly to this process of deception (2Thes.2:9-12). Apart from the fact that our Lord has told us in no uncertain terms **not** to look for Him to return in this way which approximates His first advent (for about His second advent there will be absolutely no doubt: Matt.24:23-31; Mk.13:21-26; cf. Lk.21:8-9), hidden within all of the beast's words there will be indications clear enough to those who know their God that he is not truly the Messiah. For everything antichrist says will be directed towards impressing the masses and gaining a personal following, that is to say, towards currying favor rather than teaching the truth (and this will be true no matter how fine sounding and deep the platitudes he spouts may be).

Thus antichrist will be the ultimate "wolf in sheep's clothing" (Matt.7:15; cf. Rev.13:11ff.), effectively presenting himself as gentle and mild on the outside, but being in truth a ravenous son of Satan on the inside. Just as the devil, the quondam "light bearer", threw away that prestigious position now occupied by the true Morning Star (compare Is.14:12 with 2Pet.1:19; Rev.2:28; 22:16), and yet still represents himself as a "messenger of light" (2Cor.11:14-15), so also we may expect antichrist to burst upon the scene as a bright and shining light in the eyes of the unbelieving world, though in reality all within is deep darkness. We may also expect his approach to be syncretic as he makes himself all things to all people in order to ensnare as many as possible: to those looking for a religious solution, he will seem the true Messiah; to those looking for a political answer to the world's problems, the Great Leader; and to those enchanted with the scientific and supernatural, it is not beyond the pale of speculation to assume that antichrist may well allow himself to be understood as some genetically engineered superman, or an extra-terrestrial sent from afar to heal all the wounds of this troubled world. So astounding and impressive will he and the impression he creates be, that even in the initial stages of his rise to prominence there will doubtless be many who will exclaim, "this is the One, this is the Christ!".

Two other points can be made about the initial rise of the beast as a "great leader" based upon 1st John 2:18-22. In that passage we find John using the analogy of antichrist to warn his readers about the dangers of all false teachers and counterfeit "Christian"

leaders. These men are said in verse 19 to have "gone out from us", indicating that those most dangerous to the Church of that day were unbelievers and apostates who had built up some credentials as "Christian leaders" before overtly breaking with the faith. We may draw from this the corollary conclusion that the beast himself will very possibly begin his career as an erstwhile "minister" of the church visible. Secondly, John's observation in verse 18 that there are "many antichrists" has a particular significance for the early days of the Tribulation. The removal of Holy Spirit restraint (discussed in part 2B) will allow these lesser "antichrists" to gain more prominence and larger followings than is presently the case. Far from creating competition problems for the actual beast, these other false Messiahs will serve to provide cover for antichrist in the early days of his rise. We may expect these pseudo-antichrists to be much more obviously false and to be operating much more transparently out of selfish motivation, so that not only will these more obvious frauds seem more credible candidates for the role of "antichrist" (thus offering a measure of protection for the real antichrist from any such scrutiny or identification), but they will also make it seem very unlikely that the beast could possibly be the genuine antichrist when his activities are compared to their own much more clearly evil and satanic behavior.

Finally, while we perhaps do not know all we would like to know about the early rise of antichrist, everything we do know suggests that his appearance, manner, presentation, and personal charisma will be persuasive in the extreme. Since his motivations are entirely evil and his moral character non-existent, it is more than likely the case that he will very effectively espouse political positions and social causes with which many of us will be highly sympathetic (though he will have no intention of actually following through on any of his promises or of ever being held accountable for his lies). It will thus be more important than ever before for believers of the tribulational period to stay aloof from politics of every sort. The events prophesied will take place regardless of our actions. Our duty is to the Lord, and our primary responsibility in regard to the political situation of the Tribulation will be to avoid becoming ensnared by the beast's movement, a task that will prove far more difficult than we may now imagine, and one that may be next to impossible for all those who mistakenly choose to fight antichrist with political rather than spiritual weapons. Nothing could be more dangerous to our spiritual welfare than to suppose that believing in antichrist or following him will be difficult things for believers to do, or that attempting to oppose him militarily will be either possible or godly. On the contrary, under the enormous pressures of that time it will be all too easy to be swept into antichrist's powerful vortex. The difficult thing will be to persevere in our commitment to Jesus Christ despite everything we see with our eyes, leaving the politics to Him and concentrating on the spiritual realities that are truly important.

b. The Movement: As we have suggested earlier, though the opposite is certainly possible, there are some indications that the Tribulation may perhaps be preceded by a period of considerable peace and prosperity, a situation which will rapidly and radically change as soon as the seventh seal is opened. In our discussion of the second seal trend and its symbol, the rider on the red horse (see part 2B), we also saw that the Tribulation will be a time of unprecedented civil discord, civil strife, and social upheaval, with the breakdown of law and order progressing at an alarming rate worldwide. This contrast,

along with the trend towards acceleration of crime, revolution, and general societal disintegration, will make the world in general very receptive to a leader and a movement that promise decisive action and deliverance from these new and mounting terrors. For Babylon, the world's commercial capital, worldwide instability will add an additional dimension of concern as business interests overseas are threatened by revolutions and dictatorships (cf. in particular the rise of the southern alliance discussed below), at the same time that the exceptional economic well-being of her citizens is being seriously degraded.

The advent of an individual who approximates Christ in his mannerisms and gives promise of miraculous abilities would attract attention under any circumstances. In the crisis occasioned by the onset of the Tribulation, we can expect antichrist to receive an all the more enthusiastic hearing. To rise to political power, however, will require the building of a movement, and such organizations must of necessity possess at least the semblance of a platform. Since he will have no intention of implementing any of the promises he may make (and no expectation of ever being called to account for this failure), any resemblance between his actual policies and his pre-ascension to power pronouncements will be purely coincidental. Remembering that antichrist's initial base of power will be religious, it is probable that his movement will also be more religious than political in appearance (albeit, in reality, with definite political ambitions). Thus we can expect the beast's policy manifestoes to be even more general than those to which citizens of contemporary democracies are now accustomed. As "the great religious leader", and, at least to his inner circle, "the true Messiah", those who throw in their lot with him will be expected to "trust him" to solve every problem *after* he is in power. With few specific policy proposals to attack, antichrist will cleverly and deceitfully craft an agenda designed to alienate as few as possible, and at the same time allow the majority to project their wildest dreams into his poetically ambiguous words. As a master of deception (Dan.8:23-25; 11:21; 11:27; 2Thes.2:9-12; cf. Rev.19:20), it is likely that the beast will fashion a public relations strategy which seeks to appeal to and to coopt the extremes of both right and left, while embracing the middle as well:

- in terms of social policy, promising to repress growing instability and crime, yet adopting a live and let live attitude towards all other behavior (no matter how degenerate).
- in terms of economic policy, promising to end the growing crisis, while at the same time relieving debt and creating economic equality (without regard to property rights).
- in terms of foreign policy, promising security at home through actively improving the world abroad (a top-down, one-world approach, self-righteously justified).

That is to say, antichrist's movement will embrace contradictory policy directions which seem at one and the same time puritanical and libertine (in social policy), capitalistic and communistic (in economic policy), and isolationist and interventionist (in foreign policy). In truth, of course, he will "do as he pleases" as soon as his worldwide power-base is secure. In addition to the pressure of crisis, the lack of specifics in the beast's

program will do much to allay legitimate fears. Since his movement will be first and foremost a "religious" one which has turned to political solutions "for the good of all", this withholding of specifics will seem the more reasonable, and be more readily tolerated than would be the case for a more traditional party. Adherents will be expected to put their faith in this exceptionally "good and gifted" man, trusting him to bring divine power and supernatural solutions to bear on the urgent problems of the day, trusting him to somehow bring in a new millennium of peace, prosperity, security and harmony around the globe, one, that is of such blessing in every regard that every segment of society will benefit – everyone will win, and no one will lose. The attractiveness of this vision, the pressing nature of the emergency, the removal of Holy Spirit restraint, and the seemingly exceptional (though in reality egregious) nature of antichrist will all be factors which contribute to the success and popularity of his movement.

An important point to understand in the context of antichrist's religious-political movement is the role its rise will play in the Great Apostasy (and, conversely, the role that the Great Apostasy will play in it): the defection of many lukewarm Christians around the world from allegiance to the true Messiah will be intimately connected with their conversion into followers of the pseudo-Messiah, antichrist. In the previous installment of this series, we saw that the unique conditions of the Tribulation, namely, the removal of Holy Spirit restraint, the concomitant outbreak of the mystery of lawlessness, the dearth of solid Bible teaching, and the plentifulness of persuasive false teaching will all contribute to the rise of antichrist's religious movement.⁽⁴⁹⁾ After all, before the lies of the beast can be effective, truth must first be rejected, and it is this rejection of the truth of the Word of God that is at the core of the apostasy that will be so closely interwoven with antichrist's success:

To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the Lord is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it. Jeremiah 6:10 NIV

This religious movement, the base from which antichrist's political offensive will be launched, will be an ecumenical one that gradually coopts and subsumes most if not all of what today might be called "organized Christianity", culminating at the Tribulation's mid-point when the beast and his false prophet will throw off all semblance of deceit, unveiling the movement for what it truly is, the outright worship of Satan and his anointed antichrist (2Thes.2:4; Rev.13:1-18; cf. Dan.11:36-39). When antichrist is thus finally "revealed", it will be far too late for those who have already accepted him as the true Messiah. In terms of the building up of his movement, however, we may expect this acceptance, allegiance, and "faith" to be more of a process than an overnight conversion, one which gathers strength and momentum with every political and military success (just as the Great Apostasy will only reach its peak under the pressures of the Great Persecution: Matt.24:8-28).

In policy terms, the vague, pseudo-religious promises of antichrist will provide much of interest to nominal and lukewarm Christians on both ends of the political spectrum. For those on the left, the beast's preaching of "economic justice", a "live and let live"

morality, and a pro-active internationalism for "the good of all mankind" will have much to recommend it. For those of the right, his promise of "millennial" economic prosperity and limitless opportunity, his pledge to end crime and social upheaval, and his commitment to a forceful elimination of external threats under the guise of the "conquering Messiah" will prove hard to resist. In short, a golden age under the reign of this great messianic leader will seem a "deal too good to pass up" for all concerned. Christian skeptics who understand that all of these dreamy prospects are essentially secular and material rather than spiritual will find themselves increasingly on the outside.

The three-fold combination of the most effective satanic propaganda, the most intense pressure, and the least spiritually prepared Christian population in history will greatly contribute to antichrist's success and to the process of apostasy. It is therefore understandable that Babylon, the place of the greatest Christian community (in terms of numbers, influence, and, historically, in terms of effectiveness), will also be the place of greatest apostasy. Indeed, as the home country of antichrist, Babylon will be the place where the Great Apostasy originates, and the nation which will see the most numerous and most dramatic defections from Jesus Christ. Given its influence in the Christian world, there could really be no better place for the devil and for his antichrist from which to launch the last great assault on faith.

One thing of which we may be sure in regard to the beast's politico-religious movement is that, while it may be purposely vague in specifics (beyond the need to "just trust" the new "Messiah"), it will certainly not be lacking in excitement or in entertainment. To the world of that time, desperate for solutions, eager for distractions, and open to seduction, the promises, the thrill, the confidence, the electricity of a mass movement more appealing and led by an individual more charismatic than anything previously seen will be difficult to resist (and few will try). This seemingly righteous yet self-righteous movement will give direction and provide justification to all sorts of evils and hidden desires, even as it grants absolution for them through the safety which is often to be found in numbers and in popular causes. The promises of antichrist's movement will prove a heady wine that will easily inebriate many of the inhabitants of Babylon, dissolving their fears and stimulating their lusts (as wine is wont to do), and thereby providing a substantial base for the beast from which to launch his coup d'état and gain control of Babylon (cf. Hab.2:4-5).

c. The Party: Daniel 8:9 tells us that antichrist will "start small" and yet quickly become the most powerful of the tribulational leaders (i.e., he will come virtually "out of nowhere" and become more prominent than any of the "ten horns"; cf. Dan.7:20). Therefore we may safely posit the rapid development in the early days of the Tribulation of a mass movement coalescing around this previously unknown charismatic leader, and propelling him into power almost overnight. However, it is important to distinguish between antichrist's overall following on the one hand (i.e., all those who, while they do become involved in his mass movement, yet possess widely divergent degrees of commitment to and understanding of his true aims), and his committed followers on the other (deemed here his "party"). Daniel 11:23b states that the beast's rise to power will be accomplished by means of only a small group (*me'ath goy*). We should not take this

to be a reference to the numbers who flock to his banner at that time, but rather to the small cabal who are truly privy to his intentions:

After men have leagued themselves to him (i.e., antichrist's inner circle), he will set his conspiracy in motion and will grow [in power] and become [very] strong, even though his faction (i.e., his "party") is small.

Daniel 11:23

Because of the rapidity of his rise, seizing power in Babylon, gaining control of revived Rome, and defeating the only other major power-block in the world, the southern alliance – all within the Tribulation's first three and one half years – it is virtually certain that antichrist will begin to collect a sizeable mass following right from the Tribulation's inception. We can expect his actual "party", however, to be quite small in comparison to the wave of supporters who sweep him into control of Babylon. It is also likely, as indicated in the quote above (and paralleled by totalitarian movements of the past), that within this "party" itself there will be an inner core consisting of antichrist's most trusted confidants (i.e., those who initially "league" themselves to him even before his meteoric tribulational rise begins). Within this inner circle of leadership (containing the likes of the false prophet of Revelation chapter 13), it is probable that there will be no illusions about the beast's true nature and intentions, and that this cadre will most likely be engaged in organization and planning with antichrist even before the Tribulation commences. For the beast will no doubt be in the process of collecting and forming a group of "disciples" long before the Tribulation begins and his true nature is revealed. It stands to reason that this inner following would be privy to his true origin and plans, and be in full complicity thereto, as opposed to those who are later "amazed" and join the mass rush to his band wagon which will ensue in no small measure as a result of the "signs and miracles" he will later perform (cf. 2Thes.2:7-9).

The supernatural element of antichrist's appeal and the "evidence" it seems to provide (to unbelievers) that he "is the Messiah" also supports what we have suggested before about the beast's movement, namely that it will initially be a religious movement behaving like a political one. For this reason we may likewise expect many members of the original "party" that is built upon his inner cadre of supporters to be religious figures and adherents for whom the line between religion and politics has been blurred through the acceptance of the person of the pseudo-Messiah, antichrist. The promise of tangible rewards when once the beast "comes into his kingdom" (Dan.11:24; 11:39; cf. Dan.11:28) will also have a powerful effect in motivating his followers at every level, and it should not be lost on believers that all the benefits and blessings promised by this ecumenical movement of the false Messiah will be material in nature, focused entirely on this world, and bereft of any true spiritual dimension whatsoever. The most important thing for Christians to remember when considering these matters before the time is that this exciting new personality will not be the true "embodiment and fulfillment of Christianity" as he will claim to be, and not even the fact that institutional Christianity will flock to him can make him so. He will not, in fact, be the true Messiah at all, but only a very cleverly constructed counterfeit, and of that we have been warned ahead of time by our Lord Himself, the one and only Christ:

"At that time if anyone says to you 'Look! Here is the Christ!' or 'There He is!', don't believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will perform great miracles and wonders [sufficient] to deceive even the elect, if [that were] possible. Look, I have told you [this] ahead of time."

Matthew 24:23-25

d. The Crusade: The religious focus of the beast's movement mentioned above will serve to make his rise to power more like a crusade than a political campaign. This will be true both in terms of internal and external policies. We have already suggested that antichrist's social, economic, and foreign policy platform will make attractive and seductive promises of progress (which, of course, he has no intention of keeping once in power). But we may expect an even larger part of his and his party's appeal to lie in threats he promises to remove. While no one can foresee the precise condition of the world at that future time, the fact is that, after antichrist's rise to power in Babylon and his subsequent gaining of control of revived Rome, the remaining portion of the Tribulation's first half will be consumed by his two massive military campaigns against the world's only significant remaining power block, the southern alliance (Dan.11:25-30; 11:40-43). It takes no great leap to surmise that the growth of antichrist's influence both in Babylon and in revived Rome will be at least in part because of the perception that he is the only potential leader capable of and willing to confront the growing threat to the west from this quarter of the world.

Perhaps the one thing that might be capable of propelling a strong-man into power in this country and in Europe would be the development of a unified anti-western Islamic world under the control of a messianic figure bent on world conquest. Such a development would be all the more terrifying and compelling if it were to manifest itself in escalating terrorism in addition to more traditional aggression. Daniel chapter 11 and the other passages which touch upon this issue do not give us many specifics about this "king of the south", but the need for two considerable campaigns to subdue him, and the indications that his alliance encompasses the bulk of the biblical "south" (i.e., a large kingdom with a center of gravity in the Middle East, Africa, and probably parts of Central Asia) are enough to suggest that his power will be extensive. It is also worth speculating that this individual may well be seen by his followers to be the coming Islamic "Messiah", the Mahdi. In such a political environment, with the west besieged by a unified Islamic alliance bent upon conquest, it is easy to see how the nominally Christian world might take this foreign leader to be "the antichrist". And once the leader of the southern alliance is accepted as "antichrist", the claim of the real antichrist to be the Messiah will seem to ring all that much more true to those who trust their eyes more than the Word of God. Whatever the particulars of the political events of those days, from the prophecies about the southern alliance we may safely posit a gathering threat from abroad manifesting itself internally in Babylon in any manner of terrifying ways. Nor should we underestimate the intensity of the pressures of those days as lawlessness reigns in the absence of Holy Spirit restraint.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Thus it would be strange indeed if antichrist were not to make maximum use of such a threat to build his following. Seen in this way, antichrist's rise takes on the aura of a crusade which must first unify Babylon and the west before waging war against the Islamic "antichrist" in behalf of

"Christendom". Casting himself in the role of the conquering Messiah, the putative defender of Israel (see section IV below), and the deliverer of the "Christian" west, will do much to establish antichrist's bona fides in the eyes of marginal and nominal Christians everywhere. For those who truly know their God, however, it will be understood that, for antichrist, world domination is only a means to an end: he does the devil's will, and it is on the top of Satan's agenda to remove from the earth all who believe and all who are of Jewish ancestry – *especially* believing Jews. This is the main point of his true platform and it will be the reason and impetus for Armageddon (see part 5).

e. The Seizure of Power: Scripture does not specify any particular "triggering event" that leads to antichrist's ascension to power. Just as the devil originally seized temporary control of the world through what amounts to a "coup", then, after God's reconstruction of earth, again regained a measure of rulership over this planet through his temptation of our first parents,⁽⁵¹⁾ so the beast will likewise make use of conspiratorial methods in his initial seizure of power:

(23) And at the end of their kingdom (i.e., during the Tribulation), when rebels are being confirmed [in their apostasy], there will arise a stern-faced king (i.e., antichrist), well-versed in deception. (24) And he will become exceptionally powerful – but not through his own power. And he will be astoundingly successful in his corrupting [activities]. And he will even undertake to corrupt the mighty men (i.e., believers) and [a part of] the holy people (i.e., Israel). (25) And on account of his cunning, [his] conspiracy will prosper under his direction. And he will [greatly] magnify himself in his own thinking, and by his seductive ways he will corrupt many. He will even take his stand against the Prince of princes, and will be shattered apart from human agency.
Daniel 8:23-25

And there will arise in his place a [man of] contempt upon whom they will not bestow the honor of the kingship (i.e., he will not come to power in a legal, conventional way). Rather, he will come [to power] through seductive [methods], and will take control of his kingdom (i.e., mystery Babylon) by means of duplicity.
Daniel 11:21

It is not impossible that this seizure of power will follow hard on the heels of some particular event that affords a prime opportunity for action, but this will not necessarily be the case. Once his forces are adequate and public opinion sufficiently primed it is likely that antichrist will waste no further time in grabbing the reins of power in Babylon, and everything we have learned about him suggests that he will do so at the earliest possible moment. The one theme that the scriptures above press home emphatically is the deceptiveness of his actual assumption of power. Therefore, whatever the specific means he will use, and whatever the specific opportunity he will employ, we can be sure that his actions will be deceitful, illegal, and arrogant in the extreme, characteristics that should assure even those only superficially conversant with the scriptures that the one with whom they have to do is certainly not the true Messiah. However, the terrible and terrifying times, the horrendous threats to security both foreign and domestic, the explosion of the "mystery of lawlessness" and unprecedented

"empowerment of error" (phenomena studied in the previous installment of this series; 2Thes.2:3-12; cf. Dan.8:23), and the absence of the palliating influence of the Spirit's restraining ministry will all contribute to the receptiveness of many members of that future generation in Babylon both to the idea of antichrist as the Messiah and to their acceptance of his coup d'état as their one hope of deliverance. Finally it is fair to ask why, with all these factors in his favor, antichrist will have to resort to such means instead of assuming power in a more traditional way. The answer to this question, aside from the fact that he will have no concern whatsoever about even the appearance of legitimacy, is the astounding rapidity (and complete lack of patience) with which he will implement all his plans, and it is precisely this rapidity which will necessitate a coup, both from the standpoint of his unwillingness to wait, and on account of the suspicion and resistance that the very "leopard-like" swiftness of his rise to prominence in Babylon will generate among all those who have not yet been fully convinced (cf. Rev.13:2).

III. The Kingdom of the Beast

Following his seizure of power in Babylon, antichrist will move swiftly to gain control over the seven major nations of the European part of the former Roman empire. Together, Babylon and this subordinate empire of revived Rome will compose the kingdom of the beast in its initial and essential form (i.e., before its expansion through antichrist's conquest of the other major power-block in the world of that time, the "southern alliance" composing the further three kingdoms):

And through [the same] seductive [methods] he will enter the strongest provinces (i.e., the seven nations) of the empire (i.e., Revived Rome), and will do what neither his fathers nor their fathers have done. He will distribute plunder, spoils and riches to his [followers] and will afterwards plot against the [remaining] powers (i.e., the three sub-coalitions of the southern alliance), but [will wait] for an opportune time.

Daniel 11:24

We find the same essential picture in Ezekiel, where antichrist's kingdom is similarly portrayed as a single country ruling a subordinate empire composed of multiple parts:

"Son of man, set your face against Gog of the land of Magog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubhal, and prophesy against him."

Ezekiel 38:2

Gog, as was pointed out in section II above, is a prophetic name for antichrist, while Magog refers to his home country, Babylon, a "super-nation" which holds sway over a larger, composite empire (a.k.a., "revived Rome"). In the passage directly above, the revived Roman empire is designated by the two Japhetic nations "Meshech and Tubhal". The use of Meshech and Tubhal to describe revived Rome (especially its seven European kingdoms) is particularly appropriate, since these two tribes are often associated with one another not only in scripture but also in ancient secular history (cf. Gen.10:2; 1Chron.1:5; Is.66:19; Ezek.27:13; 32:26; 39:1).⁽⁵²⁾ In an identical way to the description above, the European part of revived Rome will also be composed of multiple,

territorially contiguous states which while often associated in general terms, are yet each unique and distinct.

This central characteristic of Babylon's subordinate empire, that is, being both unified in one sense and yet at the same time clearly composed of disparate parts, is also emphasized in Daniel's vision of the great statue. In that vision, however, not only are there distinct parts (i.e., "feet" and "toes"), but even within the composition of its essential material we see a further schism:

(39) And after you (Nebuchadnezzar) another kingdom will arise inferior to you, then a third kingdom after that, one of bronze which will rule the whole earth. (40) Then there will be a fourth kingdom (i.e., revived Rome), strong as iron inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters everything. And like iron which smashes [everything], [this fourth kingdom] will crush and smash all of these other [kingdoms]. (41) And in that you saw that its feet and toes were part potter's clay and part iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but in that you saw iron joined to common clay, it will possess some of the strength of iron. (42) And as to the toes of its feet [being] part iron and part clay, the first (lit., "end") part of the kingdom (i.e., the seven kingdoms) will be strong, but [the other] part of it (i.e., the three kingdoms) will be brittle. (43) And in that you saw iron joined to common clay, there will be an attempt to join these [ten sub-kingdoms] together in the seed of man (i.e., through a mixing of their populations), but they will not bond one to another, just as iron cannot be joined to clay.

Daniel 2:39-43

In this passage too we see the beast's kingdom overall represented as bipartite, for there are two legs of "iron" upon which it stands (i.e., Babylon and revived Rome). And as was the case with "Meshech and Tubhal" in Ezekiel 38:2 above, we also see here a second bifurcation that is itself composed of multiple parts: there are two "feet", representing the dual nature of the revived Roman empire over which Babylon rules. Moreover, in Daniel's careful and repetitive representation of the feet and toes as "partly iron and partly clay" these two elements are being represented as visibly distinguishable and distinct rather than intermingled. That is to say, they are seen as fused one to another rather than confused altogether, layered rather than rendered homogeneous. Therefore we may understand that some of the toes are made of iron, and some of clay, with the clay and iron radiating up into the feet in separate and discernible strata (like Zebra stripes), and with the iron toes representing the seven nations of European Rome, while the clay toes represent the three nations of the southern alliance, the former group being "strong", and the latter "brittle".

1. The Ten Horns of the Beast: The ten toes in Daniel's vision of the great statue, consisting partly of iron and partly of clay, present a clear parallel to the ten horns of the fearsome beast seen in Daniel chapter seven and Revelation chapters thirteen and seventeen. Both are symbolic of the ten nations of the revived Roman empire when seen in its final, united form (after the collapse of the three southern nations).

After this, I was watching in the vision of the night and, behold, a fourth beast (i.e., Rome/revived Rome), terrible and fearsome and exceedingly powerful. And it had huge

iron teeth. It devoured [all the others], crushing [them] to bits and trampling under foot whatever was left. Now this beast was different from those which preceded it, and **it had ten horns**.

Daniel 7:7

This twofold nature of new Rome seen in Ezekiel's reference to "Meshech *and* Tubhal" and in Daniel's implicit differentiation between the toes of iron and clay is also to be found in the other descriptions of the ten horns of the beast.

Then I wished to know the details about the fourth beast (i.e., Rome/revived Rome) which was different from all the others. It had iron teeth which were exceedingly terrible, and claws made of bronze. It devoured [all the others], crushing [them] to bits and trampling under foot whatever was left. And [I also desired to know the details] about **the ten horns** on its head, and the other one (i.e., antichrist) which came up later, and before which **three of the former ones** fell (i.e., the southern alliance)

Daniel 7:19-20a

And as to **the ten horns**, from that kingdom (i.e., Rome, the fourth beast) **ten kings** will arise, and another one (i.e., antichrist) will arise after them. And he will be different from the former ones, and he will cast down **three kingdoms**.

Daniel 7:24

The passage immediately above also makes clear the bipartite nature of revived Rome (i.e., the ten kingdoms which "will arise" later and will come "from that kingdom" of historical Rome). For the ten horns are divided into the explicitly named block of **three**, overtly conquered by antichrist, and a further block which we are meant to understand as composed of the other **seven**. While Daniel 7:24 establishes that the three non-European members of the ten kingdom block that constitutes antichrist's empire are going to be subdued by military force, it is left to the book of Revelation to explicate the precise nature of the relationship to antichrist of the remaining seven kingdoms of revived Rome.

And another sign appeared in the sky. And behold, a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven crowns.

Revelation 12:3

Here we see the dragon, representing Satan, bearing very close resemblance to the beast, his antichrist. This resemblance is deliberate and is an indication of the degree to which antichrist and his father the devil are in accord. The fact that it is only in this passage that we see seven heads with crowns (everywhere else it is the horns which are crowned) shows that the key stepping stone for the establishment of Satan's kingdom on earth will in fact be the central seven kingdoms of revived Rome under the command of antichrist and Babylon.

And I saw a beast rising from the sea, with ten horns and seven heads. And on the horns were ten crowns. And on its heads was a blasphemous name.

Revelation 13:1

This verse shows us both the initial and final constitution of revived Rome at one glance: the ten horns represent the rulers of the two separate parts of revived Rome combined, while the seven heads represent the seven kingdoms of revived Rome's largely European part.⁽⁵³⁾ This passage also demonstrates the critical role played by the seven, for they characterize the beast and his kingdom to such a degree that his "blasphemous name" is actually inscribed directly upon them (a clear parallel to the inscription of the number of the beast upon the foreheads of all of his followers during the Tribulation's second half: Rev.13:16-17; 14:9; cf. Rev.20:4). The best and earliest manuscripts of the New Testament have the Greek word for "name" in the singular, not the plural, and we understand from this description that antichrist's blasphemous title is thus written on the seven heads in a distributive manner, with one letter of that title inscribed upon each of those seven heads. This of course begs the question of just what that name or title might be.

On this point the description of the name as one of "blasphemy" is key, and the ultimate blasphemy has always been the false claim of divinity (cf. Jn.10:33). As our previous discussions have made clear, the central point of antichrist's blasphemy is his claim to be the true Christ, and it is in this respect that his anti-God discourse may be said to be the most blasphemous (hence his scriptural designation, *anti*-Christ; cf. Is.37:23; Dan.7:25; 11:36; 2Thes.2:1-12; Rev.13:1-18). This usurpation by antichrist of the title "Messiah" is, in fact, a three-fold blasphemy directed against all three members of the Trinity: 1) his claim to be Christ is false, and a blasphemous attempt to replace the true Messiah (Matt.24:5; 1Jn.2:22); 2) but his claim also arrogantly usurps the right of the Father (who alone can anoint the true Messiah), while blasphemously denying the Father's many demonstrations of His Son as the true Christ (Matt.3:17; 17:5; cf. Ps.2:6-12; 110:1-7; Is.42:1-4; Col.1:19; Heb.1:1-14); 3) and, further, his claim is the height of the "blasphemy against the Spirit" about which our Lord warned (compare Mk.3:30 with Matt.12:31-32; Mk.3:23-29; Lk.12:10), for by asserting himself as the true Messiah, by definition antichrist blasphemes against the Spirit's witness to Him who really is the Christ, "the anointed One" (thus essentially calling the Spirit a liar). Therefore, since antichrist's claim to be Christ is the ultimate blasphemy, the title "Christ" is thus a not unlikely candidate for the name inscribed on the seven heads. This possibility is made the more likely by the fact that in the Greek script (the language of the book of Revelation), the name "Christ" has the requisite seven letters (i.e., Χ ρ ι σ τ ο ς), allowing us to posit one letter per head, the most likely meaning of the phrase "on its heads was **a** blasphemous name". It is very important to note here that the title written on the seven heads of the beast in Revelation 13:1 is simply "Christ", not **the** Christ (i.e., there is no definite article, and that is always very significant in Greek). Scripture therefore carefully and deliberately distinguishes between **the** One who is truly anointed by God and antichrist, who blasphemously and falsely claims this anointing. By accepting this name of blasphemy, the seven heads/kingdoms and their kings are thus shown to be in full complicity with the beast's claim to be Christ, and thus also with his assumption of power on that basis (see below).

This calls for a mind having wisdom: the seven heads [of the beast] are seven mountains whereon the woman sits. They are also seven kings.

Revelation 17:9

This verse is emphatic in accentuating the importance of the role of these seven mainly European nations in the beast's revived Roman empire. For here we see the seven heads described as "seven mountains whereon the woman (i.e., Babylon) sits". This can only be meant to represent Babylon's domination of and reliance upon these "mountains". The Greek word here, *oros* (ὄρος), does mean mountain, not "hill", so that to take these mountains as the "seven hills of Rome" cannot be supported by the context. To the contrary, in scripture, mountains can be used metaphorically to refer to powerful nations (e.g., Jer.51:25; Dan.2:35), and that is the meaning here. In addition to Babylon's reliance upon and domination of the seven nations in this passage, the use of the word "mountain" suggests that the power of these seven will be not be insignificant.

Our consideration of the passages above should suffice to show that the distinction made by scripture between the 10 horns and 7 heads (or, for that matter, the 7 horns as distinct from the 3 horns within the group of 10) does not represent any discrepancy in symbolism, but is instead designed to differentiate between that part of revived Rome first assimilated by antichrist and Babylon, and the later conquest of the remaining three kingdoms (which constitute the "southern alliance" as we are terming it). Indeed, in the vision of the woman riding the beast throughout Revelation chapter 17, we find all three elements of antichrist's kingdom closely intertwined, with Babylon (represented by the great whore), the seven core kingdoms (represented by the seven heads), and the ten kingdoms of revived Rome fully re-united (represented by the ten horns) all occurring at once.

Having thus established the underlying meaning of this symbolism of the 10 horns and the 7 heads, it is appropriate that we turn now to a brief consideration of the possible geographical constitution of revived Rome. First of all it should be pointed out that the Roman empire of John's day, while centered in Europe, stretched far beyond the boundaries of Europe proper. Rome at the end of Nero's reign comprised the entire Mediterranean litoral, extending from Britain to Armenia, and from southern Germany to the Sahara. Nor, excepting Italy, were the European provinces proper either the most populous or the most prosperous. Egypt, for example, was one of the most important provinces, being the breadbasket of the empire, Asia minor contained the wealthiest city-states, and North Africa was a much more verdant and agriculturally productive area before the systematic devastations which accompanied the Islamic conquest. Furthermore, apart from the close correspondence of Italy with the earlier Italia, the current political map of the Mediterranean world bears in many instances little resemblance to that of Nero's day. For while Hispania-Spain and Gaul-France are each close regional equivalents, the territory of present day France and Spain was in both cases split up into multiple provinces under ancient Rome. The fact is that, other than identifying the beast's empire with the earlier Roman empire, scripture gives no precise identification of the ten kingdom's that comprise it. However, we can make some basic deductions from the conquest of the king of the south and his kingdom by antichrist as described in Daniel chapter 11 (i.e., the three horns of the southern alliance that "fall

before the little horn": Dan.7:19-24). Inasmuch as the conflict between antichrist's realm and the three kingdoms of the southern alliance will center around the land of Israel (Dan.11:25-30; 11:40-44), we can hardly understand these three "horns" in any other way than as areas of the Roman empire in the vicinity of Palestine. We will have much more to say about the southern alliance and this conflict in sections IV through VI below, but suffice it to say here that, given the close proximity of these events to our own day, it is therefore more than likely that those three nations will be or will at least be centered upon the present Muslim power-blocks of that region. At the time of the writing of the book of Revelation, Egypt was the most important province in the empire strategically speaking (through its combination of central geography and grain-producing capacity), Asia Minor (Turkey) was the wealthiest province, and Syria was the place of the greatest concentration of Roman legions (due to the proximity and hostility of the Parthian empire). In the author's view, therefore, these are, in the general terms fleshed out below, the most likely candidates for the three "horns", since they match up reasonably well both with the Roman pattern and with the current geopolitical situation:

1. Egypt (representing a coalition including Muslim Africa and the Arabian peninsula)
2. Turkey (representing a coalition including Muslim Central Asia and the Caucasus)
3. Syria (representing a coalition including Iraq, Iran and Pakistan)

No one can be sure of the particulars, but scripture is very precise about the correspondence of these three kingdoms with the Rome of John's day, and about the fact that there will be three dominant kings ruling them. Therefore while it is not the author's intention to leave the impression that the groupings above are to be taken as definitive, nonetheless, the positing of three sub-coalitions within the Muslim world which bear some relationship to the provinces of John's day does seem to be the best solution to the interpretation of the three horns (even if the precise nature of these groupings as suggested above out should turn out to be somewhat different in the event).

If we thus accept the proposition that Africa and the Mideast are to be removed from the pool of nations/provinces from which the remaining original members of antichrist's empire may be identified, we are left with a probable roster for the seven as follows:

1. Britain (including/representing all of the British Isles)
2. France (including/representing the Benelux nations)
3. Germany (including/representing the rest of Central Europe)
4. Greece (including/representing the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Russia)
5. Spain (including/representing the Iberian peninsula)
6. Italy
7. Israel

As in the case of the three sub-groupings of the southern alliance, this list is meant to be taken as an approximation of the actual coalitions which will manifest themselves at that future time. Scripture, however, does clearly indicate a group of seven kings and their respective kingdoms which will dominate the geography of historical and revived Rome, and in its depiction of the events of the Tribulation's first half and later (in Daniel chapter 11 in particular), there is absolutely no indication given of any neutral parties (indeed, when we move into the Great Tribulation, we find the entire world under the sway of antichrist to one degree or another: cf. Rev.13:3b). Therefore while it is very probable according to present geopolitical realities that the "kingdom of Greece" would be dominated by Russia (and that its "king" would most likely originate in that country), it is still the case that those present (and near-term future) realities must tie in to the historical arrangement of the Roman empire and its provinces to some significant degree. So whatever the actual alignment of the nations of Europe on that near-future day, the essential point is that there will be seven power-blocks (lead by seven extraordinary rulers) which will be constituted from and comprise in near or complete totality present day Europe – or more precisely put, six, because Israel, a non-European state (as it is almost unnecessary to point out), will be one of those seven. In John's day, Palestine was, of course, a Roman protectorate, and in both Daniel and Revelation, the two main sources of scriptural information about these events, Israel plays a central role. Furthermore, the positing of Israel as the northern kingdom's "wedge" against the southern alliance and as an "irritant" to that alliance has much to recommend it both in terms of scriptural interpretation and present realities on the ground. Indeed, at time of writing, by projecting the present course of events it is not difficult to envision a situation in the near future where the west and the Muslim world find themselves embroiled in a fatal duel, with Israel at the center of the conflict.

To review and at the same time cast our glance forward all the way to the end of his reign, we can summarize the progression of antichrist's career as follows:

1. Babylon seized.
2. Revived Rome seized (the 7 kingdoms).
3. The Southern alliance conquered (the 3 kingdoms), in two campaigns.
4. The world subdued (brought under antichrist's influence to a greater or lesser degree).
5. Armageddon (the world's armed forces collected in Israel to oppose Christ's return).

2. The Seizure of Revived Rome: For such a significant event, it may seem surprising that, apart from Daniel 11:24, scripture seems to have very little to say about antichrist's parlaying of his seizure of Babylon into control over the seven nations of the revived Roman empire. Revelation, for example, in its mention of the ten horns and seven heads in association with the beast and Babylon in chapter 17, effectively portrays these events as already accomplished after the fact. The combination of this general lack of scriptural elaboration, the incredibly short time frame within which these events must take place

(i.e., antichrist is ready to launch his first campaign against the south within 18 months of the Tribulation's inception as we shall see), and the details which are provided in Daniel 11:24 (treated below), all lead to the same conclusion: antichrist's seizure of the seven kingdoms will be an extraordinary rapid and amazingly easy affair. In fact, it will hardly be a seizure at all. For the seven kings of revived Rome will be antichrist's allies from the very start.

And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they will receive authority as kings for one hour (i.e., time period, specifically, the Tribulation) **along with the beast**. These will have **one purpose** and [are going to] **give their power and their authority to the beast**.

Revelation 17:12-13

This passage clearly demonstrates the close connection of the beast both to the wider group of ten mentioned here and to the more elite group of seven included within the ten. In these verses we are told that all ten kings will hand over to antichrist the power and authority they possess over their respective nations. This is critical for our understanding of the revived empire and of antichrist's seizure of control over it, for what it suggests is that the beast's efforts to gain control of revived Rome far from being hindered by the rulers of her most important nations will instead be aided by them, and significantly so:

1) They are all said to "receive authority as kings for one hour (i.e., the Tribulation) *along with the beast*." Scripture thus ties their accession to power directly to that of antichrist, and in the phrase "receive authority" indicates that, like antichrist, rather than being independent agents they are operating under the aegis of a larger scheme (i.e., Satan's plan for world conquest).

2) This impression is strengthened by the fact that they are all said to have the same "purpose" (Greek *gnome*, γνώμη), and it is precisely this common purpose which motivates them to hand over their power and authority to the beast.

3) Finally, the fact that they are going to hand their power and authority over to antichrist entails an unheard of degree of coordination, cooperation, and subordination of personal and national interest – certainly beyond anything paralleled in world history to this point. This detail strongly suggests that these ten kings are either also Nephilim (half-angelic creatures not recorded in the Bible since Genesis chapter six), or at least close and ardent followers of the devil whose purpose it will be from the very beginning of their political careers to aid and abet antichrist's ascension to rule over revived Rome. In that it is said of the ten kings that they will "receive authority as kings . . . *along with the beast*", we have in this statement the further implication that their rise to power in their individual countries will bear many similarities to the rise of antichrist in Babylon, making it clear that they are indeed part of the devil's plan from the start (cf. their later unity of feeling and cooperation in regard to Babylon: Rev.17:16).

By any interpretation the thrust of all the "head-horn" passages covered here and in the previous section is, especially when taken together, to tie antichrist, his kingdom, and his subordinate rulers very closely together. Far from being accidental, therefore, the

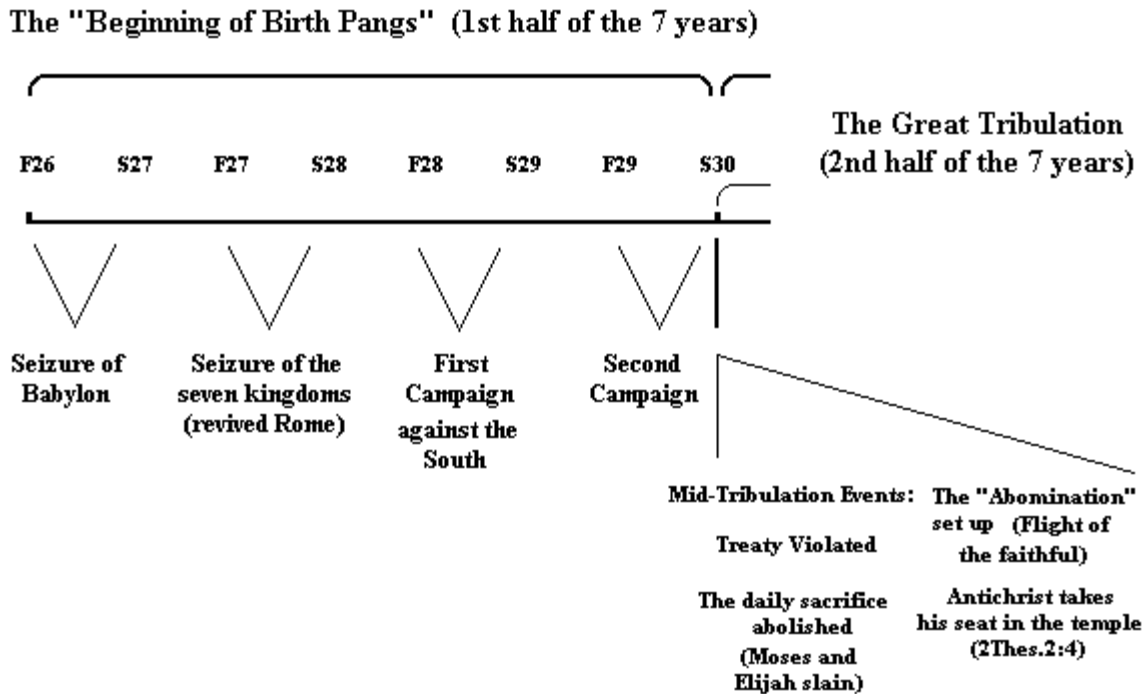
cooperation of the ten kingdoms themselves in antichrist's seizure of power over them as "revived Rome" is also an integral part of the satanic grand design for gaining world power. It is therefore in this sense that we should understand the details given in the critical verse below which alone describes antichrist's seizure of revived Rome from his base of power, Babylon.

And through [the same] seductive [methods] he will enter the strongest provinces (i.e., the seven nations) of the empire (i.e., revived Rome), and will do what neither his fathers nor their fathers have done. He will distribute plunder, spoils and riches to his [followers] and will afterwards plot against the [remaining] powers (i.e., the three sub-coalitions of the southern alliance), but [will wait] for an opportune time.

Daniel 11:24

The phrase in the translation above, "the strongest provinces of the empire", refers to the seven nations ("provinces") of revived Rome which constitute the strong or "iron" part of the revived empire as opposed to the three remaining "kingdoms of clay" (cf. Dan.2:39-43).⁽⁵⁴⁾ Not only does the Hebrew here not give any definite indication that antichrist's entrance into these provinces is at all opposed, the description of the means by which he enters, "through [the same] seductive [methods]", strongly suggests that his taking of possession of these seven nations will be along the lines of his seizure of power in Babylon. In fact, the Hebrew phraseology employed here in Daniel 11:24 is effectively identical to that used of antichrist's coup d'état described in Daniel 11:21 (i.e., the *qal* of *bo`*, בּוֹא, plus the prepositional phrase *beshalvah*, בשליוה, are used in both instances to mean "gain control through seductive methods"). Rather than a complicated series of military maneuvers, therefore, it is apparent that antichrist's takeover of Europe and Israel will be accomplished through largely political means. The picture provided by Daniel 11:24 also agrees with what we know of the timing of tribulational events. A complicated series of military campaigns designed to "conquer" all of Europe and Israel would almost certainly take a considerable amount of time to prepare and complete, and such a prolonged period of warfare within Europe is not consistent with what scripture has to say about the Tribulation's first half, specifically the two campaigns against the south which follow the beast's seizure of the seven kingdoms (cf. esp. Dan.11:25-30 and 11:40-43):

Events of the Tribulation's First Half



The chart above will suffice to give the reader a rough idea of the sequence of events during the Tribulation's first half, and the approximate timing and longevity of its major events (dictated by the constraints of its 42 month duration) which concern us here. The beast's initial seizure of Babylon and preparation for the subsequent securing of the first seven nations of revived Rome would seem to require at a very minimum at least six months a piece to complete. Given that fully two major campaigns by antichrist's newly won empire of the north against the southern alliance are also prophesied to occur during the first half of the Tribulation (and that such campaigns have historically taken place during the winter months with most of the preceding summer months needed to organize and prepare), we are left with a scant six month period for antichrist's capture and consolidation of the seven kingdoms. These time constraints alone, therefore, argue for this seizure to be more along the lines of another coup d'état, and this time a multi-faceted one at that.

We have already discussed the scenario by which antichrist will use deceptive means to gain power in his native Babylon. To accomplish a similar feat in seven other different nations simultaneously will unquestionably require an extraordinary degree of cooperation, one which is unprecedented, as observed above, in the previous annals of human history. Apart from cooperation at the top, it is highly questionable whether such

a feat would be possible (even were we to assume a large fifth column of sympathetic supporters in each of these seven nations and their corresponding spheres of influence). Indeed, the only scenario which seems prima facie feasible is the one which Daniel 11:24 suggests, the same scenario which the absence of detail in Revelation also points to, assuming as it does antichrist's control over revived Rome from the beginning, namely, that the seven kings are in the beast's camp from the very start. This agrees with the information we have already gleaned earlier in the book of Daniel:

And as to the ten horns, from that kingdom (i.e., Rome, the fourth beast) ten kings will arise, and another one (i.e., antichrist) **will arise after them**. And he will be different from the former ones, and **he will cast down three kingdoms**.

Daniel 7:24

In emphasizing the military defeat of three kingdoms, this verse necessarily suggests no such overt military conquest in the case of the preceding seven. But the passage above also provides an important detail which helps to explain antichrist's relationship to the seven, for it states that he "will arise after them". What this means is that the rise of these seven extraordinary dictators to power in their own countries (and their subsequent establishment of hegemonies over their weaker neighboring nations) will **predate** antichrist's takeover of Babylon. In other words, the seven nations of revived Rome will effectively be waiting for the beast to pluck like a series of ripe apples as soon as he has secured his own political position.

Even the projecting of the development of antichrist's religious-political movement backward several years prior to the Tribulation (so as to be able to posit the development of a number of mirror movements in the seven nations and the subsequent seizure of power by their leaders) fails to fully explain how or perhaps more to the point why these seven kings are standing ready to hand over their power and authority to the beast. The fact that this flies in the face of all prior known historical behavior cannot be overemphasized. Therefore it must be the case that these seven kings have more in common with the beast than may meet the eye, and that their involvement with the devil and his minions is far closer and far more explicit than anything we have seen in the past, even in the case of the world's most evil tyrants and dictators. Not even an active embracing of Satanism is sufficient to fully explain this somewhat self-sacrificing acquiescence to the will of the devil's son. Therefore the best explanation for this extraordinary chain of events is that, like antichrist, they too are Nephilim, not offspring of the devil himself as is antichrist, but engendered nevertheless by some of his most trusted lieutenants. Only in this way can we explain on the one hand the coincidence of seven discrete meteoric rises to power on the part of seven distinct individuals within the territory of historical Rome, and on the other hand their unanimous willingness to cede their exceptional power to another, absent overwhelming duress. It can only be that these seven share in company with the beast a wickedly unique origin and an innate commitment to carrying out the will and plans of the evil one. This interpretation helps to explain the close connection found in scripture between the beast and these seven; for example, 1) in Revelation 13:2 the beast is said to have a mouth "as of **lions**", the plural being a reference to the seven kings who are clearly similar to him; 2) the seven kings are described at Revelation 13:3 as seven identical heads, though one head has a fatal

wound, a picture which for our purposes here also shows the similarities between antichrist and these kings who is both "an eighth and one of the seven" (i.e., depending upon whether he is being viewed as a discrete emperor or the personification of revived Rome: Rev.17:11); 3) the fact that, as we saw above, the "name of blasphemy" which identifies the beast as a pseudo-Christ is inscribed collectively on the seven heads (Rev.13:1); 4) the identification of antichrist as a horn among these horns (Dan.7:24) who starts out smaller (Dan.7:8) and becomes larger than the others (Dan.7:20); and, finally 5) the fact that all seven heads and all ten horns are an intrinsic part of the same beast in all of the instances in Daniel and Revelation where this figure is used. Therefore whatever the visible coordination between these leaders (and between the beast and these seven as a group), and whatever visible similarities in the political, social, and religious phenomena they represent and exploit, the truth will be that there is a deeper, more sinister reason for their unprecedented cooperation, and that all of the areas of apparently coincident self-interest on the surface will in reality be driven by a darker unanimity of purpose. It is for this reason above all that the seizure of the seven kingdoms will resemble a victory parade rather than a military campaign (in terms of recent history, Nazi Germany's *Anschluss* of Austria may provide a rough parallel).

Even such exceptional (or, from the divine point of view, egregious) leaders will still require some sort of external or internal crisis to provide sufficient motivation for these present day democracies to give themselves over to dictatorial rule. The most likely grounds for such a dramatic sea-change in the collective body politic of Europe and beyond is the continued rise and consolidation of power in the Muslim world of groups and leaders with anti-western Jihadist agendas. The description given in Daniel chapter 11, moreover, is clearly one of a unified northern block (antichrist's Babylon-led revived Rome) waging two massive and eventually decisive campaigns against a similarly unified (Muslim) south. Now the three horns which collectively represent this southern alliance will later be a willing part of antichrist's unified Rome (Rev.17:12-17). Therefore the most likely explanation for both this initially anti-beast opposition on the part of the three southern horns in contrast to their later unanimous approval of antichrist is to be found in their accession to power through the aid of the "king of the south" who leads this alliance and for whom their support is in reality duplicitous (cf. Dan.11:25-30; and see the discussion in parts V and VI below).

Postulating a charismatic figure who rises to prominence in the Mideast in the days before the Tribulation is the most likely interpretation of the events which scripture describes. It accounts for the development of a threat serious enough to motivate the west to serious political change on the one hand, while also explaining the rise of the three kings in a manner wherein they are initially hostile to the beast (at least to all appearances), yet later willingly subject to him (after the defeat of their first patron). At the time of writing the emergence of such a single charismatic leader who manages to gain control of the entire Muslim world is a nightmare scenario. The appearance of such a "Mahdi", a Muslim "Messiah", and the rallying of that world around him is perhaps the one event which might explain a dramatic political realignment in Europe and Israel in such a short space of time, and the subsequent and even more rapid rise of antichrist both in Babylon and to the rulership of revived Rome. In the face of exponentially growing terrorism, the emergence of an overt military threat posed by the unification of

this part of the world in hostility towards the west (even bent upon its conquest), and the collapse of economies dependent upon the Mideast's oil, it is easy to see how the appearance of a set of leaders (and, subsequently, one leader in particular) would be welcomed as the only hope of survival, even at the price of the loss of freedom. The fact that Israel will be the primary focal point of the initial southern attack will provide a further incentive on the part of many in the west, and especially in the United States, to support this development of military dictatorships both at home and abroad. Perhaps the most ironic and potentially dangerous thing about this scenario is that according to the propaganda machine of the beast and his seven kings the coming conflict through which they will rise to power will likely be billed as a war in defense of Christendom and Israel against the pseudo-Christ "Mahdi", whereas those who support this effort will be casting in their lot with the real antichrist about whom scripture leaves no doubt that the destruction of all believers and of all Jews is in reality one of his chief objectives.

IV. Antichrist's Alliance with Israel

In the long history of the nation of Israel, there have been many times when, instead of relying upon the Lord who formed her and delivered her from the smelting furnace of Egypt to be His own special people and nation, she has instead chosen to rely upon the power of countervailing empires. From the human point of view, a relatively small nation poised in-between opposing and competing empires as Israel has been for much of her history would seem to be well served by allying herself to one party or the other, or at least by seeking help from one side when threatened by the other. But Israel is God's special possession, the "apple of His eye" (Zech.2:8), and it has ever been His will for her to rely, rather than upon the deceptiveness of human strength and good will, upon His own power and mercy, . . .

. . . not on Egypt instead (cf. Is.20:5-6; 30:1-7):

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, [who] rely upon horses and put their faith in chariots because they are numerous and in cavalry because it is strong, but who have not looked to the Holy One of Israel, and have not sought the Lord.

Isaiah 31:1

. . . not Assyria instead (cf. Ezek.23:5-8):

You shall not say "an alliance (i.e., with Assyria)" [as the solution] for everything [for] which this people may say "an alliance (i.e., with Assyria)" [as the solution] (cf. Is.30:1). And you shall not fear that which makes them afraid nor tremble at it (i.e., the threat of the northern kingdom allied with Syria). It is the Lord of Hosts whom you shall sanctify, and He is the One who shall be your fear, and He is the One at whom you shall tremble.

Isaiah 8:12-13

. . . not on Babylon instead (cf. Ezek.23:14-21):

What will you say when [the Lord] puts in charge over you as commanders those very ones whom you courted (i.e., the Babylonians)?
Jeremiah 13:21a

In contrast to the revival led by Moses and Elijah and administered by the 144,000, the state of Israel itself will remain in secular hands until our Lord returns. And this same tendency to seek security apart from the Lord will be the proximate cause of many of her tribulational difficulties as she first allies herself to the beast (as one of the seven kingdoms), then at the Tribulation's end conspires against him in company with tribulational Babylon (see part 5 of this series). Outside of those who are today believers, and that much larger future number who shall embrace the cross of Jesus Christ during the exceptional Jewish evangelism which will then occur, the state of Israel is and will be during the Tribulation an exceptionally secular and materialistic state (cf. Is.2:7-8; Amos 8:11), making it a natural ally of Babylon, even if it has and will have its issues with the other coalitions of revived Rome. And it is Babylon that will count, especially at the inception of the Tribulation in its capacity as antichrist's initial base of power. Facing an intensified threat from the growth of the southern alliance (whose rallying cry her destruction will be), it is not difficult to see how Israel in particular will look to Babylon and to antichrist for deliverance, especially considering the special relationship between the two countries which exists even today.

A part of the above trend as well as a result of it will be the emergence of a Jewish ruler whose power and influence will be on a par with the other exceptional "kings" of Europe who will gain sovereignty during the early days of the Tribulation. Not to be confused with antichrist's false prophet who will only come to the fore during the Tribulation's second half (Rev.13:11-18), this Jewish premier is instead one of the seven kings, and also described as the "foolish" (or "godless") and "worthless" (or "wicked") shepherd in Zechariah chapter eleven, a prophecy that sheds much light upon the details of this period from the point of view of events in Israel:

(4) Thus says the Lord my God: "Pasture the flock of the slaughter. (5) Those who buy them will slaughter them and will not be held to account and those who pasture them will not take pity on them. (6) For I will no longer take pity on the inhabitants of the land," says the Lord. "For, behold, I am going to hand over [all] mankind each into the hand of his neighbor and each into the hand of his king, for they will crush the earth and I will not deliver out of their hands." (7) So I pastured the flock of slaughter, that is, those of the flock to be afflicted, and I took for myself two staffs. I called the one "Delight" and the other "Bindings", and [thus] I pastured the flock. (8) After I humbled the three shepherds in the first month, my heart had become grieved with [the flock], and they had come to detest me. (9) So I said, "I will not pasture you [any longer]. Let those destined to die, die, and let those destined to be humbled, be humbled, and let the remainder eat each one the flesh of his companion". (10) Then I took my staff [named] "Delight", and I broke it so as to break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples. (11) And it was broken on that [very] day, and thus those to be afflicted who were watching me knew that this was the word of the Lord. (12) Then I said to them, "If it seems good in your eyes, give me my wages, but if not, then do not". And they weighed

out my wages to me, thirty [pieces] of silver. (13) And the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter[']s field], [this] magnificent price at which I have been valued by them." So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord to the potter[']s field]. (14) Then I broke my second staff [named] "Bindings" so as to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. (15) Then the Lord said to me, "Take up for yourself now the equipment of a godless shepherd. (16) For, behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not look after the humbled, nor seek the [lost] young, nor heal the sick, nor provide for the healthy, but will eat the flesh of the fat and tear off their hooves." (17) Woe to the wicked shepherd who abandons the flock. A sword upon his arm and upon his right eye! And may his arm shrivel and his right eye go blind!
Zechariah 11:4-17

In this prophecy, Zechariah, under divine command, acts out an allegory whose prime application is to the rejection of the gospel message about Jesus Christ as it is proclaimed to Israel during the Tribulation through the ministry of Moses and Elijah. The prime opposition to the truth in this passage is the 7th king, the Israeli leader whose kingdom constitutes the last of the seven horns (rather than antichrist, whom the "king" and "shepherd" in this context are often taken to be):

- verses 1-3: The theme of the powerful about to be humbled as a result of the process described clearly marks this allegory as applicable primarily to the events leading up to Christ's return (namely, the Tribulation; cf. Is.2:11ff; 5:15; Is.13:11; Ezek.21:26).
- verses 4-6: These verses serve to apply the prophetic information in this chapter to the Great Tribulation in Israel and beyond. The "flock of slaughter" refers to those destined for tribulation. The "buyers" are antichrist and his invading army at Armageddon, who will completely ravage the land of Israel during that campaign (cf. Ezek.38-39). The "sellers" are the 7th king, the Israeli leader, and his cronies. They are not "held to account" for this activity, meaning that they will not have to pay for their horrendous behavior – until they are destroyed at Armageddon. Because of the rejection of the gospel by the majority population of Israel at this time, in spite of the ministries of Moses and Elijah and of the 144,000, the period of mercy will end at the Tribulation's mid-point, and the Great Tribulation will ensue, during which time the Lord will "not take pity any longer" upon the land of Israel as she undergoes the most troubled time in her storied history (cf. Jer.30:7). And not only will Israel suffer – the same pattern of intense tribulation will obtain for "all mankind".
- verses 7-8: After the summary overview discussed above, these verses take us back to the period prior to the commencement of the second half of the seven years. The flock "to be afflicted" are those who will suffer tribulation on account of their rejection of the gospel. In his divinely directed actions here, Zechariah is acting as a type (i.e., symbolic representative) of Christ, the Good Shepherd, who in taking for Himself two staffs, Moses and Elijah, is offering Himself and His kingdom soon to come to the inhabitants of Israel. The allegory thus condenses the First and Second Advents as is

often the case in Old Testament prophecy, for the Age of the Church is, in prophetic terms, an interlude between the cross and the Messiah's millennial reign. The names of the two staffs, "Delight" and "Bindings" refer respectively to the joy and love all God's people should have for Him and the relationship He makes available through Jesus Christ (seen in His establishment through Moses of the Old Covenant which foreshadows the New Covenant), and the restoration or "binding up" of what has been broken in His reestablishment of Israel as His covenant nation through which the Messiah will rule the world (whose proclamation is the province of Elijah, as we have seen). The ministry of Moses and Elijah will "thus" (verse seven) be the means by which these truths are brought home to Israel (though most will not accept them until the point of Christ's return). The humbling of "the three shepherds" refers to the defeat of the southern alliance by antichrist at the Tribulation's mid-point. Following the removal of this external threat (the number one factor, as we are suggesting, in Israel's decision and desire to join with antichrist and his alliance), antichrist will make war on Moses and Elijah, and the majority of Israel will openly choose for the former, that is, they will come to "detest" the Lord and His representatives, causing Him to be "grieved" with them and thus bringing the period of mercy to an end. This will happen at the inception of the Great Tribulation (i.e., its "first month" [n.b., not "*one* month"; cf. Gen.1:5, "day *one*" = "the *first* day"]). Ironically for Israel, this same removal of the threat of the Mahdi's invasion will also remove all restraint from antichrist and his policies, and will thus begin the implementation of his and his father the devil's plan to destroy Israel.

- verses 9-14: In these verses we are given the details of this transition from warning and mercy to judgment and tribulation. Having rejected God's truth, God's grace, and God's Son, He will "no longer pasture" these sheep, and they will instead have to endure the harsh treatment of the one they have chosen in His stead, antichrist and his local representative, the 7th king. The breaking of the "covenant" thus refers to the termination of the prior period of mercy to which God's chosen people were entitled, taking as its first symbol the death of the one who had mediated it, namely Moses (i.e., the staff named "Delight"). Just as we have seen that the trumpet judgments of the Tribulation's first half function as warnings and the bowl judgments of the Great Tribulation as primarily punitive, so here we also see divine mercy towards Israel in the period before the commencement of second half of the seven years transitioning now to harsh tribulation. And with the blanket of protection removed from Israel, it is no wonder that the same tribulation and punishment is visited upon "all the peoples". Nor is there any delay, for the Great Tribulation will commence "on that very day" that Moses is removed as a witness to Israel and to the world (compare Rev.11:13-14 with 11:15-19). In his role here as a symbolic representative of our Lord Jesus Christ, Zechariah is told to portray this rejection of the two witnesses for what it truly is, a rejection of the Lord Himself. The prophecy of the thirty pieces of silver, the "severance pay" for the Messiah and His ministry on the one hand and for Moses and Elijah on the other shows unequivocally the low regard that unbelievers in Israel had and will have for the One who died for them as well as for the tremendous sacrifices of His servants on their behalf. This was fulfilled during our Lord's First Advent, and is here applied to Moses (and Elijah) prior to the Second Advent. In both cases this severance pay is given not to the Lord Himself but to His betrayer, to Judas during the First Advent (in a very

literal fashion) and the to the 7th king (who aids in the war against the two witnesses) prior to the Second Advent.⁽⁵⁵⁾ The breaking of the "brotherhood" mentioned here refers historically to the split between believing "Judah" and unbelieving "Israel". At the time of writing, the northern kingdom was a distant memory so that Israel stands symbolically for the unbelievers who reject the message of Moses and Elijah, while "Judah" refers to those who respond to the gospel message and flee into the desert during the middle of the Tribulation prior to the commencement of the Great Persecution, after responding to the "binding" ministry of restoration mediated by Elijah (and Moses) which divides Israel into those who respond and those who do not (cf. Rev.12:1-17).

- verses 15-17: The worthless (or, better, the "godless") shepherd is, in fact, the 7th king, the ruler of Israel during the tribulational period who is part of antichrist's coalition from the beginning. His self-interested modus operandi is clear to see in these verses as he exploits the people and fails to protect them in their hour of need (cf. Ezek.34; Jer.23:1-4; Zech.10:2-3; Jn.10:1-18). His coming condemnation is thus unavoidable.

The 7th king who will rule and abuse Israel during the Tribulation as an associate of antichrist is also mentioned in Ezekiel chapter twenty-one:

And as for you, O defiled [and] wicked prince of Israel, whose day will come at the evil end time (i.e., the Tribulation), this is what the Lord God says, "Take off his [royal] turban and remove his crown. This will not stand (i.e., he and his regime will be deposed). Exalt the humble, but humble the exalted. I will make [his land] a ruin, a ruin, a ruin. But this too shall not happen until the One to whom judgment belongs shall come (i.e., the Messiah), for [to this] have I appointed Him" (cf. Jn.5:22; Acts 10:42; 1Pet.4:5).

Ezekiel 21:25-27

The pattern of the rise, reign, and fall of the 7th king is unquestionably very similar to that of the other six (and most probably to that of the remaining three as well). This shepherd appears to the sheep who support him in his ascension like the champion of their dreams, and quickly rises to supreme and unchallenged power in his own country in no small degree because of an imminent external threat. Once in control, however, he has little regard for his charges, exploiting them mercilessly for his own ends (and no doubt for the benefit of his inner circle as well). As in the case of this particular king who will support antichrist right to the end, even through the Armageddon campaign whose object is to destroy all Israel (i.e., the 7th king's own country), we can expect that for the other subordinate kings as well the wishes of their patron antichrist will easily outweigh the true interests of their respective peoples.

In addition to specific information about the king of Israel during the Tribulation, scripture also gives us specific information about the compact or alliance made between antichrist and Israel during that time.

Then he (i.e., antichrist) will confirm **an agreement** (or "covenant"; Hebrew, ברית, *beriyth*) with the powerful [in Israel] during [that] one [remaining] week (i.e., the 70th week, the Tribulation), but in the middle of the week (i.e., just prior to the Tribulation's mid-point) he will put a halt to sacrifice and offering (i.e., eliminating Moses and Elijah and interrupting the temple rites). And on account of the extreme [nature] of [his] abominations, he [will] be causing desolations (i.e., desertion and estrangement from God), even until the end when what has been determined will be poured out upon the one characterized by [this] desolation (i.e., the beast as archetype and cause of the alienation and rebellion from God which he fosters).

Daniel 9:27

The beast, it will be remembered, is "*the prince*" of this "covenant" (Dan.11:22), and although this "covenant" should not be confused with the "holy covenant" also mentioned by Daniel (Dan.11:28; 11:30; 11:32), it is clear that, as part of his policy of representing himself as the Messiah to Israel and to the world, antichrist will indeed portray this agreement as the fulfillment of the "New Covenant" of Jeremiah 31:31-33. In this way, and despite the refutation that will without doubt proceed from Moses and Elijah, the beast will be effective in coopting those in Israel (and around the world) who are impressed by the ministry of the two witnesses yet still unwilling to give themselves to Christ (cf. Jn.5:43). In reality, of course, this will be no more than the clever "packaging" of the treaty with Israel in a pseudo-Messianic wrapping (attempting through his political and media domination to take credit for the reestablishment of the temple and temple rites). Thus this treaty will be the political focal point for the myth which antichrist will foster about himself as the "conquering Messiah", out to protect Israel (and Christianity) from the Mahdi's southern alliance (a propaganda ploy that will figure large in promoting apostasy and the advance of the beast's ecumenical religious union). On the basis of the model which Daniel 9:27 provides, we may therefore further deduce from this verse that antichrist will gain control over all of the seven nations of his original empire by means of this same process of formal confederation. But while these treaties may spell out the independence of the subordinate states, in actuality they will only be a means for disarming opposition. As in the case of Israel, which this scripture explicitly details, we may expect that also in regard to the other six initial member states (or, more precisely, coalitions) any rights or freedoms originally given de jure will also be de facto annulled (as in the case of Israel) as the beast and his lieutenants consolidate Satan's worldwide empire. That this (and therefore these) covenants are said to be made "with the powerful" (Hebrew, רבים, *rabiym*), is also most instructive, indicating that all of the coalitions which ally with antichrist's Babylon will first come to be ruled by powerful oligarchies, presided over by the "kings" with their special relationship to the beast.

It should also be noted here that neither this treaty nor any of the treaties are subject to a time limit (see the corrected translation of Dan.9:27 above). Yet the beast's relation to Israel is special in certain regards. After all, as the pseudo-Messiah, Israel is the natural and ultimate focal point of his earthly rule. Both the fact that only one of the beast's heads has a mortal wound and that all of the horns have to be on one of the heads (cf. Dan.7:8; 7:20) indicate a closer, "special" relationship with one of the seven county-

coalitions (Rev.13:1-3; 17:1-11), and that country is surely Israel, the place where antichrist will take up residence during the Great Tribulation (Dan.11:45; 2Thes.2:4).

V. The First Campaign against the South

[After his conquest of revived Rome, antichrist] will distribute plunder, spoils and riches to his [followers] and will afterwards plot against the [three remaining] powers (i.e., the three sub-coalitions of the southern alliance), but [will wait] for an opportune time.
Daniel 11:24b

While the precise time-line for antichrist's consolidation of power in the seven kingdoms of revived Rome is not given, the time constraints of the Tribulation's first half allow us to make an informed judgment about the likely timing of the beast's first campaign against the southern alliance (see figure #1 above). Allowing roughly one year for his rise to and consolidation of power in Babylon and a further year for his securing of revived Rome brings us to the fall of 2028. Any military campaign in the Mideast on the scale and of the scope of this massive invasion would be well advised to have concluded major combat operations before the heat and storms of mid-summer begin. A six month time-frame beginning at this point and ending roughly in the summer of 2029 is thus the most likely scenario for the marshaling of forces, transit to theater, combat operations, consolidation of gains, and return of the military assets necessary for this first campaign – not an implausibly short length of time when we recall that all of the beast's operations will be characterized by just such exceptional rapidity (cf. the winged leopard of Rev.13:2). This time-line also has the virtue of allowing a comparable and parallel time period for the second campaign the following year (i.e., commencing fall of 2029), whose termination point (i.e., summer of 2030) would then coincide perfectly with the commencement of the Great Tribulation, exactly as scripture predicts (cf. especially Dan.11:29-31).

And from one of the [four horns] came forth another horn, a small one (i.e., antichrist), but it grew great towards the south and towards the east and towards the Beautiful Land (i.e., Israel).

Daniel 8:9

Daniel 8:9 has as its immediate application the prophesied rise of Antiochus Epiphanes, ruler of the Seleucid kingdom whose epicenter of power was Syria. As we have seen, however, much of Old Testament prophecy has a dual application to both nearer and farther term events, with the Tribulation and its events being the primary paradigm of application (so as to provide a point of comparison for near term tribulation as well as to provide details about that ultimate Tribulation).⁽⁵⁶⁾ We have also seen above that Antiochus Epiphanes is a particularly important representative type of antichrist, invading Israel, proclaiming himself to be divine (hence the cognomen "Epiphanes"), and profaning the temple in a manner that foreshadows antichrist's future conduct. We may therefore read in the verse above both the general pattern of the beast's military expansion and the motivations which underlie it. Since antichrist already dominates the north (and arose in the west, Babylon), only the south, east, and Israel are outside of his

complete control at this point (for while he has the secular ruler of Israel in his camp, the ministry of Moses and Elijah will still be in place and be flourishing at this point). The expansion towards the south mentioned here refers to the conquest of the southern alliance in the two campaigns of Daniel chapter 11, while the eastward expansion is a reference to the progressive occupation and domination of the one other remaining quadrant of the world not as yet under the beast's direct rule. By the time of Armageddon, we see the east also under antichrist's command (Rev.16:12-14; cf. the temporary disruption of that control occasioned by the bowl judgments: Dan.11:44). The final place on earth to succumb to the beast's direct authority will be the land of Israel, and we can see in the pattern of Daniel 8:9 not only a strategy for world domination, but also the primary purpose behind it, replacement of the worship of the One true God with the worship of the devil and his son antichrist, and the concomitant destruction of God's holy people, Israel.

The southern alliance will therefore represent the last major military impediment to antichrist's domination of the world. The combination of economic, political, and military power projected by Babylon, revived Rome, and the growing coalition of the world's nations falling like dominos at the feet of the beast will remove all other major resistance by the Tribulation's mid-point. The two campaigns against the south, through their scale, rapidity, and success will in particular no doubt also produce a bandwagon effect for joining with rather than opposing the beast until the whole unbelieving world shouts with one accord "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (Rev.13:4).

(3) And when He sat down on the Mount of Olives, His disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us when these things will be, and what the sign is of your return and of the end of the age?" (4) And Jesus answered and said, "See to it that no one deceives you. (5) For many will come in My Name, saying, 'I am the Christ', and they will deceive many people. (6) And you are going to hear about [actual] wars and impending wars. Make sure you do not become [overly] alarmed [by such things]. For [these things] must happen, but this is not yet the end [of the Tribulation]. (7) For [before that end] **a nation will rise against a nation** (i.e., in general terms, the Japhetic pan-nation against the Semitic pan-nation), **even a kingdom against a kingdom** (i.e., Babylon and revived Rome versus the southern alliance; cf. Dan.11:25-30; 11:40), and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. (8) But all these things are [merely] the beginning of the birth pangs (i.e., the first half of the Tribulation).
Matthew 24:3-8

We can see in our Lord's words above the significance of the conflict between north and south that will dominate the secular political events of the Tribulation's first half (made parallel here to the "famines and earthquakes" which, as we have seen, are shorthand for the divine warning "trumpet judgments" which will also characterize this period). The "wars and impending wars" that will occupy the secular world's attention at this time are significant enough to rate special mention by our Lord, and so we may glean from this combination of remarks that the scale of the warfare between the beast's coalition and

the Mahdi's alliance, the two most significant "nations" and "kingdoms" on earth, will be enormous.

Then he (i.e., the king of the north, antichrist) will rouse up his power and desire against the king of the south with **a great force**, but the king of the south will mobilize for war with **an equally great force** which will also be **very powerful**.

Daniel 11:25a

Rarely in the history of warfare have two coalitions mobilized such exceptional and comparably powerful armies for a particular confrontation. Although August of 1914 may provide a rough parallel, in terms of the numbers deployed, the distances involved, the firepower available, the ideological fervor motivating the conflict, and the overall scale involved here (i.e., with roughly two entire quadrants of the world engaged in this titanic struggle), this campaign is likely only to be eclipsed by the ones which follow (i.e., the second campaign of Dan.11:29-30; 11:40-43, and the Armageddon campaign).

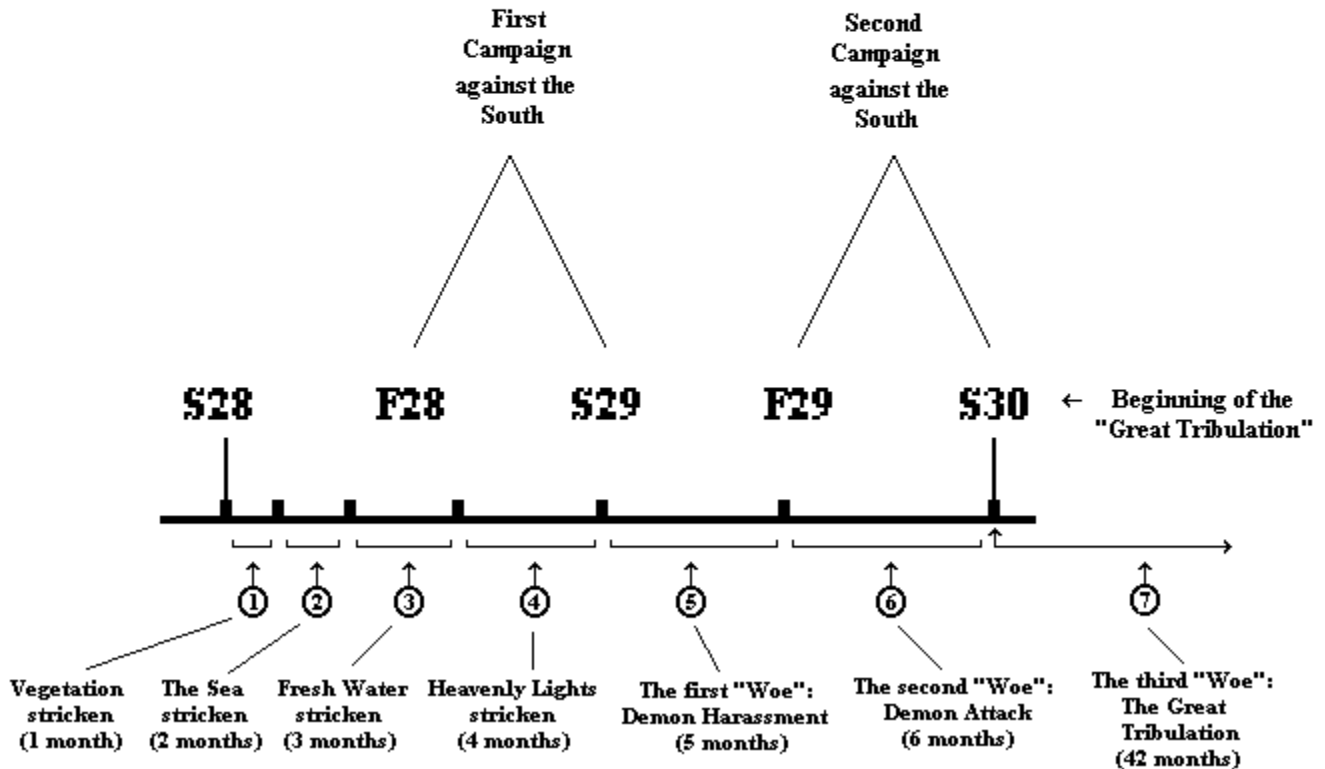
In addition to all of the other issues involved in these campaign, both coalitions will also have to contend with the trumpet judgments which, as we have seen, will be taking place during this entire later period of the Tribulation's first half. On the political front, it is at least conceivable that, for the consumption of the unbelieving world, antichrist in his capacity of pseudo-Messiah will "spin" these trumpet judgments as divine displeasure for the world's failure to support Israel (though he himself, of course, has in mind her eventual destruction), thus adding emotional impetus and added justification to his "crusade". The people who know their God will not be fooled by this false interpretation, and we can be sure that the truth will be made clear by Moses and Elijah along with the 144,000 – for all who are willing to receive the truth. On the operational front, the events of the trumpet judgments will clearly cause complications for daily life in general, and all the more so for military operations. The chart below which compares the probable time-line for these two campaigns with these judgments of divine warning indicates a coincidence of trumpet judgments three and four with the first campaign, and of trumpet judgment six with the second:

The Trumpet Judgments and the Two Campaigns against the South

Daniel 11:24-44 and Revelation 8:6 - 9:19

— The Tribulation —

(1st Half)



As the juxtaposition of events in the chart above makes clear, the initial phase of the first campaign will be conducted in the aftermath of the smiting of the world's fresh water by the "Wormwood" asteroid (while the world is still suffering under its effects), then, at roughly the campaign's mid-point, the world's heavenly lights will be stricken (with these effects lasting throughout the rest of the campaign). Just as king Ahab went to great lengths to preserve his military assets during a comparable water shortage occasioned by divine judgment, and no doubt did so at the expense of his suffering population (1Kng.18:2-6), so we may expect that whatever difficulties the population of the earth experiences from the third trumpet judgment (which we are told will result in many fatalities: Rev.8:11), both antichrist and the leader of the southern alliance will ensure that their vast armies are not seriously inconvenienced, no matter how much more difficult this may make things for their subject populations. Aside from the

logistical problems of transporting additional fresh water over vast distances into terrain that is inhospitable under the best of circumstances, it is probable that the third trumpet will not otherwise seriously affect the course of this campaign (and, indeed, there is no indication from Daniel chapter 11 that it does). The fourth trumpet judgment, the significant diminution of light which will occur during the four month period that coincides with the middle and the end of this campaign, may actually have an enabling effect, for it will virtually ensure that the heat which might otherwise prove an impediment to the unprecedented marches this expedition will entail on both sides will be significantly less than would otherwise be the case. In any event, we may conclude from the scriptural testimony about the fact of this campaign and its successful conclusion on the part of the beast that at the very worst the negative effects of these two judgments will likely affect both sides equally, and will not, in any case, prevent its successful conclusion by the forces of Babylon and revived Rome.

One of the main differences between the two campaigns which antichrist will launch against the triple coalition of the south will be that while the second campaign will be characterized by the decisive intervention of an overwhelmingly superior navy (cf. the Hebrew of Num.24:23-24; Dan.11:30; 11:40; covered below), this first expedition will apparently consist, as intimated above, entirely of a ground invasion. Several reasons may be adduced for this. First, much of what still remains semi-independent in the world will still be in the process of being consolidated under antichrist's control at this time. The concentration of the southern hemisphere's population and power on the litoral of the world's great oceans will require a significant application of naval power to secure, and it is likely that the combined navies and amphibious forces of Babylon and revived Rome will be too preoccupied in this task to have much of an impact in this first campaign. Secondly, it is also likely, given the essential geography of revived Rome versus the southern alliance, that antichrist will need two campaigns to complete the task, and that this first, primarily ground operation, will have as its strategic objective an initial degradation of the south's armed forces and the seizure of key terrain for the establishment of bases and staging of resources that will ultimately be necessary to deliver a knock-out blow in the follow-on campaign. Additionally, the conduct of the first campaign as an entirely overland operation proceeding from north to south will also serve to create an opportunity for strategic surprise by making the massive naval operations of the second campaign a less anticipated development.

Nevertheless, he (i.e., the king of the south) will not be able to stand [against the king of the north], for they (i.e., the three subordinate southern kings) shall devise plots against [the king of the south]. (26) For those who eat his choice food (i.e., his inner circle) will break him, and [this is why] his force will flood away, and many will fall slain. (27) And though these two kings (i.e., antichrist and the Mahdi) set their hearts on evil and speak lies at the same table (i.e., a peace conference), it will not prosper, for there will yet be an end to the period [of the Great Tribulation].

Daniel 11:25b-27

All tactical considerations aside, the verses above clearly indicate that the primary reason for the failure of the south and the victory of the north in this first confrontation will be the treachery against the southern leader or Mahdi on the part of antichrist's

agents (i.e., the three subordinate kings of the south who are themselves part of the ten horns). All this suggests that the south's forces will actually be significantly stronger than antichrist's numerically inferior (if perhaps somewhat technologically superior) army, and that, had the battle taken place on a level playing field, the result would have been much different. We are not told the specifics of how this inner circle of the three kings will undermine the Mahdi's hopes in this first encounter, but it is not difficult to guess. Through a combination of bad advice (i.e., encouraging the decisive action too far north, thus making the logistical situation easier for the beast and more difficult for the south), undermining morale, spreading false rumors, keeping the beast informed of all the Mahdi's movements and plans, and deliberately failing to carry out necessary operations with appropriate vigor, these three will be in a position to bestow upon the beast a decisive advantage.

It should be noted at this point that as a result of his strategic pull-back and the peace treaty with the south, there will therefore probably be no large scale movement of the beast's troops into the state of Israel at this time (that development will apparently await the conclusion of the second campaign when antichrist will shift his world headquarters to Jerusalem; cf. Dan.11:41). As the relatively vulnerable *casus belli*, we may theorize that Israel's primary role during this first campaign will merely be to defend herself, and possibly also to act as a blocking force against the direct intervention by the forces of the alliances' southernmost kingdom (i.e., Egypt and its coalition partners). This does not mean, however, that the beast will not take advantage of this opportunity to begin to apply the screws to Israel while he still has significant forces in the vicinity. The political state of affairs within the state of Israel at this time is likely to be extraordinarily tense. On the one hand, the secular Jewish majority will have placed a very strong leader in power (one of the "ten kings" in fact). On the other hand, however, the ministry of Moses and Elijah and the worldwide evangelism of the 144,000 directed by them will be reaching its zenith at this point, producing a sizeable minority of believers.

The defeat of the southern alliance will be a turn of events which will leave even many of the most ardent supporters of the "worthless shepherd" (i.e., the Israeli premier) somewhat less enthusiastic about the beast and his empire, while at the same time antichrist will also feel less constrained in regard to his dealings with Israel. For with the south "set up" for defeat, the entire world will be only one step away from falling completely into his hands, and the need for a great cause, that is, the "crusade" to protect Israel, will soon be obsolete. At this point, then, the beast will feel secure enough to take preliminary steps towards Israel which will leave objective observers in little doubt about his ultimate designs for that state and for the Jewish people. For while he had based his worldwide political campaign upon the need to protect Israel, in reality it had always been his father Satan's plan to destroy her.

Now as he (i.e., antichrist) returns to his own land with great booty, his heart will be set against the holy covenant, so that he will take action [against it] and [then] return to his own land.

Daniel 11:28

The words "holy covenant" used here refer both to the administration of God's grace and truth to the Jewish people through the restoration ministry of Moses and Elijah and the 144,000, and to the heart and hand response of those in Israel who accept the message (cf. Dan.11:30; 11:32).⁽⁵⁷⁾ All of antichrist's long-distance efforts to hinder the ministry itself will prove unsuccessful at this time (as the Lord will provide the two witnesses with ample ability to ward off any direct threats: Rev.11:5-6; cf. 2Kng.1:9-15). But this verse does represent the beginning of the persecution that will break forth with a vengeance after the conclusion of the second campaign. We can only imagine what sort of intimidating measures the beast and the worthless shepherd will impose upon true believers at this time (though they will likely include activities of the sort intimated by Dan.8:10; 8:23-25; 11:32-35), but one can safely assume that particular pressure will be brought to bear upon all those who have not openly accepted the message of salvation. Such a strategy has the advantage of creating a widening rift between "the people who know their God" and those who, while they may have a varying degree of emotional attachment to the restored ritual of the temple, will be unwilling to abandon their worldly security for a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. Still, the reduction in personal freedoms and alteration/restriction of traditional rituals which the actions of antichrist referred to here in Daniel 11:28 will no doubt entail (especially coming at a time when the threat from the south has now been reduced) will not be well received by many in Israel and will have repercussions as we shall see below.

VI. The Second Campaign against the South

For the better part of this study we have been following Daniel chapter 11 as our chronological guide to the secular events of the Tribulation's first half, and it will be helpful to repeat at this point the summary of the pertinent part of that chapter given in section II.3 above:

- verse 21: Synopsis of the beast's career part 1: His rise to power and his methodology in seizing control of mystery Babylon.
- verse 22: Synopsis of the beast's career part 2: Mobilization for and destruction at Armageddon. Identification of antichrist as the prophesied "prince of the covenant".
- verse 23: Return to the chronological order by reprising antichrist's methods in gaining control of mystery Babylon.
- verse 24: Seizure of the seven kingdoms (revived Rome); consolidation of power and preparations for attacking the southern alliance.
- verses 25-28: The first campaign against the three kingdoms (the southern alliance).

- verses 29-30a: The second campaign against the south.
- verses 30b-35: The attempted assassination of antichrist, his putative resuscitation, and his resultant persecution of Israel.
- verses 36-39: The reign of antichrist during the Great Tribulation.
- verses 40-43: Reprise of antichrist's victory over the southern alliance during the Tribulation's first half giving a more detailed account of the second campaign.
- verse 44: The departure of antichrist from Israel to secure his kingdom following the fifth bowl judgment.
- verse 45: The defeat of antichrist at Armageddon.

It is particularly critical for our study to note at this point the fact that the second campaign is both described in its chronological order in verses 29-30a, *and* later reintroduced for explanation in greater detail in verses 40-43. This is not an uncommon biblical technique (see the discussion in section II.3 above) and it is employed here for two reasons: the brief description in the first half of Daniel 11:29-30 allows the narrative which follows to focus first in an undistracted way upon the most important developments at the Tribulation's mid-point (i.e., the termination of the ministry of the two witnesses, the setting up of the "abomination of desolation", and the commencement of the Great Persecution, the defining event of the Great Tribulation), while at the same time allowing for a later reintroduction of the second campaign in greater detail. For the specific geographical details given in Daniel 11:40-43, while potentially distracting in the first instance, are necessary in this latter context to explain the situation that results from the conquest of the south, in particular, the exploitation that follows the victory and the exclusion of Edom, Moab, and part of Ammon from the vast territorial conquests of the beast (as havens for the believers who will flee Israel when the abomination of desolation is set up; cf. Matt.24:15-20; Rev.12:13-17).

(29) During this period he will return and attack the south [again], but the circumstances of this [second] campaign will not be like those of the first one. (30a) For ***ships of Kittim*** (i.e., the western "Babylon") will attack ***with*** him [so that he will be victorious].

Daniel 11:29-30a

Now at the time of the end, the king of the south (i.e., the Mahdi) will make a thrust at him (i.e., the beast), with the result that the king of the north will come against him like a whirlwind with chariots, and with cavalry, and ***with many ships***.

Daniel 11:40a

The reference to the naval forces of antichrist in both of these passages is noteworthy. In the first passage above, "Kittim", literally the people of the island of Cyprus, is most

often used in scripture as a generic term to refer to all of "the islands", that is, the nations of the world's western quadrant (Is.23:1; 23:12; Jer.2:10; Ezek.27:6; i.e., as representative of all of the western sons of Japheth from whom "the islands of the gentiles divided", Gen.10:4-5). What this means is that these "ships of Kittim" are the ships of Babylon and its western allies. What we have here, therefore, is a reference to the beast's own navy rather than to some extraneous force opposing him (as is often erroneously supposed).⁽⁵⁸⁾ Once this point is understood, it is clear to see that in Daniel 11:30 these ships **are** the reason why "circumstances are different" in this second campaign, for it is just this naval superiority which proves to be the decisive element in the beast's victory, attacking "**with** him". The second passage above is in complete agreement with this interpretation. For here we see that antichrist's navy is not only the ultimate element named in the threefold list of his combat arms (stressing its importance), but is also the only one marked out as exceptional in terms of its quantity (i.e., his ships are "**many**", even in comparison to his certainly numerous "chariots and cavalry"). Together, these two scriptures confirm that the second campaign will be won by antichrist through the decisive use of seapower, and the precise manner in which he will employ that power has also been given to us in prophecy, specifically in the last oracle of Balaam son of Besor:

Then [Balaam] pronounced his oracle, and said, "Alas! Who can survive once God unleashes it (i.e., the Great Tribulation)? For ships will come from the direction of Kittim, and they will afflict Ashur, and they will afflict Eber. For this is even the one (i.e., antichrist) . . . until he perishes."

Numbers 24:23-24

It is not unexpected that Balaam, who sought to curse Israel, should be given this prophecy about the persecution emanating from the all-time nemesis of Israel, antichrist. However the context of Balaam's last oracles (Num.24:14-24) have the stated purpose of conveying information about "the days to come" (Num.24:14). In addition to this statement and to the other eschatological elements in these prophecies (cf. the irrefutably Messianic "star" and "scepter" of Num.24:17), the phraseology of the Hebrew words used in verse twenty-three above to identify the "mystery man" who will be responsible for the future "affliction of Eber" (**ve-gam hu'i**: "*for this is even the one*") is reminiscent of that used in the key passage in Daniel which likewise identifies antichrist (i.e., Dan.11:22b: **ve-gam naghidh berith**: "*for he is even the prince of the covenant*", cf. Dan.9:27). Together, these facts make the connection between these "ships of Kittim" and the "ships of Kittim" in Daniel chapter 11 virtually certain. Balaam's prophecy also provides us with the crucial information which details the precise place of this invasion, namely, through present-day Lebanon-Syria and Israel. For Ashur, of course, is the original ancestor of Assyria just as Eber is of Israel (cf. respectively Gen.10:22 and Gen.11:10-31), making it clear that the entire eastern coastline of the Mediterranean will be the focus of this unprecedented invasion.

The purpose for the massive amphibious assault suggested by these scriptures is plain enough when one considers the actions of the king of the south described in Daniel 11:40a above. In that verse, the king of the south is said to "make a thrust" against the king of the north in what would have to be a south to north direction, a maneuver which

would entail the large-scale movement of most if not all of his forces toward the upper reaches of his realm, close to his border with antichrist's kingdom. We may surmise that this has been antichrist's expectation and plan from the very start, even from before the opening of the first campaign. By this time the Mahdi has no doubt mobilized an even larger army, confident of victory based upon the previous campaign and the improved ratio of forces that must now be even more heavily in his favor (when only those forces deployed on the ground are considered). After the king of the south thrusts to the north, Daniel 11:40 characterizes the beast's response as swift and furious (furious as a whirlwind, according to the Hebrew text), and we are again reminded of the leopard-like swiftness which characterizes all of antichrist's operations (Rev.13:2). Once the forces of the south have advanced into his trap, the beast will spring it by launching the largest amphibious invasion in history with the objective of cutting off his enemies from the rear, thus surrounding and then annihilating them. In this way, the last major independent military force outside of antichrist's direct control will be eliminated with a single blow.

Since this seaborne invasion will be directed at Syria-Lebanon-Israel, the general location of the final battle of this campaign is thus most likely somewhere in northern Iraq-Syria and southern Turkey-Iran. This too is consistent with what we find elsewhere in scripture. As we have seen above, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, is a scriptural type of antichrist, the prophetic king of Babylon. Within the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (esp. Is.19-20; Jer.46; and Ezek.29-32), we also see the conflict between the historical Nebuchadnezzar and Egypt's Pharaoh functioning as a prophetic analogy to the end times with its conflict between Babylon's antichrist and the Mahdi of the southern alliance (whose political center of gravity is also Egypt; cf. Dan.11:42).⁽⁵⁹⁾ Therefore we can say that the conduct of antichrist's campaigns against the Mahdi and his southern alliance will be similar in general terms to the scriptural representations found in these prophecies.

Egypt will rise up like the Nile, and her waters (i.e., the forces of the southern alliance) will surge forth like the [Nile's] streams. And she will say, "I will rise up. I will inundate the world. I will destroy [its] cities and their inhabitants".
Jeremiah 46:8

Jeremiah places the decisive battle which will ensue as a result of the king of the south's "thrust" and the king of the north's "whirlwind" response (cf. Dan.11:40) in the northern reaches of southern alliance territory "by the river Euphrates", making the most likely focal point of the decisive engagement, as mentioned immediately above, somewhere in the vicinity of present-day Syria, Iraq, and northern Turkey (cf. Jer.46:2; 46:10):

"Muster [your troops] with buckler and shield, and advance to the battle. Harness your horses and order your cavalry to mount up. Assemble with your helmets. Polish your spears. Put on your armor. But why do I see them [all] terrified and falling back to the rear? [It is because] their picked troops have been smashed and are in headlong flight. They do not even look back, for there is terror all around [them]". The Lord declares, "Let the swift not flee [to safety] nor the strong escape. ***In the north, by the river***

Euphrates, they shall stumble and fall".

Jeremiah 46:3-6

Following this massive defeat, little will be left for the forces of the beast other than to exploit this victory:

(40b) And [the beast] will invade the lands [of the southern alliance], and inundate [them] and sweep through [them], (41) and he will advance into the Beautiful land (i.e., Israel). Now many lands will fall before him, but these will escape from his control: Edom, and Moab, and the first [part of the territory] of the sons of Ammon (i.e., the southern half of historical Ammon contiguous to Edom and Moab). (42) And [antichrist] will extend his control over the lands (of the southern alliance), so that even the land of Egypt will not escape. (43) Thus he will take control of all the repositories of gold and silver, even over all of Egypt's treasures, with Libya (i.e., representing North Africa) and Cush (i.e., Sudan-Ethiopia) following her [in submission].

Daniel 11:40b-43

Egypt is emphasized here because it is the main pillar upon which the southern alliance will be based. We may understand Libya to represent the entirety of North Africa, whereas Cush stands for East Africa. The northern, eastern, and southeastern reaches of the south's three kingdoms, while not mentioned by name, fall into the category of the "many lands" of verse forty-one, so that here we see the fulfillment of the prophecy of the fall of the "three horns". We should also recall in this respect that the three kings of these sub-kingdoms who were so instrumental in the beast's victory during the first campaign will certainly be exceptionally useful to him in his consolidation of power over their respective realms. Furthermore, the "bandwagon effect" of the astonishing defeat of this impressive army will not be lost on the rest of the world. It will serve to deflate the hopes of any and all who are even remotely considering opposition on the basis of secular means, especially when one considers the exponential increase in power that antichrist will experience after capturing "Egypt's treasures", namely, all the natural resources of all of the southern alliance territories. The aftermath of defeat for Egypt and by extension of all of the nations of the triple coalition that threw in with her under the Mahdi's leadership is voluminously covered in scripture, and the combination of passages which treat this subject paint a picture of abject defeat, a situation which will no doubt be all the more difficult to bear since the hopes of the south will have been thrown down from such a lofty height (see esp. Ezek.30; cf. Is.19-20; Jer.46; Ezek.29-32):

"Son of man, prophesy and say, "Thus says the Lord, "Wail! Woe for the day! For a day [of judgment] is close, [yes], the day of the Lord is close. It will be a day of clouds and time [of judgment] for the nations. For a sword will come against Egypt, and writhing will come upon Cush. When the slain fall in Egypt, they will take away her treasures and her foundations will be trampled. Cush, and Put, and Lydia, and all Arabia, Lybia and all the peoples of the covenant land (i.e., all the allies of the king of the south) along with them will fall by the sword."

Ezekiel 30:2-5 (cf. Ezek.20:45-48)

Egypt's complete undoing at the hands of the beast will, in the end, be a benefit. For it will cause the Egyptians along with many people of the lands of the south to see the impotence of their modern day "Pharaoh", the Mahdi (cf. Jer.46:17; Ezek.32:2-15), and bring them instead to cry to the Lord for help, a prayer to be answered both at and after the return of our glorious Lord (Is.19:4-25). Ultimately, the south's defeat in this second, decisive campaign will again be largely attributable to the treason of the three horns and the massive infighting that will ensue within her own ranks in the wake of the beast's springing of his trap (cf. Dan.11:26):

For I will spur on Egyptians against Egyptians, and they will fight one against his brother and another against his friend, a city against a city and a kingdom against a kingdom (i.e., the splintering of the triple coalition). And Egypt's spirit will be emptied from the midst of her, for I will confound her plans, although they consult their idols and mediums and oracles and familiar spirits. And I will hand Egypt over into the hand of a cruel master (i.e., antichrist), even a stern king (cf. Dan.8:23) [who] will rule over them, says the Lord God of hosts."

Isaiah 19:2-4

As was the case during the first campaign, so here too we may expect some complication of military maneuvers on account of the trumpet judgments, specifically for this second campaign the sixth judgment or "second woe" (see figure #2 above).⁽⁶⁰⁾ The havoc wreaked upon the world by the bands of marauding demons is sure to affect this campaign at least to some degree, but, as was the case in the first campaign, we may expect that the worst case analysis for the army of the beast would be an equal share of disruption, and it is fair to ask whether his forces would not be largely exempted from such an assault (for otherwise one would have, in effect, a case of "Satan casting out Satan"; cf. Matt.12:26). In any case, the result of the second campaign will be an overwhelming victory on the part of antichrist, and the removal of the last major impediment to his worldwide rule (Ezek.31:16-18):

And the entire earth was in awe of the beast. And they worshiped the dragon because he had given his authority to the beast. And they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? And who is able to make war with him?"

Revelation 13:3b-4

VII. The Apparent Assassination and Resuscitation of Antichrist

Then he will be stricken [as if dead], but will revive. Therefore he will be enraged at the holy covenant, so that on his return [to Israel from the far south] he will take action [against it] (i.e., eliminating Moses and Elijah and ending the sacrifices).

Daniel 11:30b

Immediately upon the heels of his dramatic victory over the south, the beast will be the object of an attempted assassination plot, the event that gives him the "fatal wound" that is nonetheless miraculously "healed" (Rev.13:3). The key word in the half verse above is the Hebrew verb form *nich'ah* (נִכְאָה). While there exists a variety of opinions among

lexicographers and commentators about this difficult form, what we have here is most likely the *niphal* (i.e., passive) perfect of the verb *cha'ah* (כָּאָה), meaning to strike, smite or scourge (hence the translation, "he will be stricken").⁽⁶¹⁾ Time and space do not here permit a detailed explication of נִכְאָה. It must suffice to remark that in his Hebrew lexicon, Gesenius likewise derived this form from כָּאָה, and that he and other commentators (notably O. Zöckler and T. Lewis in the Lange series) also find the *niphal* of this verb at Job 30:8 in the form נִכְאִים (i.e., "driven/scourged from the land"; Gesenius understands the *dagesh forte* as euphonic). Translations which take this verb as being used here in a strictly emotional sense (i.e., understanding it to mean that antichrist will be "disheartened" but not physically injured) do so without any firm evidence. The two passages often adduced as parallels, namely, Psalm 109:16 and Ezekiel 13:22, both contain the delimiting word "heart" which specifies the place affected or "stricken", and thus move the application of the blow from the physical to the emotional realm. No similar delimiting word is to be found in Daniel 11:30. Therefore, given that the meaning of the near identical root נָכָה likewise means literally to strike or smite, and given the well-known Hebrew phenomenon of related roots often bearing identical meanings, the preponderance of evidence points in the direction of antichrist being stricken in a quite literal sense, as opposed to suffering a mere psychological setback.⁽⁶²⁾

The wounding and seemingly miraculous recovery of antichrist described in Daniel 11:30 is thus the Old Testament parallel for the similar information given in Revelation chapters 13 and 17. While we will continue our method of covering these verses seriatim in their proper places (in accordance with the generally chronological progression of the book of Revelation that we have noted before), it will be of use to consider the four pertinent passages of scripture here:

And one of its (i.e., the beast's) heads [looked] as if it had been ***stricken unto death***, and [yet] its ***mortal wound had been healed***.

Revelation 13:3a

And he (i.e., the beast's false prophet) [will] act with all the authority of the first beast [while] in his presence, and he will make the world and all its inhabitants worship the first beast, ***whose mortal wound was healed***.

Revelation 13:12

And he (i.e., the beast's false prophet) [will] deceive those who dwell upon the earth on account of the miracles (lit., "signs") which have been given to him to perform in the presence of the beast, even commanding the inhabitants of the earth to make an image of the beast, [that is] of him ***who received the [deadly] stroke of the sword and [yet] came [back] to life***.

Revelation 13:14

The beast, which you saw, ***was*** (i.e., "existed"), ***and is not*** (i.e., came "not to exist"), ***and is going to rise from the Abyss*** (i.e., the revival of Rome on the one hand and apparent resuscitation of antichrist on the other), and is going to its destruction. And the inhabitants of the earth, [those] whose names have not remained written in the book of life [where they were written] from the beginning of the world, will be in awe when

they see the beast, **because he was** (i.e., "existed"), **and is not** (i.e., came "not to exist"), **and will again be present on the scene** (i.e., seem to return to life in the case of antichrist, and be reestablished in respect to the empire).

Revelation 17:8

Whatever one makes of these passages, we can say with authority that antichrist is most certainly not being "resurrected" here – only our risen Lord currently possesses an eternal body, and no one else will do so until the resurrection of His Church at His return (at which point the beast will be deposited in the lake of fire: Rev.19:20). The question of "resuscitation" is a more difficult one. On the one hand, it is impossible that the devil would be able to engineer even the temporary return to life of his son, that is, a true "resuscitation", without divine permission for something so entirely unprecedented (i.e., the revival to life from death of an arch-enemy of God and his people), and of such consent we have no specific indication from scripture.⁽⁶³⁾ On the other hand, the four passages from Revelation quoted above do suggest at the very least a physical revival which will be extraordinary in the extreme, with the final passage, Revelation 17:8, presenting the most difficult case to explain away. For even though that passage has its primary application to revived Rome, applying to the beast by extension (as opposed to Revelation 13 where this relationship of primary and secondary application is reversed), what is true of one should also be true of the other, and the words "was (i.e., "existed"), and is not (i.e., came "not to exist"), and will again be present on the scene" are most emphatic, and hard to take in any other way than as a literal return from the dead (that is, the definite departure and return of the spirit).

Whether this assassination attempt results in antichrist's actual death or, alternatively, a near-death experience so dramatic and traumatic that it will be nearly indistinguishable from actual death and resuscitation, it is clear from the reaction of the general public to the beast's recovery from this "mortal wound" that the genuineness of his death and the miraculous nature of his return to life will **taken** as true and factual by the unbelieving world (cf., the amazement and resultant worship of the world: Rev.13:3b-4). It is also relatively easy to see how trauma unquestionably fatal in the case of any other normal human being might not necessarily be so for the beast – for he will not be fully human after all. The angelic paternity of antichrist will doubtless give him the physical resiliency to endure wounds to which any mere man would certainly succumb. We know from our previous study of the *nephilim* that prodigious physical attributes are the norm for such creatures, and it is probable that their ability to tolerate conditions which would kill normal human beings is at least part of the reason why God caused the great flood to cover the earth to such a depth and for so long a time.⁽⁶⁴⁾ So it is certainly possible that while to the world antichrist may appear to have received an unavoidably fatal injury and may seem to have been "stricken unto death", this wound, mortal in every other case, may only be near-fatal in his case.

From the following context of the passages in both Daniel and Revelation, there is no evidence that the beast will suffer any chronic after-effects of this wounding (beyond the permanent scar visible upon his head left by the blow from the sword which strikes him). Quite to the contrary, rather than a setback this incident will actually be a boon to the beast, for it will do much to further the idea that he really is "the true Christ", having

thus "risen from the dead" in such a seemingly irrefutable way. It is therefore no accident that it will be directly in the wake of this incident that antichrist's new religion will be transformed into outright devil worship and swiftly come to dominate the world (cf. Rev.13:3-17). Unbelievers all over the earth will take this "resurrection" to be genuine and to be legitimate proof of the beast's status as the Messiah. However, believers who know their God and continue to hold firm to the testimony of Jesus will remember our Lord's warning to beware of all such false signs, no matter how persuasive, waiting instead on their own resurrection at the return of our truly resurrected Lord:

At that time if someone says to you "Look [(as they will tell you then)]! Christ is here!", or "Here [He is]!", do not believe [it]. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will perform great miracles (lit., "signs") and wonders [sufficient] to deceive even the elect, if [that were] possible. Look [(as I am telling you now)]! I have told you ahead of time. So if they say to you all, "Look, He is in the desert!", do not go out [there]. [Or] "Look, He is in the inner-rooms (i.e., in hiding in the city)", do not believe [it]. For as lightning [though it] comes forth from the east is visible all the way to the west, this is just how the return of the Son of Man (i.e., the Second Advent) will be. For wherever the body is (i.e., the Lord), there the eagles will gather (i.e., believers rising in resurrection). Matthew 24:23-28

Beyond the details from Daniel and Revelation provided above, we can say a few things further about this critical event. Having conquered the king of the south, the beast will be at the height of his power, with no possible combination of the remaining independent powers on earth capable of resisting the combined power of Babylon, revived Rome, and the now occupied and cooperating territories of the southern kingdom. At this point, with the world, for all practical purposes, lying prostrate at his feet, antichrist's plan, soon to be successfully carried out, will be to move his headquarters to Jerusalem, intending to rule the world from there as if he were God (cf. 2Thes.2:4). It should be observed in regard to his treatment of the Jews, moreover, that, in addition to the measures "against the covenant" already taken at the conclusion of the first campaign (Dan.11:28), the land of Israel will be very roughly handled during the second campaign, with the invading amphibious forces treating her and her population as anything but allies (i.e., "they will afflict Eber": Num.24:24; cf. Is.33:1-8, especially v.8, and Lam.1:2, 10, 19, 21). The beast's horrendous plans to completely annul his agreement with the state of Israel and to thoroughly abrogate the revival of temple rite will doubtless not be totally secret, even before the fact (at least not to his inner circle, a group which we may expect will contain representatives from Israel, one of the seven original kingdoms of revived Rome). It is more than likely, therefore, that the agents of this assassination attempt will be Jewish. This would seem to be the best explanation for the close connection given in Daniel 11:30 between the "striking down" of antichrist and the fury released immediately thereafter *against* the legitimately revived worship of God in Jerusalem and those who are involved therein:

(30b) Then he will be stricken [as if dead], but will revive. Therefore he will be enraged at the holy covenant, so that on his return [to Israel from the far south] he will take

action [against it] (i.e., eliminating Moses and Elijah and ending the sacrifices).
Daniel 11:30b

It should not escape our attention here that this "rage" and retaliation are an indication of antichrist's core antisemitism, for it will be technically misplaced. Those who are truly following Jesus Christ in response to the ministry of Moses and Elijah and the 144,000 will be focused upon divine solutions, and will certainly not be misled into thinking that any act of violence of this sort, no matter how apparently justifiable, will in any way ward off the Great Tribulation to come. At this time in Israel, there will essentially be three major factions into which the body-politic is split: 1) dedicated followers of antichrist; 2) dedicated followers of our Lord; 3) patriots (or "zealots"), most of whom were ardent supporters of the beast when he appeared to be the only worldly hope of help against the Mahdi and his hordes. As the Tribulation progresses, we can expect more and more of the first group to migrate into the third group (cf. Zech.12:3-8 with Zech.12:10). Those who truly know their God, however, will flee into the wilderness in accordance with the commands of our Lord just as soon as antichrist sets up the "abomination of desolation" as a putative part of his reaction to this assault on his person (though his plan all along has been to take this action). In addition to supporting his argument to be the true "Messiah", therefore, this assassination attempt will also supply the beast with a certain measure of justification for the harsh treatment of Israel to follow, and specifically for his war against Moses and Elijah and the subsequent termination of the revived temple worship (an action that will in itself enjoy a measure of worldwide popularity because of their direction of the trumpet judgments: Rev.11:7-13). For antichrist will opportunistically, though falsely, lay this deed at their feet. Finally, it is likely that the assassination attempt will take place while antichrist is involved in directing the plundering of Egypt, the heartland of the Mahdi's power (cf. Ezek.30:9 with Dan.11:30a), for he is said to "return" to Israel after the event in order to vent his anger "against the covenant".

VIII. The "Abomination of Desolation" and the "Session" of Antichrist

Upon his return to Israel following his defeat of the south and his subsequent recovery from the attempt on his life, antichrist will act swiftly to annul the treaty made with Israel (cf. Is.33:7-8). Using the assault upon his person as an excuse and the true believers who follow the ministry of Moses and Elijah and the 144,000 as scapegoats, the beast will commence his "war" against the two prophets with the intention of bringing a halt to the newly revived worship of the one true God, and replacing it with the overt worship of the devil and of himself (Rev.11:7-13).

Then he (i.e., antichrist) will confirm an agreement (or "covenant"; Hebrew, ברית, *beriyth*) with the powerful [in Israel] during [that] one [remaining] week (i.e., the 70th week, the Tribulation), but in the middle of the week (i.e., just prior to the Tribulation's mid-point) **he will put a halt to sacrifice and offering** (i.e., eliminating Moses and Elijah and interrupting the temple rites).

Daniel 9:27a

Then he will be stricken [as if dead], but will revive. Therefore **he will be enraged at the holy covenant**, so that on his return [to Israel from the far south] **he will take action [against it]** (i.e., eliminating Moses and Elijah and ending the sacrifices). And **he will give his support to those who abandon the holy covenant**.
Daniel 11:30b-c

As we saw in the previous installment of this series in our treatment of the ministry of Moses and Elijah, antichrist's assault upon these two prophets will only be successful because God allows it to be so. In the end, even the beast's murder of the two witnesses will be shown to be merely a part of the permissive will of God, as both are revived to life a full three and one half days after their murder, then taken up into heaven right before the eyes of their enemies and the unbelieving world. But the departure of Moses and Elijah marks the end of the nervous truce between those in Israel who are ardent followers of the beast and those who had heretofore supported him out of misplaced patriotism. Now that the two prophets with their miraculous powers have been removed, antichrist will waste no time in putting an end to all semblance of the worship of God on the temple mount (as the verses above indicate). Worse to tell, he will now implement his plan for replacing the worship of God with the worship of himself as God in conjunction with the worship of his father the devil. The first irrefutable sign of this will be the setting up in front of the temple of an abominable idol known in scripture as "the abomination of desolation".

1. The Abomination of Desolation: The placement of this idol by antichrist is well-documented in scripture, being referred to both by Daniel and by our Lord as one of the critical events whereby the beast may be known (Matt.24:15-18; Mk.13:14-16):

For it is from him (i.e., the coming evil one) that the military forces will issue forth which will pollute the sanctuary (i.e., ending the ministry of Moses and Elijah), remove the daily sacrifice, **and set up the abomination of desolation**.
Daniel 11:31

Daniel's combining of the pollution of the sanctuary and halting of the offerings to God with the setting up of this idol indicates that the place of its erection will indeed be within the temple court:

"But when you see **the abomination of desolation standing where it should not** – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."
Mark 13:14

Matthew goes further and overtly connects this idol with the "abomination" mentioned in Daniel (i.e., Dan.11:31 and 12:11), so as to leave no doubt about the identification of these prophecies: from Daniel's words, to our Lord's words, to the description of the idol in Revelation chapter 13, all of these passages are clearly referring to one and the same thing, the idol of antichrist which is set up in the temple court at the Tribulation's mid-point:

"So when you see the abomination of desolation (which is spoken of through Daniel the prophet) standing in a holy place – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."

Matthew 24:15-16

It should be noted that in the Greek text of Matthew 24:15 there is no definite article preceding the words "holy place", so that translations which render this phrase "*the* holy place" are technically incorrect. This is important because, in translation, the words "*the* holy place" generally refer to the outermost of the temple's two spaces which contained the table of the bread of presence, the golden altar of incense, and the golden lampstand or *menorah* (in the LXX: Ex.26:33; 28:29; Lev.16:2; etc.; cf. Heb.9:1-5; in Greek in all these cases, moreover, the word "place" is left out). The omission of the article thus serves as an emphatic sign that the words "holy place" most definitely do not refer to the temple, but rather to the inner court or "priest's court" (as in Dan.8:11; Rev.11:2; cf. Acts 6:13; 21:28). The idol will be visible to all inhabitants of Jerusalem, for it will not be necessary to enter into the temple proper to view it. In fact, during the 42 months of antichrist's reign in Jerusalem, the world will make pilgrimage to the temple mount to do obeisance before the statue of the beast, thronging into the outer court from where the idol, no doubt of substantial size, will be visible from its place in the inner court before the temple (cf. Ezek.8:3-5):

And [the beast's false prophet] [will] perform great miracles (lit., "signs"), even making fire come down from heaven to the earth in front of everyone. And he [will] deceive those who dwell upon the earth on account of the miracles (lit., "signs") which have been given to him to perform in the presence of the beast, even commanding the inhabitants of the earth to make ***an image of the beast***, [that is] of him who received the [deadly] stroke of the sword and [yet] came [back] to life. And it was given to him to provide ***a spirit for the image of the beast so that the image might speak***, and [it was also given to him] to bring it about that as many as refused to worship the image of the beast might be put to death.

Revelation 13:13-15

As is clear from this description, this idol will be most impressive to the unbelievers who view it and come to worship it. In our age of skepticism and worldliness, that is saying quite a lot. We may therefore expect this idol to be both mammoth in its proportions, incredibly and persuasively life-like in its functioning, and awe-inspiring in its verbal pronouncements. It will strike fear and reverence into the hardened hearts of the unbelievers who come to Jerusalem to worship the beast, confirming their confidence in him and strengthening their support of him. The impression made by this idol in conjunction with the miracles performed by the false prophet and the prior apparent "resurrection" of the beast in conjunction with his military conquest of the world will be more than enough for all those who have rejected the one true God to convince them of the divinity of the devil's son.

Our name for this idol, "the abomination of desolation" comes directly from the conventional translation of our Lord's words in Greek at Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14 (to *bdelugma tes eremoseos*; τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως), which is in turn a direct

rendering of the Hebrew of Daniel 11:31 (*hashiqutz meshomem*; משומם השקוץ). This translation, while understandable, is a bit misleading, for even in the Greek translation of the original Hebrew phrase, "desolation" is a verbal noun which ought rather to mean something like "**process of desolating**", a fact even more difficult to ignore in the case of the corresponding participles of Daniel 11:31 and 12:11. Since these words are all really calling attention to the *action* produced by the "abominable thing" (i.e., the idol), we would have been better served had this phrase been traditionally translated "the abomination **which causes** desolation". In applying the exact same terminology to antichrist himself, Daniel 9:27 spells out the precise significance of these words in respect to this capacity of the "abomination" idol to produce "desolation" in a spiritual sense, namely, an appalling isolation and separation from God resulting from horrendous idolatry and in turn resulting in devastation in both spiritual and material terms.⁽⁶⁵⁾

And on account of the extreme [nature] of [his] (i.e., antichrist's) **abominations**, he [will] be causing **desolations** (i.e., desertion and estrangement from God), even until the end when what has been determined will be poured out upon the one characterized by [this] desolation (i.e., the beast as archetype and cause of the alienation and rebellion from God which he fosters).

Daniel 9:27b

Unfortunately, the setting up of idols even in the very presence of the Lord God is not unprecedented in Israel's history (2Kng.23:6; cf. Ezek.8:3-5). What makes this particular "abomination" distinctive is that, rather than being a mere symptom of apostasy, this particular idol will be instrumental in producing a spiritual "desolation" within Israel whence it will spread to the entire world (cf. Dan.8:13, where the apostasy or "rebellion" is said to be instrumental in the "desolation"). For it is the obeisance paid to this idol which will be central to the new religion of beast-and-Satan worship which antichrist will establish at the Tribulation's mid-point, and it is the acquiescence and willing participation in this worship which will both energize the Great Persecution that follows and at the same time doom the world in general and Israel in particular to the "desolating horrors" of the Great Tribulation itself, the final intense period of judgment that precedes our Lord's return.

"And when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that her **desolation** is near."

Luke 21:20

In Luke's account of our Lord's words above, a second sign (i.e., the mustering of the beast's armies in Israel following the defeat of the south) is given as a warning for believers to flee Jerusalem in addition to the sign of the "abomination". The Greek word used here, *eremoseos* (ἐρημώσεως), is precisely the same word for "desolation" as the one used for the idol in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14. Thus in the case of Luke we are also given to see the *resulting* "desolation" which proceeds from the establishment of the system of worldwide idolatry in the very center of Jerusalem focused on the worship of antichrist and the idol which represents him, "the abomination [which causes] desolation".

2. The Session of Antichrist in the Temple of God: The elimination of Moses and Elijah and subsequent desecration of the sanctuary through the establishment of the talking idol are preliminary steps to the purpose most dear to antichrist's cold, half-human heart, namely, taking his seat in God's temple and thereby blasphemously proclaiming to the world that he is the true God and the true Messiah (cf. Dan.8:11-14).

For [the Second Advent cannot come] unless the [Great] Apostasy has first occurred and the man of lawlessness, [antichrist,] has [first] been revealed, that "son of destruction" (cf. Jn.17:12 of Judas), the one who will oppose and exalt himself against every so-called god and object of worship to such a degree that **he will [even] take his seat in the temple of God and represent himself as being God.**

2nd Thessalonians 2:3-4

The scope and duration of this false "session" are also discussed by Daniel:

(10) And [the little horn] (i.e., antichrist as a type and representative of the devil) magnified himself against the host of heaven (i.e., the family of God, men and angels both), and he cast down to the earth some of the host (i.e., antichrist seducing believers into apostasy) and some of the stars (i.e., Satan having seduced angels into rebellion) and he trampled them underfoot (i.e., their rebellion or apostasy in association with him leading to their subsequent destruction; cf. Dan.7:7; 7:19; Rev.11:2). (11) He even magnified himself against the Prince of the host (i.e., Christ). The daily sacrifice was abolished by him, and the holy place (i.e., the inner court) was desecrated. (12) And along with the daily sacrifice, the host (i.e., believers) fell into his power on account of [the] rebellion (i.e., the Great Apostasy). And he threw truth to the ground, and was successful in whatever he did. (13) And I heard one of the holy ones who was speaking, and he said to the other holy one who was speaking, "How long will this vision of the daily sacrifice and of the rebellion which produces desolation and of the handing over of the holy [place] (i.e., the inner court) and of the trampling down of the host be?" (14) And he replied to me, "Until 2,300 evenings and mornings have passed. Then the holy [place] will be purified."

Daniel 8:10-14

The beast will thus occupy the temple of God for the better part of the Great Tribulation, removing from Jerusalem only when the events which precede the Second Advent necessitate it (Dan.11:44-45; see part 5 of this series). Indeed, this prolonged "session" of antichrist is a deliberate attempt to mimic the present heavenly and coming earthly true session of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also take up residence in the temple during His thousand year millennial reign. Believers who know their God will not be fooled by the false parallels engineered by the beast (i.e., of a false Messiah ensconced in a false New Jerusalem ruling a false "kingdom come"). Just as the ark did not come to rest until Solomon, the "son of David", built a new and glorious home for it (i.e., the first temple), so the our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the ark is a type (1Chron.17:1-6), will be the one to "build up" the third temple in a manner and to a degree which will allow of no misinterpretation as to the true divine glory of its Builder and Inhabitant (cf. Zech.6:12-15). On the other hand, just as his father the devil profaned the original mountain of God (Ezek.28:18), so antichrist will profane and pollute the sanctuary until the 42

months of the Great Tribulation run their course and the glorious day of our Lord's return draws nigh.

3. The Revelation of Antichrist: With the termination of the warning ministries of the Tribulation's first half (directed by Moses and Elijah and carried out by the 144,000), the setting up of the abomination of desolation, and the session of antichrist in the very temple of God, blasphemously proclaiming himself to be God, not even the most skeptical nor the most ignorant will be able to doubt the identification of this individual as the beast prophesied in scripture. With these events, antichrist will have been fully "revealed" (2Thes.2:3-8), and the "number of his name" associated with the ensuing worship of him and his father the devil central to his new religion (Rev.13:16-18; covered in the next installment of this series) will be the final and incontrovertible proof that he is not the Son of God but rather the son of Satan. From this point forward, antichrist will be, for all practical purposes, the ruler of the world (Rev.13:3-10), and from his new headquarters on Jerusalem's temple mount he will seek to solidify that rule through the institution of a worldwide religion whose basic tenet will be that all must "join or die". All those whose names are not written in the book of life will acquiesce to this demand (Rev.13:8), but for those who are determined to remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, come what may, there will then begin a time of persecution unprecedented since the beginning of the world, there will begin the Great Tribulation.

This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Look! Disaster is spreading from nation to nation; a mighty storm is rising from the ends of the earth."
Jeremiah 25:32 NIV

Footnotes:

1. See The Coming Tribulation: Part 2B: The Heavenly Prelude to the Tribulation, section III, "The Restraining Ministry of the Holy Spirit".
2. See The Coming Tribulation: Part 3A: The Tribulation Begins, section II, "The Great Apostasy".
3. For more on the theory and application of biblical types and antitypes, see The Coming Tribulation: Part 1: Introduction, section IV.1.d, "Typology and Sequence in Old Testament Prophecy".
4. See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: "Judgment, Restoration and Replacement", section III.2, "Satan's postdiluvian attack on human freedom (the Tower of Babel)".
5. See The Coming Tribulation: Part 3A: "The Tribulation Begins: From the Seventh Seal to the Two Witnesses" section II.3.a, "The unleashing of the "mystery of lawlessness".
6. The Great Persecution takes place during the Tribulation's second half, and will be covered in part 4 of this series.

7. See part 2 of the series Exodus 14: Hardening Pharaoh's Heart.
8. See The Coming Tribulation: Part 1: Introduction, section IV.1.b, "The 'Day of the Lord' Paradigm", and section IV.2.a, "Biblical sources for the end times: Old Testament: Isaiah".
9. For commentary, see especially Bevan, E.R., "A Note on Antiochus Epiphanes", JHS 20 (1900) 26-30, and Morkhølm, O. Antiochus IV of Syria (Copenhagen 1966). Book 24 of Polybius' Histories and 1st and 2nd Maccabees (of the Apocrypha) are the most extensive ancient sources for Antiochus.
10. Jerome, in his commentary on the book of Daniel, likewise takes the discussion about Antiochus starting at Dan.11:21 to be applicable to antichrist.
11. See *sub voce* "Antiochus" in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville 1962).
12. While the "seed of Satan" can also refer to all who follow him (cf. Jn.8:44), this passage finds its ultimate fulfillment in the person of antichrist.
13. See L.S. Chafer's discussion of C. Larkin's The Spirit World: Systematic Theology v.2 (Dallas 1947) 114-117.
14. See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: "Judgment, Restoration and Replacement", section III.1, "Satan's antediluvian attack on the purity of the human line (the Nephilim)".
15. For a discussion of the rationale behind the devil's attempt to supplant God, see The Satanic Rebellion: Part 1: "Satan's Rebellion and Fall", especially section IV.3 "Satan's Fall".
16. On the symbolism of the sea, see above and also The Satanic Rebellion: Part 2: "The Genesis Gap", section II.3, "The Sea".
17. See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: "Judgment, Restoration and Replacement", section II.9, "Specific Chronology of the Seven Days of Human History".
18. On both of these points, see The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: "Judgment, Restoration and Replacement", section II.9, "Specific Chronology of the Seven Days of Human History".
19. See The Coming Tribulation: Part 1: Introduction, section I.2.h, "Other Passages [referencing the Tribulation]".
20. While the original root of *shiphiphon* is impossible to determine with certainty, there is no question but that the sound and feel of the word would remind the attentive reader of the verb in Genesis 3:15, especially given the similarities of the contexts.

21. Antichrist claims to be the Lion of Judah, but in reality he is a "ravening lion" bent on the destruction of the righteous in a manner similar to his father the devil (1Pet.5:8), who also makes a habit of masquerading as an angel of light (2Cor.11:13-15).

22. Indeed, it is the latter of these two passages which was taken by Irenaeus to be preeminent proof that antichrist would arise from the tribe of Dan: "Hieremias . . . et tribum ex qua veniet [Antichristus] manifestavit dicens: *ex Dan audiemus vocem velocitatis equorum eius* (Jer.8:16) . . . et propter hoc non adnumeratur tribus haec in Apocalypsi cum his quae salvantur" (*Adv. Haer.* 5.30.2).

23. In addition to its near term fulfillment in regard to historical Babylon, and its forward-looking eschatological application discussed here, this prophecy also relates the pre-historic fall of Satan, the father, mentor, and type of the beast. See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 1 "Satan's Rebellion", section IV, "Satan's Character, Sin and Fall". For the multiple application of biblical prophecy in general and on this passage in particular, see part 1 of this series, section IV, "The Biblical Sources for the History of the Tribulation".

24. See the preceding note for the application of this passage to historical Babylon and to Satan's prehistoric rebellion.

25. Both this and the previous cryptogram are derived by a device known as "*athbash*", an alphabet code whereby the encoded letter stands for the same number sequence letter of the alphabet read in reverse (i.e., *taw*, the first letter read from the end of the alphabet stands for *aleph*, the first in the normal order, while *shin*, the second from the end, stands for *beth*, the second from the front, etc. – hence the name, *a=th-ba=sh*, $\psi=\kappa - \eta=\aleph$).

26. It is precisely for this reason that John describes the armies and their leader which encircle millennial Jerusalem at the end of our Lord's thousand year reign as "Gog and Magog" (Rev.20:8) – not because Ezekiel 38-39 have their primary application at that time (e.g., there would be no time or need or possibility for a seven year period of plundering the remains of these armies if the eternal state follows immediately as it surely does: cf. Ezek.39:9-10) – but because in that instance too we have a worldwide confederacy led by a single anti-God ruler directed behind the scenes by Satan (just as in the case of antichrist and his coalition).

27. In an alternative alphabet code, decoding Magog by using the previous letter of the Hebrew alphabet for each of its three consonants, then reading the word right to left instead of left to right, one achieves the result "Babel", the Hebrew word for Babylon (i.e., m-g-g [ג-ג-מ] reversed = g-g-m [מ-ג-ג], then substituting the previous alphabet letter for each consonant one arrives at b-b-l [ל-ב-ב]). It is also possible to see in the name "Gog" a doubling of the Hebrew word for gentile, *goy*, a formation which would identify antichrist as the ultimate profane gentile ruler.

28. The Hebrew prefix *m-* [מ] bearing a locative sense as is often the case in nominal formations.

29. For a discussion of the chronological issues involved in determining the birth date of our Lord, see the Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: "Judgment, Restoration and Replacement", section II.9.a.1, "the Birth of Christ".

30. In the Greek text (see ms. 8), the phrase "this [one] is the eighth" is masculine, meaning that the reference has to be to the kings, and not the beast per se (neuter in Greek), or to one of the heads (neuter in Greek), or to one of the mountains (feminine in Greek). The same is true for the "other", i.e., "last" in the sequence of the seven, so that in both instances the reference is to antichrist rather than to his ten-kingdom empire.

31. See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: "Judgment, Restoration and Replacement", section III.2, "Satan's postdiluvian attack on human freedom (the Tower of Babel)".

32. See also the comments in the preceding part 3A regarding the Euphrates and Babylon as the center of the world from the standpoint of satanic opposition to God's plan: section III.6, "The Second Woe: Demon Destruction (9:13-19)".

33. See section IV.2.a of part 1, "Biblical Sources for the End Times: the Old Testament".

34. See M.F. Unger, Commentary on the Old Testament in. loc.

35. See the discussion of the four biblical quarters of the earth in The Coming Tribulation: Part 2B: The Heavenly Prelude to the Tribulation, section IV.4b, "Summary of the Four Horsemen".

36. For the likely commencement of the Tribulation according to the seven millennia age day interpretation of scripture, see part 5 of the Satanic Rebellion series, section II.9, "Specific Chronology of the Seven Days of Human History".

37. On the removal of the Holy Spirit's restraining ministry see part 2B of this series, section III.

38. cf. the many revivals in ancient Israel later followed by apostasy (e.g., Judg.2:10-15). It is more than interesting to note that the destruction of Assyria followed the revival begun by Jonah by approximately the same number of years allotted to this final era of the Church, that of Laodicea wherein lukewarmness comes to a head.

39. cf. the *niphal* of *sha'al*, where *nish'al*, means to "ask for oneself" in Neh.13:6.

40. That is not to say that this fact provides the full interpretation of the "*gematria*" device we are given at Revelation 13:18. The complete resolution of 666 will only be possible when one calculates the numerical value of antichrist's name (a virtual impossibility without first having the proper name to check). See the forthcoming part 4 of this series for a complete discussion.

41. See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: "Judgment, Restoration and Replacement", section III.1, "Satan's antediluvian attack on the purity of the human line (the Nephilim)".

42. The Hebrew of the book of Daniel is particularly and peculiarly abbreviated and succinct, often to the point of what would be obscurity without a prior detailed and specific understanding of the interpretation at hand (and nowhere is this more evident than in chapter eleven).

43. See The Coming Tribulation: Part 1: Introduction, section I.2.h, "Other Passages [referencing the Tribulation]".

44. Jerome seems to have been the earliest to appreciate that the description of antichrist begins in verse twenty-one.

45. See the following note.

46. The phenomenon seen here and in verse 23 of a leading synopsis or first account followed by a more detailed account or a "flashback" summary is a common one in scripture. Compare the summary of the seven days of re-creation given at Genesis 2:4 which is then followed by a more detailed treatment of the creation of Adam and Eve which took place within the prior description. See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 2: "The Genesis Gap", section III.2, "The Genesis 2:4 Summary".

47. Compare the methodology of similar "trafficking" employed by the beast's father in his suborning of the [fallen] angels to follow him in rebelling against the Lord. See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 1: "Satan's Rebellion and Fall", section IV.3.

48. See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: "Judgment, Restoration and Replacement", sections II.7-9, "The Seven Days of Human History".

49. For more specifics on antichrist's religious movement, see The Coming Tribulation: Part 3A: The Tribulation Begins, section II.3.c.2, "The persuasiveness of the tribulational false religion", and, in the forthcoming part 4 of this series, section VI.2, "The Anti-Christian Religion and its Worldwide Expansion".

50. See The Coming Tribulation: Part 3A: "The Tribulation Begins: From the Seventh Seal to the Two Witnesses" section II.3.a, "The unleashing of the "mystery of lawlessness".

51. See parts 1 and 3 respectively of The Satanic Rebellion.

52. e.g., Herodotus (*Hist.* 3.94; 7:78) as well as Assyrian records. See Unger's Bible Dictionary, and The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, s.v. "Meshech" and "Tubhal".

53. The heads have a dual interpretation as we saw in section II.1.c.3 above: they also refer to the progression of "emperors" which culminates in antichrist. This is why the beast is said to be "one of the seven" (i.e., the ultimate emperor of [revived] Rome) and at the same time also "the eighth" (i.e., king of a kingdom [Babylon] which is separate from revived Rome). This is analogous to the case of the little horn of Daniel chapter seven which is likewise described as a horn, yet separate from the other ten.

54. This phrase is generally misunderstood in the versions, at least in part. The Hebrew adjective *mishman*, משמנים, from the root *shaman*, שמן, while literally meaning "fat", is often employed in the sense of strength as well as of wealth, and that is the meaning here (cf. Is.10:16, "stout warriors"). The word we are translating "empire" is the Hebrew noun *medinah*, מדינה, an Aramaic loan word which, while it can mean province in Hebrew, does so primarily through application of the word to Judah, a province of the Babylonian and Persian empires. On its own, there is evidence that the word means "city" and since it occurs here without the definite article, it must be regarded as a proper noun, that is, not "city", but "City", namely, the capital city of an empire and by extension the empire itself (this is essentially the way the noun is used in the Targums for both Rome and Constantinople). The NASB comes the closest of all the version to capturing the precise meaning on this point with its rendering "the richest places *of the realm*".

55. The phrase "throw it to the potter" refers to the purchasing of the "potter's field" (cf. Matt.26:14-15; 27:3-10), a place in any major town where clay for pots was quarried. Any such field would, over time, become pockmarked with numerous holes large and small and be good for nothing except a mean burial.

56. See part 1 of this series, section IV.1.b., "The 'Day of the Lord' Paradigm".

57. cf. M.F. Unger on this phrase: "a designation (i.e., "holy covenant") of the Jewish nation embracing the knowledge and worship of the true God", Commentary on the Old Testament v. 2 (Chicago 1981) p.1684.

58. These ships will also be instrumental in the exploitation of the beast's victory (Ezek.30:9-12), and the emphasis in scripture of the destruction of these naval forces of antichrist at the Second Advent underscores this point (Ps.48:4-7; Is.2:16; 33:21-23; 43:14; cf. Ps.72:10).

59. We also see in Ezekiel chapter 31 in the parable of the tree representing Assyria taken down by "the ruler of the nations" (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar-antichrist), followed by the similar fate that befalls the tree representing Egypt, a parallel to the fall of revived Rome at the hands of the beast's Babylon prior to antichrist's conquest of the southern alliance (centered on Egypt).

60. This sixth trumpet judgment is covered in part 3A of this series, section III.6.

61. The future sense is derived here as it frequently is in Biblical Hebrew from the *waw* which precedes in the future sequence begun in verse 29 (*yashubh ubha'*, ויבא ישוב).

62. cf. the Vulgate's rendering: *percutietur*.

63. I am grateful to Mr. Barney Blankenship for his comments in this regard.

64. See part 5 of the Satanic Rebellion series, "Judgment, Restoration and Replacement", section III.1, "Satan's antediluvian attack on the purity of the human line (the Nephilim)".

65. This devastation of physical and spiritual life is what is truly at the heart of the Hebrew root here, *shamam*; שמש. See especially Jenni and Westermann, T.H.A.T., s.v., v.2 col.971: "vom Leben abgeschnitten sein".

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