

ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 145
“Armageddon and ‘the War on Terror’: Part II”
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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
“The Saga of the Adventist Papal Tiara”
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If the popularity of a newsletter can be measured by the number of messages of appreciation it generates, then the last newsletter on “Armageddon and the War on Terror,” scores the first place among the previous 143 newsletters. Several subscribers who faithfully read every newsletter, told me that they voted the last newsletter as the best so far.

The credit goes primarily to Prof. Jon Paulien for sharing with our readers an insightful essay on the rise, expansion, decline, and re-emergence of Islam today. The second part of this essay posted in this newsletter, should prove to be of even greater interest, since it offers a surprising interpretation of how the war on terror could eventually become a war against God’s faithful remnant, as envisioned in the book of Revelation and *The Great Controversy*.

It is reassuring to know that the painstaking efforts that go into researching and writing a newsletter, are not in vain. The hundreds of comments I receive from subscribers in different parts of the world, suggest that there are Adventists and non-Adventists with inquiring minds, who appreciate reading a biblical perspective on current issues.

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THE SAGA OF THE ADVENTIST PAPAL TIARA

During the past few weeks I have received several messages and telephone calls from fellow believers, who expressed their deep disappointment over the new symbolic interpretation of the number of Beast 666, presented in the previous newsletters. They believe that the traditional identification of the 666 with the pope’s title *Vicarius Filii Dei—Vicar of the Son of God*, is correct because such title is inscribed in the papal tiara and the numerical value of its letters add up to 666.

They reject any proof to the contrary, even if the reasons given in the Sabbath School Lesson of June 1-7, 2002, are very compelling. They view any departure from the traditional interpretation as disloyalty to the teachings of the Adventist church. Obviously, they ignore that the numeric interpretation of the number of the beast, has never been an official teaching of the Adventist church. Shortly, we will see that on several occasions the General Conference has discouraged such an interpretation.

Last Sabbath one brother raised this pertinent question during the questions/answers period of my seminar: “How can our traditional numeric interpretation of 666 be wrong when it is clearly presented and defended by Uriah Smith in his book *Daniel and the Revelation*? After all, Ellen White highly recommended this book, which Literature Evangelists have sold until it recent times, and our church has used for over a century as a reliable source for the study of Daniel and Revelation. How could our Adventist Church have accepted Uriah Smith’s interpretation for so long, if it were wrong?” This is a legitimate question that troubles some of our fellow believers—a question that deserves serious consideration.

One sister told me on the phone that her faith is badly shaken by the new symbolic interpretation of the number of the Beast. The reason

she gave me is that she made the decision to join our Adventist church, the night when she heard the evangelistic sermon on “The Mark of the Beast.” She said: “When I learned that the pope is the beast of Revelation 13, especially because the title *Vicarius Filii Dei* is inscribed in his tiara and it adds up to 666, then I became convinced that the teachings of the Adventist church were correct and I decided to join the church.”

Discovering that one particular prophetic interpretation was inaccurate, can be unsettling for those who placed their faith upon it. I share the pain of those who feel confused or even deceived by what they were taught. But, covering up the mistakes of the past, will only postpone the solution of the problem.

The few passionate reactions against the symbolic interpretations of 666, reminds me of the fact that legends that capture popular imagination, never seem to die, no matter how incredible they might be. Coming from Rome, I am reminded of some of the popular legends that have become part of the Catholic religious culture.

An Example of the Undying Nature of Popular Legends

For example, the citizens on Naples gather every year on September 19 at the Treasure Chapel of their patron saint, Gennaro, to watch his dried blood preserved in two glasses, liquefy and become like the familiar red blood of a living being. San Gennaro’s devotees believe that if his blood liquefies on the anniversary of martyrdom, September 19, then the city will continue to enjoy his protection from cataclysmic events, such as the eruption of the Vesuvius, floods, earthquakes, or whatever threatens their health and prosperity.

This legend is so deeply rooted in the popular religious culture of the Neapolitans, that when in 1964 the Second Vatican Council attempted to stop such religious celebration, there was such an uproar in Naples, that the Vatican was forced to rescind its decision. The Vatican compromised by restricting the religious celebrations for San Gennaro only to Naples, exempting the rest of the country.

In 1980, when Naples fell victim to a devastating earthquake, the Neapolitans did not blame their patron saint for failing to protect them.

Instead, they blamed the Vatican for discrediting the sainthood of San Gennaro. This example serves to show how difficult it is even for the Vatican to suppress a popular legend that does not conform to their canonical criteria.

What is true for the Catholic church, is also true to some extent for our own Adventist church. It is difficult, if not impossible, to uproot the popular belief in the alleged inscription *Vicarius Filii Dei* in the papal tiara. It would be presumptuous to assume that the recent research done by competent Adventist scholars and presented in a recent Sabbath School Lesson, will put to rest this popular Adventist belief that the number of the beast is found in the pope's title inscribed in the papal tiara.

For the sake of those interested to know the facts, I will summarize in an outline bullet-point format the basic finding of my research. This brief repetition should help those who did not fully understand what I wrote in my previous newsletters. A full explanation of each point is provided in the newly recorded DVD powerpoint lecture on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*. Information on how to order the DVD album is found at the end of this newsletter, or by clicking here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/BeastAD/>

Basic Facts About the Adventist Interpretation of the Number 666 of the Beast (Rev 13:18)

- 1) The Adventist pioneers early identified the Mark of the Beast with the enforcement of Sunday observance, but they were uncertain regarding the meaning of the Number of the Beast (666).
- 2) Initially, some Adventist pioneers, including J. N. Andrews, believed that the number 666 of the Beast was made up of approximately 666 Protestant sects who had accepted the authority and teachings of the Catholic Church.
- 3) Uriah Smith appears to have been the first Adventist leader to mention *Vicarius Filii Dei* as a possible interpretation of the number 666. His proposal first appears in an editorial published in *The Review and Herald* issue of November 20, 1866.

4) Eventually Uriah Smith’s interpretation became widely accepted due to the influence of his books *Daniel and the Revelation* and *The United States in the Light of Prophecy*.

5) The sources cited by Uriah Smith to support his identification of the number 666 with the pope’s title *Vicarius Filii Dei*, are the accounts of two eyewitnesses who claimed to have seen the inscription on the pope’s tiara while in Rome. One claimed to have seen the inscribed papal tiara in the Vatican Museum and the other witness during an Easter Mass celebrations. Both accounts are discredited by the fact that papal tiaras are not displayed in the Vatican Museum, nor does the pope wear the tiara for Mass celebrations. The three crowns gold Tiara has been used primarily for the coronation of the pope—a practice that has been discontinued by the latest three popes, John Paul I, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI.

6) A significant search for inscribed papal tiara was conducted in 1905 by Chas T. Everson, an Adventist missionary serving in Italy. At the request of several church leaders, especially Prof. William Prescott, a leading Adventist educator, Everson conducted a thorough investigation that providentially led him into the very dressing room of the pope, where some tiaras are kept.

In spite of his unique opportunity to view several tiaras at close range, Everson was disappointed in not finding the inscription *Vicarius Filii Dei* on any of them. He wrote: “But while we were pleased to see brilliant crowns, yet we were disappointed in not finding the object of our search; for the inscription *Vicarius Filii Dei* was nowhere to be found inscribed upon the tiara, as the accompanying photographs show very plainly.” He concludes his report, saying: “to be perfectly correct in our statements, we cannot say that there is an inscription of this nature on the tiara at present” (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 27, 1905, p. 10).

7) One of the stunning pictures of the papal tiara sent by Everson to the General conference, was modified by an Adventist artist who added the words *Vicarius Filii Dei* to the golden tiara. The Southern Publishing Association used this “doctored” picture of the tiara in the revised edition of Uriah Smith’s *Daniel and the Revelation*. When confronted with the incriminating evidence, the General Conference gave immediate orders

to stop the printing any further copies of the book, until the fraudulent pictures were removed.

8) Prescott requested an opportunity to make a presentation to the General Conference officers. Some of the officers were convinced by Prescott’s arguments, but others thought that the issue needed further study. At any rate, they all agreed that in the meantime “the interpretation should not be repeated.”

9) This episode was soon forgotten. *Vicarius Filii Dei* was a too neat fit to Revelation 13:18 to be easily abandoned, so it continued to be a popular interpretation, in spite of the action taken by the General Conference.

10) In 1935 Francis Nichols, editor of *Present Truth*, published an article alleging that *Vicarius Filii Dei* was the pope’s official title, inscribed in the papal tiara. As soon as the article appeared, the popular Catholic magazine, *Our Sunday Visitor*, challenged Nichols to produce the evidence or to stop using biased and dishonest anti-Catholic sources to make such claim. Nichols asked Prof. Prescott for help to justify the claim, but the professor responded that there was none.

11) Eventually a special study group was set up by the General Conference chaired by Elder Howell, hoping that some more reliable information might be found on the use of the pope’s title *Vicarius Filii Dei*. LeRoy Edwin Froom was sent on a special research assignment to the Vatican to seek information on the pope’s title *Vicarius Filii Dei*, but he found nothing of significance.

12) In 1948, LeRoy Froom, Editor of *Ministry*, issued a strong warning against the use of fraudulent tiaras in evangelistic meetings. He wrote: “In the name of truth and honesty this journal protests any such use by any member of the Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventist denomination (our worker body), of which *The Ministry* is the official organ. Truth does not need fabrication to aid or suppress it. Its very nature precludes any manipulation or duplicity. We cannot afford to be party to any fraud.” (*The Ministry*, November 1948, p. 35).

13) The warnings given by the General Conference and by *Ministry* did not stop the preaching and the writings on the pope’s title *Vicarius Filii Dei*, allegedly inscribed in the pope’s tiara. The reason was mentioned earlier. Legends that capture popular imagination, never seem to die, no matter how incredible they might be. This gives me reason to believe that no amount of compelling research done by competent and dedicated Adventist scholars, will ever succeed to suppress what has become an Adventist popular interpretation.

14) Recent Adventist studies on the book of Revelation have concluded that the traditional numeric interpretation of the number 666 of the Beast, lacks both exegetically and historical support. Thus, they have proposed a symbolic interpretation of the number 666 on the basis of exegetical and historical considerations.

15) The Seventh-day Adventist Church at large was informed about the new symbolic interpretation of the Number 666 of the Beast by the Sabbath School Lesson of June 1-7, 2002. The lesson dealt specifically with *The Mark and Number of the Beast* (Rev 13:16-18; 14:1). The principal author of the Sabbath School Quarterly is Angel Rodriguez, Ph. D. He has been serving for several years as the Director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.

16) Regarding the Number of the Beast, Dr. Rodriguez writes: “*The Number of the Beast*. The mark, the name, and the number of the beast are closely related (Rev. 13:17). Many suggestions have been made to explain the meaning of 666. Here we must be very careful. The Bible does not say that the number is the added numerical value of the letters of a name. . . . Some see in the meaning of 666 a symbol of humanity separated from God. Humans were created on the sixth day, and the number can stand as a symbol for humanity without divine rest (the seventh day).”

Dr. Rodriguez concludes, saying: “At the present time, the symbolism of intensified rebellion, six used three times, and total independence from God seem to be the best option. Time will reveal the full meaning of the symbol” (Thursday, June 6, 2002).

17). Dr. Rodriguez continues giving three reasons for rejecting the traditional *Vicarius Filii Dei* interpretation. He writes: “First, it is not clear

that this title is an official one.” My research has shown that *Vicarius Filii Dei* has been used as one of the papal title, but it is not *the* official title. The reason is that the pope has many titles, not ONE official title. The most common title is *Vicarius Christi*, which is similar to *Vicarius Filii Dei*.

18) The second reason Dr. Rodriguez gives is that the phrase “it is a human number” (v. 18), suggests that the number represents “humans separated from God.” This is an important point, ignored by most people, because the KJV inaccurately reads “it is the number of a man” (Rev 13:18). The key phrase in Greek reads “*arithmos anthropou*” (Rev 13:18), means “human number.” The phrase suggests that it is not the number of a name, but the number representing a human condition of rebellion against God. The triple six suggests a determined effort of the beast to promote the worship of himself, rather than of God.

19) The third reason given by Dr. Rodriguez for rejecting the *Vicarius Filii Dei* interpretation is that the text does not specify in which language is the numerical value of letters to be counted. He writes: “Third, those who insist in counting the numerical value of letters confront the problem of deciding which language will be used. Because the text does not identify any language, the selection of a particular one will be somewhat arbitrary.” (Friday, June 7, 2002).

This is a decisive observation. It is absurd to assume that the original recipients of Revelation could identify the number 666 with the pope’s title *Vicarius Filii Dei*. Why? For two reasons. First, this title was unknown in John’s day as it was coined eight centuries later in the forged Donation of Constantine. Second, the Latin language also was largely unknown to John and his Greek-speaking readers. His call for wisdom to understand the number 666 would have been senseless, if the information needed to understand the number was still eight centuries in the future, and if the language of the title was foreign to the recipients of the Revelation.

20) My personal reasons for accepting the symbolic interpretation of the number 666 presented by Dr. Rodriguez in the Sabbath School Lesson, are based on four major considerations:

1. John’s use of numbers in Revelation. This is the key to understand the meaning of numbers in Revelation. Very little attention has been paid in Adventist studies to the symbolic use of numbers, especially in the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation.
2. The importance of the number 666 in the pagan worship of Babylon and ancient Rome.
3. The symbolic meanings of 666 in the Bible.
4. The relationship between the mark of the beast and the number of the beast.

Each of these points is discussed at considerable length both in the live DVD lecture and in the powerpoint file with 200 slides. The DVD album includes a powerpoint file with 200 slides, accompanied by a script explaining them. Anyone interested can use the material for a personal presentation. The information on how to order the DVD album is found at the end of this newsletter or by clicking here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/BeastAD/>

21. Conclusion. The prophecy of the Mark and Number of the Beast is central to Revelation. It represents the final diabolical attempt to enforce the false worship through the unholy trinity represented by a dragon, sea-beast, and land-beast.

The prophecy calls for believers to recognize, not papal titles, barcodes, or biochips, but the global nature of false worship promoted by a variety of agencies, including Catholicism. As Adventists, we must recognize that false worship assumes different deceptive forms. Sometimes these forms can find their ways even in some Adventist churches, where worship focuses on physical stimulation rather than on spiritual elevation. Our best protection against the end-time deception of false worship is the seal of God, manifested in living by the enabling power of the Spirit in obedience to God’s commandments.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AT THE END OF THE NEWSLETTERS

A detailed description of the special offers on goods and services is provided at the end of this newsletter. Here is just a brief listing of the announcements placed at the end.

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- 1. CALENDAR OF FORTHCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS** for the months of April and May.
 - 2. SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER ON THE NEW DVD ALBUM WITH THE LIVE RECORDING** of the lecture on *The Number and Mark of the Beast*. See the details at the end of this newsletter.
 - 3. SPECIAL OFFER ON THE PACKAGE OF ALL MY RECORDINGS CONSISTING OF 5 ALBUMS**, including the newly released DVD album on *The Mark and the Number of the Beast*. The regular price for the package of the 5 albums is \$500.00, but the **SPECIAL ONE-TIME OFFER IS ONLY \$100.00**. See the details at the end of this newsletter.
 - 4. SPECIAL OFFER ON PROF. JON PAULIEN’S 5 ALBUMS with 60 CD DISKS**, containing 120 lectures that explain verse by verse the book of Revelation. See the details at the end of this newsletter.
 - 5. SPECIAL OFFER ON PROF. JON PAULIEN’S NEWLY RELEASED CD-ROM WITH HIS BOOKS AND ARTICLES**. Special introductory offer for \$35.00, instead of \$50.00. See the details at the end of this newsletter.
 - 6. HITACHI PROJECTORS:** HITACHI has offered a special over-stock discount on a volume purchase of 4 different models of projectors. For examples, the special offer for **3200 LUMENS PROJECTOR IS ONLY \$1995.00**. See the details at the end of this newsletter or call me at 269-471-2915
 - 7. NEW TOSHIBA TECRA A4 LAPTOP:** TOSHIBA is offering to our Adventist churches and schools the new **TECRA A4** that arrived from China on February 13, at 35% discount. See the details at the end of this newsletter.
 - 8. REMOTE PRESENTER:** Special offer on the smallest and most powerful REMOTE powerpoint presenter by Honeywell. See the details at the end of this newsletter.

9. DA-LITE SCREENS for your church at 30% discount. You can locate the screen your church needs and calculate the 30% discount at the DA-LITE website: <http://www.da-lite.com>. See the details at the end of this newsletter.

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION TO PROF. PAULIEN ESSAY

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In the first part of his essay on “Armageddon and the War on Terror,” Prof. Paulien outlined the rise of Islam, its expansion through the centuries, until its decline during the past two centuries, as Western powers divided up the Moslem world among themselves. He began his discussion of how fundamentalist Muslim (Jihadist) are attempting to restore Islam to a dominant place in the world today, using “terror” as a strategy.

In the second part of this essay, Prof. Paulien continues his analysis of the Jihadists’ strategy, outlining also the methods used by the American government to win the “war over terror.” The most intriguing part of this study comes at the end, where Prof. Paulien suggests a surprising scenario where the efforts of the international community of nations to suppress terrorists, suddenly expand to include the alleged threat posed by God’s faithful people.

You will find an in-depth analysis of these surprising endtime developments, in Prof. Paulien’s *The Bible Explorer Series on Revelation* which consists of 5 albums with a total of 60 CD disks, containing 120 live lectures. To express my appreciation to Prof. Paulien’s contribution to the understanding of the Book of Revelation, I am offering without any commission his timely set of 120 lectures through the shopping cart at my website: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/paulien/> More details on how to order this album with 120 lectures, are given at the end of this newsletter.

“Armageddon and ‘the War on Terror: Part II’”**John Paulien, Ph. D.,****Chairman, New Testament Department****Andrews University Theological Seminary****PART II:****The Strategy of Osama bin Laden**

The goal of the Jihadists to restore Islam to a dominant place in the world today, using “terror” as a strategy, gives us some insight into the mindset of bin Laden when he gave the go-ahead for the attack of September 11, 2001. While the actions of the hijackers were gruesome and incomprehensible to Westerners, they are part of a strategic plan to change the balance of power in the world. The leaders of al Qaeda see the Islamic world being occupied by non-Islamic forces. To change the balance of power in the world al Qaeda must find a way to end the Occupation@ and re-unite Islam. Since the United States is the leading power in the world and the patron of many Islamic regimes, it is the power behind the “occupation and, therefore, the great enemy that motivates and controls the anti-Islamic agenda.

Defeating the United States directly is not a realistic option. But the kind of war bin Laden has unleashed burdens America with billions of dollars of expenses to fight “terrorism” at home and abroad. It distracts Americans with the constant fear of unsuspected attacks. It makes Americans feel as insecure as Europeans and Israelis have felt for decades. It makes isolationism look more attractive. If, in the process, the United States can be caused to withdraw from the Islamic world, other anti-Islamic powers such as Russia, India and Israel would be helpless to intervene. Corrupt and secular governments in the Muslim world would then have no base of outside support and would be overthrown by the Islamic masses.

So al Qaeda does not expect to destroy the United States directly, unless some doomsday weapon comes into its hands. The United States is too powerful and too distant to defeat. Rather, bin Laden’s strategy has been to force the United States into a series of actions that destabilize the governments of those Middle Eastern countries that are dependant on Washington. If the United States could be made to look weak and vulnerable in the eyes of the Arab street, the governments of the Middle

East would lose their credibility. If pressure from the United States then forces those governments to join the US in fighting Islamic militants or to remain silent in the face of Israeli aggression, popular uprisings could easily lead to their collapse. The ultimate goal would be the establishment of an Islamic superpower, a vast Islamic state stretching from Morocco to the island of Mindanao in the Philippines, governed by Islamic law.

Could a bin Laden achieve such goals? He clearly believed the United States does not have the stomach to suppress a mass, popular uprising. Unlike al Qaeda, Americans as a rule do their best not to hurt innocents. The same military that is virtually invincible in battle would have a difficult time handling an army of unarmed women and children. Although the United States has important interests in the Islamic world, they are not on a scale to justify the expense and casualties involved in a long-term occupation. To the degree that further jihadist acts in the US should occur, the American populace could easily sway toward an isolationist stance. If this isolationism should lead to withdrawal from Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia and even the partial abandonment of Israel, the political world would have changed considerably in favor of the Islamic agenda.

So from bin Laden’s perspective war in diplomatic, economic or military terms would only result in the further humiliation of Islam. But this new kind of war has altered the battlefield odds. Since the targets vastly outnumber the defenders, al Qaeda has designed a war strategy in which it has significant advantages. U.S. power is weakened in that defensive action must be widely dispersed. Suicidal fervor creates a low-tech battlefield in which superior technology is neutralized as a weapon.

The goal of the attacks on September 11, 2001 was not to defeat America. America was too powerful and too distant for that to happen. Osama bin Laden’s goal was a very strange one from the Western perspective. He wanted to provoke America to attack the Islamic world. More specifically he wanted to provoke America to attack Saudi Arabia.

Did you notice that 15 of the 19 hijackers on September 11 were Saudis? While the trained pilots were generally from other countries, the “beef” of the operation (the muscle-men who would take over the plane) were almost all from Saudi Arabia. Osama wanted it to appear that this was

a Saudi attack on American. While he anticipated the attack on Afghanistan in 2001, he was sure that President Bush would not stop there. In order to stop al Qaeda he would have to control Saudi Arabia as well.

Why provoke an attack on Saudi Arabia? Because that is the holy land of Islam, the place where Allah met the prophet Muhammad, the place of pilgrimage, the land of Mecca and Medina. If any action could be calculated to inflame the passion of the Islamic masses in the Middle East it would be a Western occupation of the holy places. Osama bin Laden wanted above all else to arouse the fervor of the people to rise up against the invaders and make life so miserable for them that they would be forced to withdraw, as the Soviets were forced to from Afghanistan. Yesterday, Afghanistan. Today, Saudi Arabia. Tomorrow? The world!

Does it sound like the demented scheme of a madman? To many it does. But when you consider what other options were available to stimulate a rebirth of Islamic power in the world, bin Laden's scheme doesn't sound so crazy. It was a shrewd calculation that the only way to get rid of corrupt and secular governments in the Middle East was to find a way to humiliate the sponsor of those governments, the United States. Once the sponsor proved powerless, these Arab governments would fall and the Islamic Empire would be reborn.

So let me summarize Osama bin Laden's dream scenario. His goal for September 11 was to do something so horrific that the United States would feel forced to invade the Middle East, preferably Saudi Arabia. Osama and his friends could then label it an attack on Islam itself. A guerilla war against the invaders would provoke the Americans to kill and wound many innocent bystanders. The “Arab street,” the common, everyday man and woman in the Middle East would rise up in righteous anger against the occupiers. The military might of America would prove helpless against an uprising of “people power,” unarmed men, women and children who would be willing to die for their faith.

In the face of such an enemy, America would have little choice but to pull back into bases and leave the streets in the hands of the insurgents, much as had occurred in Vietnam years before. Eventually, America would grow tired of the conflict. Media and congress would unite to force the president to withdraw and leave the Middle East to its own devices. In

the wake of that superpower defeat, the masses in the Middle East would embrace Islam and Sharia law and the stage would be set for an Islamic superpower that could extend from Morocco to Indonesia. That was Osama's dream and it will likely outlive him regardless of the outcome in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East.

The Strategy of George W. Bush

But that brings us to the obvious question, doesn't it? In the invasion of Iraq in 2003, wasn't President Bush doing exactly what Osama bin Laden expected and wanted? Wasn't he playing directly in the hands of the jihadists? Wasn't he placing young Americans in an impossible situation where they could be picked off in ones and twos? Wasn't the Iraq adventure doomed from the very start? Then why did he go there? Was it simply bad intelligence about weapons of mass destruction? Was it really all about the oil after all?

Here is where the deeper motivations behind the news have been poorly understood. The real geopolitical goals of the Iraq War have been hinted at in the media but rarely spoken out loud. The President himself has been careful never to tip his hand publically, even in the face of just criticism of the goals that were actually stated. Let's briefly go behind the scenes and unravel the deeper actions and motivations that don't always make the news.

What did the invasion of Iraq have to do with the war on terror? Why did Bush play bin Laden's game? What was he hoping to gain? The usual reasons make no sense. The invasion was not really about weapons of mass destruction. While it turns out that Saddam Hussein no longer had any weapons of mass destruction, everybody, including the Europeans, believed that he had. Yet in spite of that belief, most did not think that was a reason to invade.

The invasion was not really about Saddam Hussein. Sure, he was a rather unsavory character. Sure, he gassed the Kurds and massacred the Shiites. Sure his secret police was killing people right and left. But such events had been occurring for the last twenty-five years and had provoked

no American invasion up to that point. Why invade now? The invasion was also not really about control of Middle Eastern oil. The oil was flowing fine before the war. The war has, in fact, driven up prices and created uncertainty. War hinders trade, it doesn't promote it. So all of the public reasons for the invasion make no real sense.

The real purpose of the invasion was the dismantling of al Qaeda. Al Qaeda is not a national government. It is not a definable state with borders and institutions that can be destroyed. To dismantle al Qaeda means shutting off the flow of funds, most of which had been coming from Saudi Arabia. To deal with al Qaeda requires co-operation from every nation in which al Qaeda operates. It requires the free flow of intelligence information. It requires people to turn in relatives and friends who are part of the conspiracy. Since al Qaeda has always been rooted in the Arab context, it cannot be defeated without projecting power into the Middle East at some point. Osama bin Laden knew that and included that into his calculations of American behavior.

Let me illustrate the problem. It is reported that Osama bin Laden had at least 53 siblings from a variety of different mothers. Many of these were not sympathetic to the goals and methods of the jihadists. Many were living happily in the United States when September 11 occurred. Some, however, were sympathetic. The only way to accurately separate the “jihadists” from the “friends of democracy” in the bin Laden family itself is to be inside the family. In other words, the United States and allied governments need to be able to penetrate such families intimately and encourage brother to “rat” on brother and/or turn them in to the authorities. This is kind of thing is heavily destructive in any close-knit family and will be resisted in most circumstances.

The dilemma for the rulers of Saudi Arabia after September 11 was that they had to choose between pleasing the United States, who wanted to root out every potential jihadist in Saudi Arabia, and pleasing their own people, who didn't want such disruptive activities occurring in their own country and in their own families. Why would they choose to please the United States over their own people? After all, if they offended their own people, their own people would be motivated to overthrow them! So there was no way the Saudi rulers would fully co-operate with the United

States in “the war on terror” unless they became more afraid of the United States than they were of their own people!

In a desperate attempt to distract the United States, the Saudi leadership began floating exciting proposals for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These proposals had no chance of being accepted by those who would be most affected by them, but offering the proposals set conditions for Saudi co-operation in the war on terror that the United States could never fulfill. What the United States heard in these proposals was that the Saudis had no intention of helping to destroy al Qaeda.

So how could the United States get at al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia? One option was to invade Saudi Arabia and do the job themselves. But that is exactly what bin Laden was hoping for and would likely have resulted in a mass uprising against the United States. The other option was to raise the threat of invasion to such a high level that the Saudi leadership would become more afraid of the United States than they were of their own people. To do that the United States had to find a way to effectively project power into the Middle East without inflaming the opposition of the Arab masses.

The United States had to find a way to convince the average Middle Eastern Arab that the United States was overwhelmingly powerful, even at the street level, and much to be feared, and that al Qaeda could put on a big show, but was essentially weak and could not protect its own. In other words, the United States had to create the perception that the jihadist project was doomed to failure and that casting one’s lot with the United States was the more effective way to create positive change in the Middle East.

Enter Saddam Hussein. If there was one ruler in the Middle East who was widely despised in the Arab world and whose demise would cause few tears to be shed, it was Saddam Hussein, the secular, oppressive president of Iraq. President Bush gambled that taking out Saddam Hussein would not inflame the Arab street. There would be anger at the presence of foreign occupiers, but it would be a manageable anger. And if Saddam could be replaced by a government “of the people” there might even be some gratitude for American intervention.

The Invasion of Iraq

What did the invasion of Iraq have to do with “the war on terror?” At least three things. 1) It enabled America to project power into the very heart of the Middle East. 2) It exploited the fundamental fault line in the Islamic world, the division between Sunni and Shiite. 3) It distracted the jihadists away from direct action against the United States. And there was a high likelihood that all three things would occur without the specter of mass uprisings across the Middle East. As with September 11, the real reasons for the invasion of Iraq were quite different than the reasons generally given in the news media. The “liberation” of Iraq was not the primary goal, it was the consequences of that liberation that would deeply impact the war on terror. Let me unpack each of these three reasons briefly, because they may not make sense on the surface.

1) Projecting American Power

In spite of many adventures in the Islamic world, the United States had more military failures on its record than successes (the failed hostage rescue in 1980, Lebanon, Somalia, weak responses to earlier al Qaeda attacks). As impressive as the defeat of the Taliban was, it was still done with the help of others and left the country relatively unpacified. So the United States, in spite of its massive power, had the reputation of being a military and political weakling in the Middle East. It had to find a way to convince all players that this time it really meant business.

In order for a nation to truly project power, it cannot simply threaten from afar. It has to be able to put troops on the ground and threaten a nation’s intimate interests directly. The invasion of Iraq put massive American power in the very heart of the Middle East. From the center of the Middle East, American power could threaten Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, all three reluctant players in the battle against al Qaeda but absolutely critical to success. The “elephant next door” would have to be taken into account in every word and action the neighboring nations took from then on. In back channel ways all three countries began to co-operate with the United States far beyond anything that would have happened otherwise. (The co-operation was usually covert, the public rhetoric [for the people’s consumption] remained resistant).

This is why Germany, France and Russia were so opposed to the Iraq War. They too disliked Saddam and believed that he had weapons of mass destruction. They too believed that he could pose a threat to civilization. But the Middle East had been their back yard for two hundred years. The last thing they wanted was the American elephant in their back yard! So they resisted in public ways that seemed inexplicable, but it was all about power and who would wield it where. Everyone knew the real issue was projection of American power into the Middle East, and no one wanted to talk about it. That is why the whole debate over the Iraq War was so surreal.

2) The Differences Between Sunni and Shiite

The biggest barrier to Osama bin Laden’s dream of an Islamic Empire is not American power, but a fundamental fault line in the Islamic world itself, the differences between the Sunni and Shiite branches of Islam. This division between Sunni and Shiite makes little sense to the average Westerner. It basically has to do with which of Muhammad’s original followers he intended to succeed him after his death. But this “fault line” is very real to Muslims and can raise even greater passions at times than the divide between Catholic and Protestant in the Christian world. The Sunni side of the debate is by far the stronger. In fact, the only two Islamic countries in which Shiites are in the majority are Iraq and Iran.

Osama bin Laden is a Sunni, so the Shiites would naturally be opposed to his agenda. Saddam Hussein was also a Sunni (although there is little evidence he took his “faith” seriously), so he had seized power in Iraq against the will of the majority of his people (Shiites). A major war strategy of the United States has always been to divide and conquer. In 1941 it succeeded in separating Stalin from Hitler in order to win World War II. In 1974 President Nixon split the Communist world by befriending China at the expense of the Soviet Union. By invading Iraq the United States exploited Shiite opposition to Sunni ambitions, thus splitting the Islamic world in two and securing Iran’s back-channel co-operation in the war on terror. It also terrified the Saudis, who have always feared Iraq and Iran, in part because of a restive Shiite minority of their own.

3) Distracting Jihadists Away From the Homeland

By projecting American power into the Middle East, the invasion of Iraq presented the jihadists with a multitude of Western targets close to home. Attacking the American homeland from hideouts in southwestern Asia is a very difficult and expensive business. Sending a lone suicide bomber into a crowded restaurant next door is a lot less tricky and still makes a statement, especially if an American soldier or two is killed in the process. So an almost perverse goal of the allied invasion of Iraq was to take the war on terror to the enemy, thereby distracting him from the more difficult, yet more effective approach of threatening the American homeland. As President Bush said more than once, “I’d rather fight them over there than in our homes and communities here.”

The invasion of Iraq was like a magnet, drawing jihadists and their sympathizers from all over the Middle East (and even Europe and Africa) to the “decisive battle.” From both Osama bin Laden’s viewpoint and that of the American government, the invasion of Iraq centered the war on terror in the Middle East instead of New York. That war would be won or lost on Iraqi soil, a location both sides preferred.

And from the American perspective, this shift occurred without the collateral result of a general uprising of the Arab street. There has been a significant insurgency in Iraq, but it has been largely limited to the Sunni sectors of Iraq. The vast majority of the Iraqi people have opposed the insurgency from the beginning. So in terms of Osama bin Laden’s grand strategy, the Iraq War started out as a victory for the American president, who gambled that the Arab street would tolerate the action and, on the whole, that turned out to be the case.

There were a number of things about Iraq that President Bush does not seem to have anticipated. He did not anticipate that Saddam Hussein would hold back his most-skilled troops in order to wage a long-term guerilla war in the streets of central and western Iraq. He did not anticipate that such a tactic would be successful enough to be a major drain on American energy. He did not anticipate that Iraq would become a drawing card for jihadist “volunteers” from all over the Islamic world, and that they would become the formidable opponents they have been. He did not anticipate that democracy would be so challenging in an environment where everyone’s first loyalty is to the local tribe, not the country as a

whole. He did not anticipate that Sunnis would use bombings and suicide missions as negotiating tools to gain a stronger place at the democratic table. He did not anticipate that the average Iraqi would be more resentful of occupation than grateful for “liberation.”

What Americans and the American government do not seem to understand is that any time you intervene in the sovereign affairs of another country, you upset the balance of that society. After the fall of the Soviet Union the first George Bush proclaimed a New World Order, in which politics would take a back seat to economic prosperity. Under the Bushes and Bill Clinton, America has seemed to think that Middle Eastern peoples wouldn't mind a little American intervention as long as their lives were freer and more prosperous.

But in fact American intervention always advantages one political group over another in the countries involved. In Iraq, the Shiites and Kurds benefitted more than the Sunnis from American intervention. In Afghanistan, the minorities benefitted more than the majority Pashtuns. In Kosovo, the majority Albanians benefitted more than the minority Serbs. Therefore, while well-intended, American intervention inevitably tends to destabilize the local situation, creating unforeseen problems.

So the invasion of Iraq did not prove to be the clean, overwhelming victory that President Bush and his advisors had hoped. While American troops in Iraq have certainly gotten the attention of the Saudis, the Syrians and the Iranians, they have been so occupied with the insurgency in Iraq they have not been the truly effective threat that was intended. The American media and the Congress have provided a constant negative drumbeat in the background, which has unintentionally encouraged the jihadist movement just when everything seemed to be lost.

On the other hand, there was no immediate repeat of September 11 on American soil. While there were a number of smaller bombings in places like Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Spain, the American homeland itself seemed increasingly secure. The power of al Qaeda to launch brilliant and complicated attacks anywhere in the world seems to have been seriously degraded. Al Qaeda's leadership seems to have become more obsessed with survival than with planning for future attacks.

The general perception at this time is that America’s power has largely prevailed and that the jihadists still have plenty of bark, but that their “bite” is more akin to pinpricks than serious challenges to the world order. While the US and allied countries have taken serious casualties in Iraq, these casualties are nowhere near the level of Vietnam and the bombings are not a serious military threat to overthrow the occupation. In military terms the insurgency is an annoyance, but not a threat. The “Arab street” is annoyed at the occupation but a long way from rising up to provide a serious obstacle to it.

Projecting the Outcome

At this time the outcome of the war on terror is still in doubt. America remains mired in the Middle East. Various factions in Iraq are still more divided than united. The insurgency continues. Al Qaeda remains on the run, but is still alive in some fashion. Young men (and sometimes women) are still lining up in large numbers to blow themselves up for the cause. The world has become accustomed to intrusive security measures at airports and hotels. Everyone is more on edge than they used to be. The war on terror is far from over and its final outcome is hard to predict. But I would like to take a few lines to outline some indicators by which you can measure how the war is going in the future. Then I will close this chapter with some reflections on what all this has to do with the Bible’s Battle of Armageddon.

Signs of Western Success

Which way are things heading in the war on terror and how can you know? It is difficult to project, but the following signs would indicate that the war on terror is going the way President Bush had hoped.

1) If years go by without a significant jihadist attack on the American homeland. The longer the time without a significant attack, the more certain it becomes that al Qaeda and related organizations have been disrupted to the point of ineffectiveness. Small attacks in Europe and the Middle East are becoming almost business as usual, but they do not threaten the world political order to a significant degree. If Al Qaeda cannot order a repeat of September 11, its goals are in danger of non-fulfillment.

2) If the “Arab Street” remains generally quiet and accepting of the American presence in the Middle East. Osama bin Laden’s strategy centered on provoking a massive popular reaction against American empire building all over the Islamic world. That has clearly not happened up to the time of this writing and seems increasingly unlikely, barring some additional provocation beyond the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (the recent spat over Danish cartoons and the Dubai port scandal are examples of such provocations). Ability to “manage the news” in the Middle East and to win hearts and minds on the street will probably be a crucial factor. As of this writing, al Qaeda has not yet found a way to incite the Arab street (although the recent bombing of the Shiite shrine in Samarra came close). As long as that continues, al Qaeda’s ultimate goals remain dreams.

3) If Iraq is able to form a unity government in which all major sides play a role and minority rights are protected. Such a government would divide the Iraqi insurgency, bringing the secular insurgents to see politics rather than violence as the way to best benefit their constituency. The foreign jihadists sent in by al Qaeda would then be marginalized and exposed to capture. They would probably leave the country looking for easier pickings. This would be Bush’s best-case scenario.

But developing a unity government will require a deft hand. The American challenge in Iraq is to find a way to please all the warring factions to the place where a central government can keep the peace and allow the American forces to go home or to be a strategic threat to al Qaeda sympathizers in Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iran. But this is a nearly impossible balancing act. There are four main political groups in Iraq. There are the Shiite religious parties, which want Islamic law (their style). There are the Sunni religious parties, which want a different style of Islamic law. There are the Kurds, who are Sunni in profession but are generally secular in orientation. And there are the Sunni and Shiite secularists, for whom a religious government is anathema.

In a Western setting it would seem that there is plenty of room for compromise and team-building. Why can’t Sunni and Shiite religious parties get along? Shouldn’t the Sunni Kurds and the Sunni Arabs be able to find common cause? Shouldn’t the Kurds and the secular Arabs be able to work together? Yet a history of oppression and revenge killings

leaves all sides taking the position of “My way or no way!” So the idea of an Iraqi unity government is nearly impossible to create and extremely challenging to maintain.

4) If some or all of the “big four” jihadist leaders (Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahri, Mullah Omar and Zarqawi) are killed or captured. These have great symbolic value (especially bin Laden and Zarqawi) to jihadists around the world. They are protected by networks of sympathizers in the places where they hide. To be able to capture them signals a breakdown in their sympathy and support network, a further indication that their organizations are being seriously degraded. It would lead to a perception of weakness in the jihadist movement, which could lead young people to choose other outlets for excitement besides resistance to the world order.

5) If democracy takes full root in the Middle East. This would mean that many Islamic fundamentalists have decided that the ballot box is a better way than the bomb to achieve political and religious goals in the Islamic world. Islamic fundamentalism does not have to be at war with the West. Over time a more moderate form of Islamist government may find that wary but peaceful co-existence is in the best interests of all sides in the conflict. Guerilla wars are not usually put down by military means. They tend to end when everyone decides that the fighting is counter-productive and goes back to negotiation and diplomacy as the best ways to safeguard people’s various interests.

Signs of Jihadist Success

The following signs, on the other hand, would be indications that the war on terror is going badly for America and its allies.

1) If al Qaeda and/or related organizations demonstrate that they still have the ability to stage a major attack like September 11 in America or in the heart of Europe. Or if there is an escalating level of attacks around the world, not just in the Middle East. More likely the relentless Western assault on all levels of the jihadist movement will cause the jihadists to go underground and take a longer-range view of the conflict. Jihadists and their sympathizers have long memories and a lot of patience. The war on terror is very likely to outlast the presidencies of George Bush and at least one or two of his successors.

Jihadists look for soft targets. These are becoming harder and harder to find in a world of obsessive security. But people cannot put up with obsessive security forever. At some point, people and their governments will relax their vigil and life will attempt to return to something a bit more “normal.” At that point it will be seen whether the jihadists were able to maintain their focus in hiding and whether they will be able to rebuild the networks that seem to have been shattered since September 11.

My guess is that the war on terror will go on for decades (if time should last that long), but at a lower level of hostilities than was the case in 2006. Since the goal of the jihadists was political change in the Islamic world, many jihadists may follow the lead of Sunnis in Iraq and give the political process a try. The jihadists may find that the rising level of democracy in the Middle East is an excellent way to achieve at least some of their political and religious goals.

2) If the “Arab street” becomes increasingly anti-American and anti-Western. If the average Muslim begins to think like the jihadists, it would be an ominous sign. Should women and children and ordinary Iraqis begin confronting American soldiers in large numbers (people power), you can know that the Vietnam syndrome is kicking in and the Western militaries will soon be withdrawing from the streets into bases. This will not result in a more stable situation, but the opposite.

The reality is that while the Americans were blind-sided by the insurgency in Iraq, the situation in the first years after the invasion was not nearly as serious in military terms as it sounded in the media. Things would have to get a lot worse than 2005 before the war on terror is in serious trouble. Internal memos among the jihadists about Iraq have been largely pessimistic. In terms of the big picture, the Iraq War, painful as it has been for the Americans, has not been a plus for the jihadist side.

An outside power, however, cannot shut down a guerilla war by itself. It needs significant allies in the local situation. Total loss of local support, for any reason, would be a sign that the American project in Iraq is doomed. It doesn't matter what causes the loss of support (whether prisoner abuse, the killing of women and children, offensive cartoons), what matters is the outcome. This is a key area that bears watching as time goes on.

3) If attempts to create a stable government in Iraq completely fail. Should Iraq break into several de-facto pieces, the Kurdish north, the Shiite south, the Sunni northwest, it is likely that civil war would break out. In that situation it would be very hard for the Americans to know who to fight and things could quickly get out of control. Turkey would feel threatened by an independent Kurdish state and would be tempted to intervene, which would put the Americans at odds with a close and vital ally.

Iran would feel threatened by the ascendancy of either the jihadists or by a rebirth of Saddam’s Baath Party loyalists and would likely intervene covertly in the south and middle of Iraq. The Syrians would take advantage of the instability to further destabilize the situation and get the heat off themselves. The Saudis would no longer feel the need to support the war on terror and jihadists everywhere could hide out in an unstable Middle East. All sides would be tempted to use oil as a hostage to their own ambitions, which would destabilize the world economy. So a destabilized Iraq and Middle East is not in the interests of a calm and peaceful civilization.

A particular element to keep an eye on is America’s relationship with Iran. The Iranians have many agents in the Shiite south and a great deal of influence. If they wanted to, they could turn the south of Iraq into an insurgent war zone overnight. The Iraqi insurgency of 2003-2006 was almost entirely confined to Baghdad and areas to the north and west, the so-called Sunni Triangle. The insurgency affected no more than 20% of the country. The relative quiet of the Shiite south suggested a strong back-channel relationship was in place between the United States and Iran. Iran would keep the Shiites quiet in exchange for Shiite religious dominance of the resulting Iraqi democracy. But if the relationship between the US and Iran should break down over uranium enrichment, cartoons in Denmark, or the shape of the Iraqi government, things could disintegrate in a hurry.

My sense for now is that the scenario laid out in the first sign that things are going badly for the West is the most likely. The jihadists’ political goals are likely to fail in the short run in the face of massive Western security measures. This will result in a lower level of jihadist activity but

not its total disappearance. What the West calls terrorism to some degree will be an ongoing reality for the rest of our lives and perhaps the lives of our children, should time last that long. At some point, worldwide weariness could cause disillusionment with democracy and a rebirth of autocratic governments whose rise would be grounded on the need for peace and safety. Saddam Hussein was an evil man in many ways, but he did succeed in keeping a lid on Iraq’s many warring factions. People may eventually feel a nostalgia for the “good old days,” when strong leaders kept evil at bay and people were able to walk the streets in safety. Such a scenario is reminiscent of the kind of situation described in the Bible’s Battle of Armageddon, which I hope to outline in a future book.

The War Against Al Qaeda and the Battle of Armageddon

Before I conclude, I believe it would be helpful to summarize the big picture of the Battle of Armageddon which I lay out in detail in the CD series offered at the end of this newsletter. As I understand the Battle of Armageddon passages in Revelation 16 and 17, the end of time will involve a great drive to unify the religious and political entities of this world in the wake of disturbing events described as frogs (Rev 16:13-14), intoxication (Rev 17:2), and natural disasters (Rev 16:1-9), among others. The result will be three great worldwide confederacies at the end of time.

1) The first of these will be a worldwide confederacy of secular and political power. This confederacy comes together when ten kingdoms (symbolized by the ten horns of the beast in Revelation 17:12-13) give their power to the beast, which represents worldwide political power in Revelation 17. Other symbols for this world-wide political unity are the Euphrates River (Rev 16:12), the kings of the whole inhabited world (Rev 16:14), the cities of the nations (Rev 16:19), the kings and inhabitants of the earth (Rev 17:2), the scarlet beast (Rev 17:3), the seven heads and the seven mountains or hills (Rev 17:9). This worldwide confederacy of secular, political, and military power is the driving force behind the world’s End-time opposition to the Lamb and those who are with Him (Rev 17:14).

2) The second worldwide confederacy is a confederacy of religion, or

better, religious institutions. It is also known in Revelation by many names; the dragon, beast and false prophet (Rev 16:13, 19), the great city (Rev 16:19; 17:18), the great prostitute (Rev 17:1), the woman Babylon (Rev 17:3-5), and the city Babylon (Rev 18). This End-time religious Babylon gathers the political powers into its service and dominates them for a short time (Rev 17:1-3, 18). The aim of Babylon is to destroy all opposition to its power, so its full attention is focused on the third confederacy.

3) The third worldwide confederacy in Revelation’s narrative of the End-time I call the confederacy of the saints (Rev 13:7; 14:12). They too are known by many names in the Book of Revelation; the 144,000 (Rev 7:4-8; 14:1-5), the great multitude (Rev 7:9; 19:1), the remnant (Rev 11:13; 12:17), the kings of the east (Rev 16:12) and several more. These scattered saints are drawn out from every nation, tribe, language and people (Rev 14:6) and are the object of death threat and economic boycott (Rev 13:15-17).

The union of the first two confederacies (Rev 17:1-3, 18) seeks to destroy the confederacy of the saints, but falls apart under the overarching control of God (Rev 17:14-17). The Second Coming is the final act that puts an end to the enemy confederacies of the End-time (Rev 19:17-21).

Are the events since September 11 some sort of dress rehearsal for this scenario of the end of time? It certainly seems so to me. This is the first time in all of history when the mainstream political and religious bodies of the world are fundamentally united in a common cause against an international, underground movement that is united by a common faith. While such a situation existed at times in Europe in the Middle Ages, the Islamic world was a powerful counter to the papal ambitions at that time. Today there is no nation or combination of nations that is able to fully counter the political and economic agenda of the United States. There is one single superpower and every other nation has to take that super power into account in every political and economic decision. This is the kind of picture portrayed in Revelation’s end-time, as noted above.

Many nations, like France, Russia and China, would like to find ways to counter American power, but they have been unable to do so. France

sought to use the European Union as a counterweight against American power at the time of the invasion of Iraq, but the majority of European nations did not go along. A combination of France, Russia, China and India would be significant, but competing self-interests seem likely to prevent such a counterweight from forming. While nationalism and ethnic centrism are stronger than ever, there is an underlying reality that we are closer to a single world system than ever before in history.

And this single world system is threatened, not by a nation or a combination of nations, but by a small, international collection of individuals, bound together by religious ideology, hiding in “the rocks and the mountains” and in chaotic cities like Baghdad, Kandahar, Jakarta and even London and Madrid! This sounds very much like the scenario laid out in the Battle of Armageddon. Worldwide religious and political unity against a scattered spiritual group from every nation, tribe, language and people!

Don’t get me wrong. I am not suggesting that al Qaeda is the end-time remnant of Revelation! But the echoes of Revelation in the current world situation are remarkable and bear watching as we approach the end of the history. Not only that, the events of September 11 and its aftermath have led to an increase of spiritual interest, not only in New York but around the world. I find that Muslims are also more willing to talk to Christians and Christians are more willing to talk to Muslims. So the current situation is well-placed to develop into the kind of three-part scenario that Revelation portrays.

Both Revelation and The Great Controversy see troublesome world events as a precipitating factor in these end-time unities. I have just returned from Singapore and, trust me, terrorism is a major concern of all civilized countries around the world. In these troubled times it is not hard to imagine a scenario in which the current world situation rapidly moves toward the events portrayed in Revelation as part of the Battle of Armageddon.

Imagine (and I know this is hard) that one or more of the jihadist leaders becomes convicted by the claims of Jesus and announces a unilateral truce. He points out that Allah is all-powerful and does not need

human intervention to accomplish His purpose for the world. It is true faith that will bring about the triumph of Islam, not bombs, hatred and anger. Imagine also that this new conviction becomes associated with the work of the Remnant people. Almost overnight, there would be a million new jihadist suspects in North America, and millions more around the world! Overnight the searchlights of “homeland security” in every nation could be turned on those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus. Overnight, the situation portrayed in the book *Great Controversy* could be set in motion. God’s faithful people could become the object of international scorn and calumny. Intelligence agencies and police forces around the world, goaded on by religious entities that feel threatened by this spiritual movement, move into action against the faithful people of God.

Sound far-fetched? Perhaps. But it is close enough to the scenario of Revelation to call for serious attention to the war on terror on the part of those who want to be ready for the final events. It will be chaotic events like those unleashed by the terrorists that will precipitate the great End-time confederacies predicted in Revelation. The result will be a worldwide unity of political and religion institutions in opposition to a worldwide confederacy of the saints. Such a situation has never occurred before, but is very close to the situation we find ourselves in today. Something to think about.

In a future book I plan to carefully examine those parts of the Book of Revelation which clearly describe the last days of earth’s history and the events leading up to them. I will explore the meaning of the word “Armageddon” and how it is used in the context of Revelation 12-18. I will focus particularly on the context of Armageddon in chapters 16 and 17. After a careful study of the evidence in Revelation I plan to take a look at the scenario of *The Great Controversy*, which is based to a large degree on the same evidence. That future book will close with a return to the above scenario to explore where we stand in history today in light of the biblical text. Readers of this newsletter will be informed when the book comes out, probably in the summer of 2007. Those who don’t want to wait that long can avail themselves of the CD offer included with this newsletter. The CD set on Revelation includes a careful analysis of the final battle of earth’s history from Revelation chapters 12 through 18.

As we await the Battle of Armageddon, let's not forget that for many of us, the end of time will be a lot sooner than that. This is brought home by a rabbinical story:

A student once came to a rabbi and asked the question, “When should I repent?”

The rabbi replied, “Repent the day before you die.”

“But when will I die?” The student retorted.

“No one knows,” responded the rabbi, “Therefore the Scriptures say, ‘Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.’”

End Notes

1. For an analysis of the 1260 days/years of Bible prophecy, see my unpublished paper, “The 1260 Days in the Book of Revelation,” presented to the Biblical Research Institute Committee of the General Conference on Sept. 29-30, 2003 at Loma Linda University. The paper is available upon request from the Biblical Research Institute and can also be obtained in electronic form on a CD (contact the New Testament Department at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI 49104-1500).

2. For an excellent outline of the events surrounding the rise of Muhammad, see the sympathetic portrait by Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).

3. The key to distribution of wealth (social justice) in the Arabian world before Muhammad was the ghazu or raid, in which a poorer tribe would seize a portion of a richer tribe's wealth by raiding its trade caravans. It was an early “Robin Hood” mentality. One historian has called the raiding party the “national sport” of Arabia in the 7th Century.

4. For a helpful overview of the Wahabi movement and the rise of Saudi Arabia see Clinton Bennett, *Muslims and Modernity: An Introduction to the Issues and Debates* (London: Continuum, 2005), 18, 53-56.

5. Adam Zagorin, “Finding the King's Fortune,” *Time*, March 31, 2003, A20.

6.. The best analysis of these matters can be found in the work of George Friedman, the founder and chairman of Stratfor Corporation (Strategic Forecasting), sometimes called a “shadow CIA.” George Friedman, *America’s Secret War: Inside the Hidden Worldwide Struggle Between America and Its Enemies* (NY: Doubleday, 2004).

7. I am well aware that “bin Laden” is not a family name in the way Western names function. It is a patronymic, meaning “son of Laden.” But the father of Osama bin Laden was named Mohammed bin Laden, so the phrase is now being used in the Western way even in Saudi Arabia. I have therefore adopted this convention with the above qualification.

8. See George Friedman, *America’s Secret War*, cited above.

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the months of April and May 2006. It is always a privilege and pleasure for me to ministers to our fellow believers in England. The reception and response is always very encouraging. I wish to extend my personal, warm invitation to all who are able to attend one of the followings rallies.

MARCH 31-APRIL 1: HAWAII: AIEA SDA CHURCH

Location: 99-Moanalua Road, Aiea, HI 96701.

For information call Pastor Lloyd Munson at (808) 455-3484

APRIL 5-11: GUAM-MICRONESIA MISSION

Location: Agana Heights SDA Church

For information call Elder Remenster Jano at (671) 477-9745

APRIL 21-22: SAN DIEGO: FALL BROOK SDA CHURCH

Location: 1200 Rainbow Valley Boulevard

For information call Pastor Gerald Jones at (760) 639-1615 or (760) 723-7733

APRIL 28-29: WINDSOR SDA CHURCH, CANADA

Location: 5350 Haig Avenue, Windsor, Ontario N8T 1K8, Canada

For information call Pastor Ulrich Unruth at (519) 948 3749.

MAY 5-6: ALBANY SDA CHURCH - NEW YORK

Location: 298 st. Agnes Highway, Cohoes, New York 12047.

For information call Pastor Don Bozarth at (607) 397-1848.

MAY 12-13: CHICAGO: HINSDALE SDA CHURCH

Location: 201 N. Oak Street, Hinsdale, Illinois 60521.

For information call Pastor Ante Geroncic at (630) 730-3075 or (630) 323-0182.

MAY 19-20: LONDON - HOLCOMBE ROAD SDA CHURCH

Location: John Loughborough School, Holcombe Road, Tottenham, London, England.

For information call Pastor Augustus Lawrence at 01923 894355.

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER ON THE NEW DVD ALBUM ON *THE MARK AND NUMBER OF THE BEAST*

The newly released DVD album on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, consists of two disks. They contain the live recording that was done at the Andrews University Towers Auditorium on Wednesday, February 1, 2006. The marathon lecture lasted over two hours and was delivered with the help of 175 powerpoint slides. The lecture was introduced by Prof. Jon Paulien and Prof. Ranko Stefanovich, two foremost Adventist experts on the book of Revelation.

You will be thrilled by this passionate lecture that will help you understand what the mark and number of the beast are all about. This prophecy is not about external markings, barcodes, biochips, or pope's titles, but rather about the internal control of the mind of every human being. It is a battle over who will people worship: the true God or Satan. This battle is already in progress, affecting many people and churches. This visual presentation will encourage you to be faithful to God and to resist the endtime deception of false worship, promoted in subtle ways on a global scale today.

This project has been a very expensive (about \$5000.00) and time consuming. For five months I have worked an average of 15 hours a day on this project, getting up faithfully at 5:00 a. m. every morning. What took a lot of time has been, not only the investigation into the historical interpretations of the mark and number of the beast, but also the search for pictures of the items discussed: documents, inscribed tiaras, books, popes, Reformers, Adventist pioneers, and recent scholars who have examined this subject. I wanted to make this powerpoint presentation as visual as possible, because “seeing is believing.”

At the end of the second DVD disk, there is a separate powerpoint file with all the 195 slides and accompanying script. This should prove to be a valuable resource for evangelists, pastors, and anyone engaged in sharing the prophetic message of Revelation. They can use some of the stunning pictures for their own presentation.

How to Order the DVD Album

The special introductory offer on the DVD album on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, is only \$50.00, instead of \$100.00. The airmailing expenses to any foreign country are included in the special price.

You can order this DVD album on *The Mark and Number of the Beast* in three different ways:

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(3) **Email:** By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date. For security reasons, you can email your credit card number in two separate messages. In the first message you email me the first 8 digits and in the second message the last 8 digits, plus the expiration date. Be sure to include your postal address.

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SPECIAL OFFER ON THE 5 ALBUMS CONTAINING ALL OF DR. BACCHIOCCHI'S PUBLICATIONS AND RECORDINGS

In occasion of the release of the new DVD album on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, I am pleased to offer you the complete package of all my DVD and CD recordings, consisting of **5 Albums for only \$100.00, instead of the regular price of \$500.00**. This is a one-time incredible offer.

You can see the picture of all the FIVE ALBUMS and read a detailed description of them, just by clicking at this URL address:
<http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com/holidayoffer.htm>

The complete package of all the recordings consists of the following FIVE ALBUMS:

1) The NEWLY RELEASED DVD ALBUM ON *THE MARK AND THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST*, as described above.

2) The DVD SABBATH/ADVENT ALBUM containing 5 DVD disks with 10 live PowerPoint lectures of the popular SABBATH and ADVENT SEMINARS.

3) The CD-ROM BOOKS/SEMINARS ALBUM containing 2 CD disks with all my publications and PowerPoint presentations.

4) The MP3 ALBUM containing 2 CD disks with 22 AUDIO lectures on vital beliefs and practices.

5) The DVD PASSION ALBUM containing 1 DVD disk with the 2 hours interview on 3ABN on my book *The Passion of Christ in Scripture and History*.

The special offer for the complete package of the five albums is only \$100.00, instead of the regular price of \$500.00. The special price

includes the airmail expenses to overseas destinations. You can order the package in four different ways:

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(2) **Phone:** By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) **Email:** By emailing your order to <sbacchicocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date. For security reasons, you can email your credit card number in two separate messages. In the first message you email me the first 8 digits and in the second message the last 8 digits, plus the expiration date. Be sure to include your postal address.

(4) **Regular Mail:** By mailing a check for \$100.00 to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

SPECIAL OFFER ON PROF. JON PAULIEN’S 5 CD-ROM ALBUMS, called *The Bible Explorer Series on Revelation*.

The book of *Revelation* has both delighted and frustrated readers ever since it was written. Sensational but senseless interpretations of the book abound. In this unique package consisting of 120 lectures professionally recorded in 60 CD disks, Prof. Jon Paulien guides you through a verse by verse study of the intriguing messages of Revelation.

Currently Jon Paulien, Ph. D., is serving as Chairman of the New Testament Department and Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Andrews University Theological Seminary.

Besides teachings and writing, Prof. Paulien travels extensively throughout the world, presenting seminars with the help of his wife, Pamela. He has authored over 100 articles and several books, *Decoding Revelation’s Trumpets*, *The Book of Revelation, Too Good to be False*, *Present Truth in the Real World*, *What the Bible Says About the End*

Time, and *The Deep Things of God*. These books are available in Adventist Book Centers, by calling 1-800-765-6955.

Prof. Paulien is rightly regarded inside and outside the Adventist community, as a foremost authority in Johannine literature, especially the book of *Revelation*. Students have told me that listening to his lectures, is a mind-opening experience. Personally I esteem Prof. Paulien as the leading Adventist authority on the prophetic books of the Bible.

If you wish that you could go back to school and seat in Prof. Paulien classes, I have good news for you. You do not need to worry about your age or your financial limitations. You do not even need to enroll at Andrews University and spend thousands of dollars of tuition to benefit from Prof. Paulien’s instruction.

All what you need to do is simply to order his 120 lectures which have been professionally recorded and packaged in FIVE ALBUMS, EACH CONTAINING 12 CD-ROMs, for a total of 60 CD-ROMs. The set is called *The Bible Explorer Series on Revelation* and takes you verse by verse through the whole book of *Revelation*. These lectures are the equivalent of four Seminary courses (about \$2000.00 of tuition), yet they are presented in a way that lay people can understand. Each lecture concludes with spiritual lessons for everyday life.

To express my appreciation for the contribution that Prof. Paulien has made to the understanding of Revelation, I am promoting and distributing his *The Bible Explorer Series on Revelation* consisting of 5 albums with a total of 60 CD-ROMS, as a free service without any commission. I have offered my service to facilitate the purchase of this timely set of 120 lectures through the shopping cart at my website: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/paulien/>

Your special offer for the complete *The Bible Explorer Series on Revelation* consisting of 5 albums with a total of 60 CD disks, is only \$175.00, airmailing expenses included to any domestic or over-sea destination. You can order the package in four ways:

(1) **Online:** By clicking here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/paulien/>

(2) Phone: By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) Email: By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date. For security reasons, you can email your credit card number in two separate messages. In the first message you email me the first 8 digits and in the second message the last 8 digits, plus the expiration date. Be sure to include your postal address.

(4) Regular Mail: By mailing a check for \$175.00 to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

SPECIAL OFFER ON PROF. JON PAULIEN NEWLY RELEASED CD-ROM WITH HIS BOOKS AND ARTICLES.

Prof. Jon Paulien is one of the most respected Adventist scholars. Besides serving as the chairman of the New Testament at Andrews University Theological Seminary, he writes and lectures extensively in many parts of the world.

Until now Prof. Paulien books and articles were available only in a printed form, often unavailable at local ABC stores. In view of my indebtedness to Prof. Paulien’s scholarship, I have offered to help him to place his books and articles on a CD disk. This makes it possible with the ACROBAT global search, to locate immediately what he has written on biblical texts or current topics.

The CD album with Prof. Paulien’s books and articles was released on February 9, 2006. For a picture and a detailed description click here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/PaulienAD/>

The special introductory offer of the newly released CD-ROM ALBUM with Prof. Paulien books and articles is only \$35.00 instead of the regular price of \$50.00, airmailing expenses included to overseas destinations.

To order the newly released CD ALBUM with Prof. Paulien books and articles, simply click here: <http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com/PaulienAD/>

If you have a problem ordering online, simply call us at (269) 471-2915. We will take your order by phone.

You can also email us your order at <sbacchiocchi@biblicalpherspectives.com>, giving us your address, credit card number, and expiration date. For security reasons, you can email your credit card number in two separate messages. In the first message you email me the first 8 digits and in the second message the last 8 digits, plus the expiration date. Be sure to include your postal address.

INCREDIBLE NEW OFFERS ON HITACHI PROJECTORS

HITACHI offered me a volume discount on four of their projector models, in order to reduce their inventory. For the first time HITACHI offered me 25 projectors 3200 lumens, high resolution for only \$1995.00 each. This is an incredible price. At the General Conference booth we sold several dozens of this projector for \$3295.00.

If your church is looking for an outstanding projector at a bargain price, this is the golden opportunity. To be brief I will only list the model, the lumens, and the special price.

CP-X250 HIGH RESOLUTION 2000 LUMENS – Only \$1195.00
Previous SDA price for the 2000 lumens was \$1900.00.

CP-X440 HIGH RESOLUTION 2500 LUMENS – Only \$1695.00
Previous SDA price for the 2500 lumens was \$2900.00.

CP-X444 HIGH RESOLUTION 3200 LUMENS – Only \$1995.00
Previous SDA price for the 3200 lumens was \$3295.00.

CP-X1250 HIGH RESOLUTION 4500 LUMENS – Only \$4195.00
Previous SDA price for the 4500 lumens was \$4900.00.

These special offers are not listed at my website, because the prices change all the time, depending on the deal that HITACHI gives us. Feel free to call us at 269-471-2915 or email us a message at <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> I will email you all the details of each projector. Keep in mind that HITACHI offers us a 3 years 24/7 warranty package that is worth about \$285.00.

TOSHIBA LAPTOPS COMPUTERS FOR ADVENTISTS

TOSHIBA has agreed to offer to Adventists the new TECRA A4 for only \$1195.00, instead of the regular price of \$1650.00. This is a outstanding business model with a very fast processor, extra bright screen, double memory, CD/DVD burner, wireless, etc. The new model arrived from China on February 13, 2006. If you are looking for an outstanding TOSHIBA laptop at a bargain price, visit my website at <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Toshiba/Notebooks.html>

If you cannot surf the web, feel free to call us at 269-471-2915 or email us a message at <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. We will email you immediately all the information about the TECRA laptops. Call me for details at 269-471-2915.

DOES YOUR CHURCH OR SCHOOL NEED A SCREEN?

If your church/school is looking for a screen, the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY, the largest manufacture of screens in the world, has agreed to offer their line of screens to our Adventist churches and schools at a about 30% discount.

The procedure is very simple. Visit the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY website at <http://www.da-lite.com>. You will see hundreds of models of screens with their respective prices. Once you find the screen that you need, give us the model number by phone (269) 471-2915 or email your request <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> We will forward your order immediately to DA-LITE that will ship the screen directly to your address. You will receive the screen at about 30% discount.

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The size of the transmitter is smaller than a credit card. You can stick it inside the palm of your hand and nobody can see it. I tested the remote in an open environment, and the radio signal can go up to 400 feet of distance. IT IS INCREDIBLE! The transmitter has three buttons: forward, backward, and laser.

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Christian regards

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