



# The Sword & The Plow

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## The Time of Reformation

*Kurt Simmons*

In this article, we look at the book of Hebrews and the "time of reformation" spoken of by the writer in chapter nine.

### **Theme of Hebrews**

The over-arching theme of the epistle to the Hebrews is the superiority of Christ and the culmination of God's salvific purpose in him. Christ is better than the angels (Heb. 1:4-14); he is better and worthy of more glory than Moses (Heb. 3:3); he has a better priesthood (Heb. 7:11-28), and has "obtained a more excellent ministry," and is the mediator of a "better covenant," established upon "better promises" (Heb. 8:6); he is high priest of a "greater and more perfect tabernacle" (Heb. 9:11), and has secured eternal redemption by the blood of "better sacrifices" (Heb. 9:23), by which he has secured for us inheritance in the "better country" (Heb. 11:15) and promise of a "better resurrection" (Heb. 11:35). The

temple service and levitical priesthood were temporary and provisional; they could not take away sins, or perfect the worshipper, but stood merely as prophetic types, imposed until God's "something better" was put in place. That something better is the New Testament of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **Historical Context**

The epistle to the Hebrews bears strong evidence of having been written shortly before the persecution under Nero. The epistle is believed by many to have been written by Paul, whose martyrdom, together with that of Peter, would mark the beginning of the persecution under Nero and the beast.<sup>1</sup> The epistle is

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<sup>1</sup> Peter and Paul both foretold their martyrdom (II Tim. 4:6; II Pet. 1:14; cf. Jn. 21:18, 19) and are best understood as the "two

written from Italy, and Timothy, who had been arrested, has been set at liberty (Heb. 13:23, 24). Since we do not read of Timothy's arrest during Paul's first trial before Nero, it seems likely that this arrest occurred in connection with Paul's second trial, perhaps when Timothy went to visit Paul in Rome, bringing the parchments and other things Paul requested (II Tim. 4:11-13). That Timothy has been set at liberty shows that general persecution has not yet broken out, although Paul's impending martyrdom means it shortly will.

Revelation describes a period of political stability in Palestine, during which the mission to the Jews would be carried out, harvesting the "144,000" from the tribes of Israel (Rev. 7: 1-8). The power to put men to death was reposed exclusively in the Roman governor (Jn. 18:31). While Claudius was on the throne, Christianity was protected by Roman law (the *religio licita*), which viewed it as a sect of Judaism. Claudius represented the restraining power of the Roman government. Claudius is the "angel" of Rev. 20:1, which held the keys of the bottomless pit (political authority over heathendom), and thus bound the dragon (Roman Empire) and beast (persecuting power) from persecuting the church. However, with the death of Claudius, the situation in Palestine and Rome would change. Claudius had banished the Jews from Rome (Acts 18:1); Nero welcomed them back. Nero's wife, Poppea Sabina, was a Jewish proselyte and Josephus reports that she exerted influence with Nero in favor of the Jews, and the temple in particular.<sup>2</sup> Faced with belief that he had ordered the burning of Rome, Nero needed someone to fix the blame upon. Christians became the scapegoat. The mortal wound received when the persecution over Stephen collapsed, would heal, and the beast revive and rise again to persecute the church anew (Rev. 11:7; 13:3, 14; 17:8; 20:1-3).

Although unbelieving Jews could not put Christians to death, the epistle makes clear that Hebrew Christians were under a time of increasing pressure and peril. While our Lord was still on earth, the leaders of the Jews had declared that those confessing Christ were to be "cast out" of the synagogue (Jn. 9:22, 34; 12:42). This policy did not end, but continued after our Lord's ascension (Jn. 16:1, 2). To be cast out or excommunicated meant the loss of all social standing and many of one's civil rights. Jews in good standing in the synagogue were charged to shun those who were

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witnesses" whose deaths would mark the beginning of the persecution under Nero (Rev. 11:3-10).

<sup>2</sup> "This was granted in order to gratify Poppea, Nero's wife, who was a religious woman, and had requested these favors of Nero." Josephus, Ant. XX, viii, 11.

cast out; they were to treat excommunicates as alien sinners and Gentiles, and forbidden to have any dealings with them (*cf.* Matt. 18:17).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, leaders of the synagogues had jurisdiction over their countrymen to impose fines, confiscations, and cause them to be scourged with rods or whips. Hence, even during the period when the Jews were restrained by Roman law, Paul could say "*of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned*" (II Cor. 11:24, 25). In a word, the Hebrew Christians are suffering and being pressured to return to Moses' law.

The context of the epistle suggests that much of the controversy and persecution directed against Christians rose in connection with the temple and its service. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that the hour was coming when worship at the Jerusalem temple would cease (Jn. 4:24). He repeated this prophecy in the Olivet Discourse days before his arrest (Matt. 23:37-39; 24:1-2, 34). Stephen repeated these predictions, saying Jesus would destroy the city and temple, and change the customs delivered by Moses (Acts 7:13, 14). For this saying, Stephen was tried and condemned to death, provoking the great persecution under Caiaphas, Pilate and Saul (Paul). It is with these circumstances in mind that the prophet Isaiah thus described the nation immediately before its destruction by Rome, when the Jews were persecuting believers, a passage quoted by Stephen at his trial (Acts 8:48):

*"Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build for me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear;: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I*

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<sup>3</sup> It is probable that this is at least part of the meaning of the "mark of the beast" in Rev. 13:16-18, by which the "false prophet" caused men to receive a mark without which no man might buy or sell: *viz.*, a test imposed by rulers of the synagogue requiring men to renounce Christ and profess obedience to the law

*delighted not. Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word: Your brethren that hated you and cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. A voice a noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies" (Isa. 66:3-6).*

This passage surveys the whole period from the cross to Christ's second coming and the destruction of Jerusalem. It shows Jewish obstinacy and rebellion in clinging to the dead ritual of the law, rejecting Christ, and persecuting believers. The passage makes unmistakably clear God's attitude toward the law during the period from the cross to the destruction of Jerusalem: it was abominated as an implicit denial of Christ. This brings us to

### **The Time of Reformation**

The epistle to the Hebrews says that the temple service was imposed (e.g. was to be obeyed) until the time of reformation:

*"Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and diverse washings, and carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation" (Heb. 9:1-10).*

Notice that the whole passage is set in the *past tense*:

- The first covenant *had* ordinances (v. 1)

- There *was* a tabernacle made, wherein *was* the candlestick, etc.
- When these things *were thus ordained*, the priest *went* always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God
- But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he *offered*
- The Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all *was not yet* made manifest *while as yet* the first tabernacle had a standing
- Which *was a figure* for the *time then present*, in which *were offered* both gifts and sacrifices that *could not make* him that did the service perfect
- Which *stood* only in meats and drinks, and diverse washings, and carnal ordinances
- *Imposed on them* until the time of reformation.

Thus, the thrust of the whole passage is to demonstrate that temple service belonged to another *time* and to another *people*. "The first covenant *had* ordinances *imposed on them* until the time of reformation." There is no indication that the writer identifies either himself or his readers with the Old Testament or the temple system. For him, it is entirely a thing of the past. He does not say it is imposed upon us, but was imposed *on them*. This does not mean the temple service was not on-going, for indeed it was. Unbelieving Jews continued to cling to the dead body of Moses, supposing that in it they were justified with God. But for Christians, the ceremonial law had no claim or demand, but stood merely as a relic of the past with which they were not to become entangled in again. "For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor" (Gal. 2:18).

### **Subject of the Reformation**

Next, let us consider the substance of the reformation. What things had Christ come to reform? The writer lists the following items as belonging to the former dispensation:

- The first covenant
- The worldly sanctuary
- The priestly service
- The appointed days and ceremonies
- The blood sacrifices
- The washings
- The dietary restrictions
- Miscellaneous carnal ordinances

In the epistle to the Colossians, Paul addressed the issue of the law, saying, "*let no man judge you in meat,*


or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:16, 17). The ritual and observances of the law stood as shadows, looking ahead to Christ. *The shadow ends where the body (substance) begins.* Since Paul tells Christians not to become inveigled in the law, it is clear that he considered the shadow past, and the body and substance of redemption as having arrived. Indeed, the writer of Hebrews says this very thing:

*"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:11, 12).*

Notice the verb tense in this passage:

- Christ *being come* (historical present, describing past events in the present voice)
- *Entered* by his blood (past tense)
- *Having obtained* eternal redemption (perfect tense, showing completed action in the past)

In other words, the whole substance of the law looked to the work of Christ upon the cross, and was fulfilled in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Shadow	The Shadow Ended at the Cross	Body & Substance
First covenant Worldly sanctuary Priestly service Appointed days and feasts Animal sacrifices Diverse washings Dietary restrictions Misc. carnal ordinances		New Covenant Heavenly Sanctuary High Priesthood of Christ His own Blood Atonement Eternal Redemption Perfected Forever

Let's look at the feasts of the Jews just to make sure this point is clear and that these all looked ahead to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. There were three major feasts of the Jews and one fast. These were

- Passover, which marked the beginning of the year (Ex. 12:1-17; Deut. 16:1).
- Pentecost, which fell the 50th day of the Sabbath following Passover and marked the

first fruit of the wheat harvest (Lev. 23:15; Deut. 16:9).

- Atonement, which fell the 10th day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:27; 25:9).
- Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles (booths), which fell in the time of autumn vintage of grapes, five days after the Atonement, and commemorated the Jews encampment at Succoth after the Exodus ("Socoth" means booths, Strong's #5523), but looked ahead to the redemption we have in Christ from the slavery of sin (Ex. 12:37; 23:42-44; Deut. 16:13).

That these were fulfilled in Christ is apparent from the following verses:

- I Cor. 5:7 - Christ our *Passover* is sacrificed for us. Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb whose death redeemed the church of the firstborn.
- I Cor. 15:23 - But every man in his own order: Christ the *firstfruits*; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. The Sunday following Passover, the firstfruit of barley was offered, prefiguring Christ's resurrection. 50 days later, the wheat harvest fell and Pentecost was kept, prefiguring establishment of the church (Lev. 23:11, 15; Acts 2:1, 47). Christ is the firstfruit that sanctifies the whole harvest.
- Rom. 5:11- And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the *atonement*; (*cf.*, Heb. 9:11, 12).
- And the Word was made flesh and dwelt ("tabernacled") among us (Jn. 1:14).

We sometimes hear that the Feast of Tabernacles symbolized the general resurrection, but I find no support for this. Zechariah uses the Feast of Tabernacles as a symbol to describe New Testament worship commemorating the salvation of Christ, saying, those nations that keep not the Feast of Tabernacles will be plagued:

*"In that day thee shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness...And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain...this shall be the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles" (Zech. 13:1; 14:16, 19).*

Clearly, this shows that Tabernacles is a commemoration of our deliverance from sin (the

second Exodus), not a looking forward to our resurrection.

All things associated with the first covenant pointed to Christ upon the cross, and were thus cast in the past tense by the writer of Hebrews, Christ being come the High Priest of good things to come.

### Entering the Most Holy

The epistle to the Hebrews attaches symbolism to the tabernacle. The tabernacle was divided into two sections: The first tabernacle is called "Holy place." In this section the priests went daily about their ministry. The second tabernacle, called the Holy of Holies, was separated from the first by a veil, into which the High Priest alone went once a year. God's presence was within the Holy of Holies, above the Mercy Seat between the cherubim. The stranger that drew nigh was to be put to death (Num. 1:51; 3:10, 38). The point of this symbolism was to show that the way into God's presence was not open to the worshipper under the Mosaic system of animal sacrifices, for the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins (Heb. 10: 1-4). The high priest, who entered annually into the Holy of Holies, depicted Christ, who would carry his blood into God's presence by his death on Calvary. Thus, when Jesus died, the veil in the temple was "rent in twain" from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51), showing that the atonement was made (Rom. 5:11) and the way into God's presence was now legally and covenantally opened by Jesus' death.

I once debated a friend who labored under the idea that "entering the Most Holy Place" signified actual entrance into heaven. Since this did not occur until the general resurrection in AD 70, he argued that the Old Law was still valid until then. However, this belies a fundamental mistake. The two sections of the tabernacle represent *the two covenants* and systems of worship, one that could not make the worshipper perfect, and the other that can. The first tabernacle symbolized the Old Testament, which could not take away sins. The second tabernacle symbolizes the New Testament, in which we are "perfected forever" by the sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 10:14). Milton Terry thus writes:

*"The holy place represents the period of Mosaism, that intermediate stage of revelation and law, when many a type and symbol foreshadowed the better things to come, and the exceptional entrance of the high priest once a year within the veil signified that 'the way of the holies was not yet made manifest' (Heb. 9:8). The Holy of Holies represents the Messianic aeon, when the Christian*

*believer, having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19), is conceived to 'have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22).'"<sup>4</sup>*

Jameson, Brown, and Faucett says the same:

*"The Old Testament economy is represented by the holy place, the New Testament economy by the Holy of Holies. Redemption, by Christ, has opened the Holy of Holies (access to heaven by faith now, Hbr 4:16 7:19, 25 10:19, 22; by sight hereafter)." (Jameson, Brown, and Faucett in loc.)*

The relevant facts represented and symbolized by the two sections of the tabernacle may be portrayed thus:

### The Tabernacle and the Two Covenants

*"We have now received the atonement" - Rom. 5:11*

Holy Place – Old Testament	Most Holy Place – New Testament
"Time Then Present"	"Time of Reformation"
Worldly Sanctuary	Heavenly Sanctuary / Spiritual Temple
Way to Holiest Closed	Holiest Opened by Jesus' Death
Could Not Perfect (save)	Hath Perfected Forever (Heb. 10:14)

*During the Old Testament period, the worshipper remained in a condition of legal estrangement, banishment, and exile from God, unable to enter his presence because of sin. The New Testament marks the time when reconciliation has been made, the veil of separation "rent in twain," and man can come into God's presence free from the taint of sin.*

If Christians could not legally and covenantally enter the Most Holy Place prior to AD 70, then the New Testament was not yet in force. But the writer of Hebrews makes clear that that the New Testament came into force at the Testator's (Jesus') death (Heb. 9:17). But as the New Testament verily came into force with Jesus' death, then were believers admitted into the presence of God, cleansed and justified from sin before AD 70. The writer thus encourages believers to have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," signifying that they should boldly embrace the New Covenant, leaving behind the relics of Moses without hesitation or fear.

<sup>4</sup> Milton Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Hunt & Eason, 1890), p. 275

## The Coming of Christ to Save his People

Isaiah's prophesy, above, about the Jews' clinging to the priestly service, while rejecting Christ and persecuting Christians, held out the promise of Christ's coming to save his people and destroy the city and temple.

*"Your brethren that hated you and cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. A voice from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies" (Isa. 66:5, 6).*

This same promise is repeated several times to the Hebrew Christians.

*"Thou hast put all things under his feet.' For in that he put all things in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:8, 9).*

This verse implies that although Christ has not yet put his enemies beneath his feet, he soon will. Meanwhile, having made the atonement, he is coregent with God, seated at his right hand.

*"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).*

This verse teaches the same as above: Christ died for man's sins and has so entered heaven, but will shortly appear to save his people from their persecutors.



*"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:38).*

Here we see that the persecution of the end time - the mystery of iniquity - was already evincing itself. Hebrew Christians needed patience to endure their suffering and plight until Christ's coming to save them.

*"Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:26-28).*

This is a quote from the prophet Haggai, who makes clear that shaking of heaven and earth would not only overthrow the Jews, but the thrones and kingdoms of the heathen (Hag. 2:6, 7, 21, 22). "Heaven and earth" here thus clearly signify, not the Jewish temple and economy, but the political powers of the world. The "new heavens and earth" would follow the overthrow of the persecutors, heralding the kingdom and dominion of Christ, who rules the nations with a rod of iron.

## Conclusion

The "time of reformation" describes the New Testament gospel of Christ. The Old Testament was done away at the Cross and the New assumed its place.

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***"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" Matt. 18:3***

# Questions from our Readers

**Q:** I'm just emailing you because I would like to know what are the inconsistencies of "proper preterism." This view is held by someone named Lloyd Dale. It seems kind of confusing cause it shows as if God is still dealing with ethnic Israel especially Judah. I want to know your advice because I'm kind of new to full preterism and I don't want to end up being totally confused and in a mess by this other view of preterism. Your answer will be of great help!

**A:** I have met Lloyd, but am only slightly familiar with his views. He is not a "full" Preterist, but believes that we are now living in the "millennium" and that Revelation is in some form or manner not fulfilled. You're correct that he does seem to have some views suggesting the Jews are somehow still God's chosen people and that the modern state of Israel is somehow Biblically significant. This is manifestly wrong.

God's covenant with the Jews was temporary and provisional to bring Christ into the world. Since Jesus had to be born somewhere, God chose Abraham and his descendants to bring Jesus into the world. The law and temple ritual were given as object lessons showing the need for a blood sacrifice to atone for sin, thus pointing to the work of Christ. But Jesus having come, the nation no longer holds any special place in the divine economy. They have fulfilled their role. There is no further role for the Jews in the sacred scheme of salvation. There is an article at our web site entitled "Still Chosen: Are the Jews Still God's Chosen People?" I would recommend reading it as I believe it will help clarify this issue.

See also the article "Bimillennialism," showing that the millennia refer to Hades and the martyrs under Nero, dispelling the notion that we are somehow still in the millennium. After reading those, write back if I can be of further help!

**Q:** Good morning, Kurt.

I enjoyed reading this issue -- thank you.

My only area of disagreement is in your article "What is the 'creation' of Rom. 8:19-23?" If vs. 19 and 20 refers to "humankind," with which I agree, then why would not this term continue to refer to the same inclusive group in vs. 20 through 22? The "[they]" (not in the Greek) of vs. 23 could simply refer to those not yet "in Christ," not yet "born from above." Or, the

first phrase of vs. 23 can read, "And not only [this]..." The "we ourselves" can refer to those, including Paul, that are already joined to Christ. He goes on to say in vs. 24 that "we" are saved by hope (or: in expectation)." It seems to me that the context of this passage should be understood in light of vs. 1-18, the "hope/expectation" (vs. 24-25) being "the glory which shall be revealed in us" (vs. 18). The "us" and the "we" refers to "them which are in Christ Jesus" (vs. 1). I fail to see justification for inserting the categories "Jews/Gentiles" into this passage.

Thanks for including the letter to Mac Deaver -- well written.

In love and appreciation,

**A:** Thanks for the thoughts. The justification for interpreting the "they" (added by translators, yes) as the Gentiles is that this group is set over against the "we" who have the first fruits of the Spirit, which many passages assign to the Jews (Rev. 14:4 calls the 144,000 harvested from the Jews the "firstfruits" to the Lamb; cf. Eph. 1:12, 13; Acts 3:6, 13:46; Jm. 1:18). I can't see how the reference can be to those not yet in Christ. Since the whole creation will be saved from the bondage of corruption (inherit eternal life) in addition to the "we," this would seem to preclude alien sinners, for clearly not every one will be saved. Hence, I prefer to see "the whole creation" as equal to "every creature" of Mark 16:15, 16. But I will give your suggestion lots of thought. (Editor's Note: After writing the above, I have been impressed that the suggestion that the "they" may simply refer to those not yet in Christ is a tenable interpretation. However, I still favor the "whole creation" equals "every creature" (Gentile nations) best).

**Q:** Hey Kurt!

Thanks for discussing things about death in my other emails. I really wanted to get that straight so that I didn't start chasing rabbits! :) On to more eschatology stuff now.

I've looked around your site but can't find anything on 1 Corinthians 23-28 discussing Jesus handing the Kingdom over to God the Father so he may be all in all. I understand that Christ was first, then those in Christ at his coming. I can see that. But then the end comes (70AD) and he turns it over to God. So, is Jesus still reigning over the Kingdom of God (the



Earth)? Was God the Father NOT over Jesus during his reign before "the end?"

Have you written anything on that that you could direct me to?

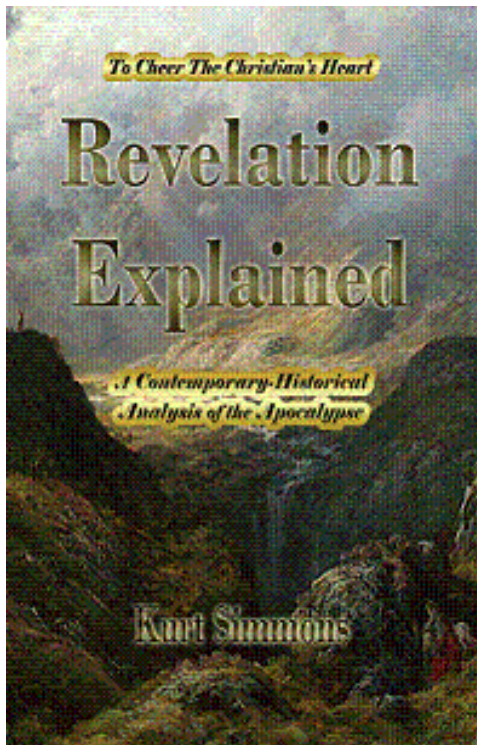
Thanks again for your enormous work. I can't help but think that the church will come to accept this view as time progresses. It just makes too much sense. I've been in absolute awe at God and what he's done every time I'm able to see the dots connected with something else! It's been fun :) I am amazed at the beauty of the Scriptures and how everything fits so perfectly together when reading it without any preconceived ideas. Your website and insight have been a huge help.

Have a great day!

A: You're right that I Cor. 15:23-28 is a difficult text. My understanding of Christ's reign and delivering up the kingdom to the Father may be analogized to

Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was co-regent and heir apparent of his father Napolassar. His father gave him sole authority to make war and conclude peace. Nebuchadnezzar thus invaded Syria and Egypt as king of Babylon, even though he was merely "coregent", and reduced the Jews to captivity in 586 BC. After returning from his war campaign, he surrendered up his authority to his father, acknowledging his father's supremacy and right as king and monarch, even though Nebuchadnezzar continued to be coregent with his father. This is how I understand Jesus' reign. He is coregent with his Father and was given sole authority to make war against his enemies and put them beneath his feet. Having subdued the Jews and Romans, he delivered up/returned the kingdom to the Father, but continued to share the reign as sole monarch. He continues to reign today as coregent with God.

Hope that helps.



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# State-Owned Churches Are Killing America

By Chuck Baldwin  
February 3, 2011

Archived column:

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America was birthed in the spirit of liberty and baptized in the blood of patriots and tyrants. Leading the charge in America's fight for independence was a courageous group of patriot-preachers that came to be known as the "Black Regiment." I have written several columns on this subject. Suffice it to say here that I invite readers to take a look at my Black Regiment web page to learn more about this early American phenomenon. There is little doubt that without these stalwart Christian pastors, this country would not have come into existence. (I extended this call for a modern-day Black Regiment 5 years before Glenn Beck ever mentioned it.) See my Black Regiment page at:

[http://chuckbaldwinlive.com/home/?page\\_id=23](http://chuckbaldwinlive.com/home/?page_id=23)

Plus, to read my column regarding the Black Regiment that was published in The New American magazine in 2009, go to:

<http://www.thenewamerican.com/index.php/history/american/1789>

So, what did these colonial preachers have that today's preachers don't? The better question might be: what did these colonial preachers NOT have that today's preachers do? The answer? Two things: 1) an IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation status, and 2) a 50-year misinterpretation of Romans chapter 13.

The now infamous 501(c)(3) section of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) goes back to 1936 (the seeds of this Venus Fly Trap date back to 1872). But then-Senator Lyndon Johnson was the Dr. Frankenstein who, in 1954, unleashed this monster upon America. His motivation was: he did not like the way pastors and churches were opposing his liberal agenda, and he wanted to use the power of law to silence them. He, therefore, introduced verbiage to the IRC that churches were prohibited from influencing political legislation and supporting political campaigns, or risk losing their tax-exempt status.

Of course, colonial pastors didn't have to worry about their churches being "incorporated" as State-created

(and controlled) entities, or about IRS agents intimidating them regarding what they could or could not say. In early America, preachers were free men; they could say whatever they darned well pleased. Gasp! Beyond that, virtually everyone regarded preachers as being "God's men," not the "servants of men."

Today, however, the average pastor has become the servant of the State and the church he pastors, more often than not, has become a creature of the State. It is an absolute fact that State-owned churches are killing America!

Dick Greb of the Save-A-Patriot Fellowship in Westminster, Maryland, wrote: "Many Americans find it disturbing that some of our churches today are little more than milquetoast corporations that fear our federal government more than the great I AM. Moreover, it can even be said that some preachers have the appearance of cringing, 'politically correct' cowards, rather than committed Godly men of fortitude with backbone, such as those we read of in the Bible." (Source: Greb, Dick. "The 501(c)(3) Hallucination: A Bane to Liberty." Reasonable Action Issue #244 Winter 2003.)

Dear reader, you can take this to the bank: the vast majority of pastors and board members of these 501(c)(3) corporations, when push comes to shove (and it always does), will demonstrate unconditional loyalty to the State. Plus, they will compromise or sacrifice any and every Bible doctrine or principle in order to preserve their tax-exempt status and stay on the smiley side of the IRC. They will also throw anyone under the old proverbial bus who might risk them falling out of favor with the IRS. (I can give painful and personal testimony to that fact!) Greb is right! Many, or most, of today's pastors and church officers fear the federal government far more than they fear God.

Not only did colonial preachers not have to contend with putting their churches under some State-controlled corporation, they would never have allowed it to happen! Can one imagine John Leland, Jonas Clark, or

John Witherspoon being told by any State official what he could or could not say, or what his church could or could not do? What a joke! These men were willing to go to prison or even the grave in order to remain faithful to their spiritual calling and to their political and moral convictions!

The other thing that colonial preachers did not suffer from was a 50-year indoctrination of a misinterpretation of Romans 13.

This “Submit-to-the-government-no-matter-what” doctrine (using Romans 13 as the pretext) is a satanically inspired lie designed to turn free men and women into slaves of the state! Students of history know that Adolf Hitler encouraged German pastors and churches to promote this same fallacious philosophy among the German people. Gee! I wonder why? And according to Erwin Lutzer’s book, “Hitler’s Cross” (must reading, I might add), out of the more than 14,000 evangelical churches and pastors in Germany at the time, only about 800 remained faithful to Scripture and opposed Hitler’s brand of state worship. If my math is correct, that’s about 5%. And it would not surprise me if 5% is about the percentage of pastors and churches in America today that are opposing this modern-day worship of the state.

At this point, instead of embellishing upon Romans 13, I am going to insert a commercial. I began a series of messages on Romans 13 last Sunday at Liberty Fellowship in Kalispell, Montana. In fact, by the time you read this, Part 1 of my message on Romans 13 will be available online.

To view my message, “The Truth About Romans 13, Part 1,” go to:

<http://chuckbaldwinlive.com/home/?p=3014>

I will continue my series on Romans 13 this Sunday, February 6, 2011. I invite readers to watch this address live on the Internet. To view this livestreaming broadcast, go to:

[http://chuckbaldwinlive.com/home/?page\\_id=17](http://chuckbaldwinlive.com/home/?page_id=17)

“The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.” So said Edmund Burke. And, unfortunately, the good men that are mostly doing nothing and allowing evil to triumph in our land are the good men (and women) of America’s churches who have either been intimidated by the 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation status, or who have been put into a

sheepish, servile, Satan-induced coma from an overdose of misapplied Romans 13 poison.

To quote the famous Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, “It is the devil that stirs up his instruments, wicked men [in government or without], to persecute the people of God; tyrants and persecutors are the devil’s tools, though they gratify their own sinful malignity, and know not that they are actuated by a diabolical malice.” (Source: Matthew Henry’s Commentaries on the Bible, notes on Revelation 2:10)

Yes, the Black Regiment preachers of colonial America helped lead America’s fight for freedom and independence. But, they did not have their hands out to the IRS, or their minds and hearts numbed into apathy and indifference by decades of misuse and abuse of Romans chapter 13.

P.S. My son, Timothy Baldwin, who is a historian, author, and constitutional attorney, is in the process of publishing a new book entitled, “Romans 13, The True Meaning of Submission.” I have read it. In the similitude of Tim’s first book, “Freedom For A Change,” this book is an absolutely brilliant and scholarly presentation of the true meaning of Romans 13. Watch my web site, or Tim’s web site, for information regarding this new book’s release.

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*God forgive our apathy, and may the men who protect and enshrine evil in law be rooted out of the land.*



This 21 week old pre born baby was taken from a jar of the North Dallas Women's Clinic in the Central Square Office Building on February 27, 1993

I wonder how it feels to have both your legs ripped off while you struggle helplessly.

***Remind me again why God should bless America?***

# The Great Persecution under Caiaphas, Pilate, and Paul

## Introduction

The book of revelation depicts two persecutions against the church: the persecution of the dragon and the persecution under the beast, harlot, and false prophet. In this article, we want to identify the time and circumstance of the first of these two great persecutions.

### The Dragon, the Woman, and the Man-child

The persecution under the dragon is portrayed in Revelation twelve where it attempts to destroy the man-child at the time of its very birth:

*And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*

*And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.*

*And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. [Rev. 12:1-6](#)*

The basic imagery is taken from the garden where the dragon appears in the form of the serpent, which tempted the woman. The serpent was not a demonic being; it was a serpent, just as the text says. It was chosen as the medium by which the woman was tempted because of the symbolic value associated with the venom of its

bite. Just as the bite of the serpent produces physical death, so sin produces moral, spiritual, and eternal death. From an actual serpent that was given man's voice to tempt the woman, the serpent is thence abstracted and made a symbol for sin and death and those that act in obedience to their command; the woman a symbol for the people of God. The scripture's then foretell the conflict between offspring of the woman and the serpent:

*And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. [Gen. 3:14-16](#)*

The woman's Seed is Christ; the promised Kinsman Redeemer; the serpent would "bruise the heel" of the promised Seed (strike a nonfatal blow) in the crucifixion, but the Seed would crush the serpent's head by the power of his cross and resurrection. (Cf. [Col. 2:14, 15](#)) The enmity between the woman and the serpent is manifested in the struggle between the people of God and their worldly oppressors. The symbol of the serpent was appropriated upon by the prophets, where it was merged into the symbol of Leviathan, the world civil power opposing God and oppressing his people:

*In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish Leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea. [Isa. 27:1](#)*

In the Old Testament, Leviathan most often stood for Egypt, but similar imagery was also

used for other world powers. (Cf. [Isa. 14:29](#); [Jer. 51:34](#) – *Assyria and Babylon*) In Revelation, the dragon is Imperial Rome. The seven heads of the serpent symbolize the seven Caesars that would rule unto the eschaton; the ten horns represent Rome's ten provinces. ([Rev. 17:10-12](#)) The woman is the mother church in Palestine to whom the promised Seed was given. Most will concede that Christ is symbolized by the “man child” brought forth by the woman. This is made certain by the reference in v. 5 that he would “rule the nations with a rod of iron” and was “caught up to God and to his throne.” Jesus uses this language about himself in [Rev. 3:21](#); however, the ultimate source of the language is the second Psalm, where it describes the risen and ascended Messiah:

*Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. [Ps. 2:8, 9](#)*

The dragon's attempt to devour the Christ-child at his birth refers to Herod's slaughter of the Innocents. ([Matt. 2:16-18](#)) Catching up of the man child to the God and his throne is prospective, and looks to the ascension of Christ following his death and resurrection. Christ's earthly ministry is depicted in the imagery of Michael and his angels (Christ and the apostles) doing battle with the dragon and his angels (Sin, Rome and the Jews). The victory over the dragon was obtained by the blood of Christ and the testimony of the gospel:

*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. [Rev. 12:11](#)*

When the dragon saw that he was defeated, he turned his wrath upon the woman, pouring out persecution from its mouth like a flood. (vv. 13-15) This persecution, following as it does fast upon the heels of the man-child's ascension, is readily identified with the persecution that arose over St. Stephen. Stephen was arraigned before the Sanhedrin on charges of blasphemy for teaching that Christ would come and destroy the city and temple and change the customs delivered by Moses. (Acts 6:14, 15) This had been the substance of Jesus' Olivet Discourse

([Matt. 23:34-39](#); 24, 25); Christ had also foretold of his coming while on trial before the Sanhedrin ([Matt. 26:64](#)), and the destruction of Jerusalem when led to Calvary. ([Lk. 23:37-41](#)) The destruction of Jerusalem by Rome had also been prophesied by Daniel (Dan. 9:24-27) and Isaiah ([Isa. 66:1-6](#), 15), the latter whom Stephen quoted in his defense, exciting the counsel to murder him. (Acts 7:48, 49) With the death of Stephen, the persecution of the woman began.

The narrative relates that the woman was given wings for flight and a place to hide in the wilderness, where she was sustained for a time, times, and half a time, or one thousand two hundred three score days. (vv.6, 14) This refers to the scattering of the church upon the persecution. Driven from Judea, the disciples carried the gospel to foreign cities among the Gentiles (“the wilderness”).

As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. [Acts 8:4](#); cf. 11:19

Not content to persecute the church in Judaea, Saul sought letters from the chief priests to go unto foreign cities and arrest those he found that professed the name of Christ. ([Acts 9:1, 2, 14](#)) Unlike today, when jurisdiction is based upon territory and the *place* where an act occurs, in ancient times, jurisdiction was also based upon *citizenship*. This is nowhere more apparent than in the case of Paul. As we read Acts, we encounter several instances where Paul's Roman citizenship protected him against the whim and caprice of local laws and officials, and entitled him to certain procedural and substantive rights, including the right to be tried before a Roman magistrate. It was Paul's Roman citizenship that enabled him to appeal to Caesar, and thus escape the wrath and power of the Sanhedrin.

*I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. [Acts 25:10, 11](#)*



This facet of Roman law, which recognized jurisdiction based upon citizenship, lay behind Saul's ability to travel to foreign cities and there arrest Jews professing faith in Christ. For it had been a right granted the Jews from the time of Julius Caesar that they were allowed to keep their own laws, were exempt from military duty and certain taxes, recognition of the Sabbath day, the right of living according to the customs of their forefathers, and full jurisdiction over their own members. Josephus records numerous edicts by the Romans on behalf of the nation, securing them various privileges and immunities. One in particular testifies to the fact that Jews were allowed legislative bodies and courts in foreign cities with power to make decrees and adjudicate cases binding their members.

Lucius Antonius, the son of Marcus, vice-quaestor, and vice-praetor, to the magistrates, senate, and people of the Sardians, sendeth greeting. Those Jews that are our fellow-citizens of Rome, came to me, and demonstrated that they had an assembly of their own, according to the laws of their forefathers, and this from the beginning, as also a place of their own wherein they determined their suits and controversies with one another. Upon their petition therefore to me, that these might be lawful for them, I give order that these their privileges be preserved, and they be permitted to do accordingly.

### **The Sceptre of Judah and the *ius gladii***

Notwithstanding the ability to arrest Jewish citizens and bring them to Jerusalem for trial, the power to put men to death rested solely with the Roman governor. The authority to adjudicate and execute sentence over capital crimes, known in Roman law as the *ius gladii* ("right of the sword"), is an integral part of the sovereign power given to the ruling authority by God from the days of Noah, to repress lawlessness on earth:

*For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Rom. 13:3, 4; cf. [Gen. 9:5, 6](#)*

The *ius gladii* was part of the sceptre of Judah; the sovereign power reposed in the tribe of Judah. Jacob's prophecy to his sons indicated that the sovereign power would not cease from Judah until the Messiah had come:

*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. [Genesis 49:10](#)*

The sovereign power embodied in the sceptre, including the right to adjudicate and execute capital crimes, was made sure to Judah until the Messiah (Shiloh) had come. The Messiah would then hold the sceptre. But, as the seat of Christ's kingdom is in heaven, the sceptre of the Davidic throne would cease upon earth. And this is precisely what occurred. In the first quarter of the first century God took the *ius gladii* away from Judah and gave it to the Romans. First, in the person of Herod the Great and his heirs, then in the person of the Roman procurator, and, finally, by the destruction of the nation itself. In the absence of a king, the Sanhedrin was the sole repository of the *ius gladii*. Josephus records that Herod the Great, when he had the government of Galilee, was tried before the Sanhedrin for putting the arch-robber, Hezekias, and his followers to death, but made his escape to Sextus Caesar, where he obtained the government of all Syria.<sup>[1\[1\]](#)</sup> Later, he was made king of Judaea by the Roman senate at the instance of Mark Antony, and was able to put men to death as an incident of the monarchical power.<sup>[1\[2\]](#)</sup> With the death of Herod, Archelaus reigned in his stead, but was banished to Vienna, a city of Gaul, in the ninth year of his reign.<sup>[1\[3\]](#)</sup> Augustus thus sent Coponius to be governor over Judaea, who held the sole authority to sit in judgment upon capital offenses.

*And now Archelaus's part of Judea was reduced into a province, and Coponius, one of the equestrian order among the Romans, was sent as a procurator, having the power of life and death put into his hands by Caesar. [1\[4\]](#)*

### **The Persecution Collapses**

At length, Pontius Pilate succeeded to the office of procurator by the appointment of Tiberius.<sup>[1\[5\]](#)</sup> The book of Acts is silent about Pilate's role in the persecution that arose over

Stephen, but, as no one might be put to death in Judea without his consent, it is almost certain that he yielded to Caiaphas in this matter, much as he had about the murder of Christ. However, the persecution's length had been determined at the outset. Revelation depicts the end of the persecution by the earth wondrously opening its mouth to swallow the flood. ([Rev. 12:16](#)) The imagery of the earth swallowing the flood is taken from the story of Dathan and Abriam who opposed Moses, and thus went down to the pit live and whole, when the earth opened its mouth as a sign against them. ([Num. 16:29-32](#)) This began to be fulfilled in A.D. 36, when the future emperor, Vitellius, then president of Syria, compelled Pilate to travel to Rome to answer charges about the death of some Samaritans that resulted in the suppression of an uprising.[1\[6\]](#) Since the Roman procurator held the *ius gladii*, the persecution depended upon his cooperation if the disciples were to be put death. Robbed of Pilate, the Jews could only beat, imprison, and excommunicate.[1\[7\]](#)

At the same time he removed Pilate, Vitellius traveled to Jerusalem during the Passover, where he was magnificently received by the Jews. In return, Vitellius remitted certain taxes and restored custody of the high priest's garments to the Jews, which, until that time, had been kept in the fortress Antonia under Roman guard. Josephus records that as a further kindness to the Jews, Vitellius removed Caiaphas from the high priesthood.[1\[8\]](#) Caiaphas contrived the murder of Christ together with his father-in-law, Annas. (Jno. 18:13, 24) The house of the Annas (viz., "Hanan," "Annas" is the Greek form of "Hanan") had long oppressed the Jews, together with the high priestly houses of Beothus, Kathros, and Ismael ben Phabi, as the Talmud records:

*Woe is me because of the house of Beothus,*

*Woe is me because of their staves.*

*Woe is me because of the house of Hanan,*

*Woe is me because of their whisperings.*

*Woe is me because of the house of Kathros,*

*Woe is me because of their pens.*

*Woe is me because of the house of Ismael ben Phabi,*

*Woe is me because of their fists.*

*For they are high priests, and their sons are treasurers, and their sons-in-laws are temple overseers, and their servants beat the people with clubs.[1\[9\]](#)*

Restoring the care and custody of the high priestly garments to the Jews at the same time he removed Caiaphas indicates that issues concerning the high priesthood were of high priority to the Jews and that there was widespread dissatisfaction with Caiaphas. Upon the death of Festus, before Albinus arrived to replace him, Ananus, the son of Annas the father-in-law of Caiaphas, convened the Sanhedrin and put to death James, the Lord's brother, with several of his fellow disciples. Josephus records that many of the leading Jews complained to Albinus of Ananus' convening of the Sanhedrin and unlawful usurpation of the *ius gladii*:

*Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he [Ananus] assembled the Sanhedrim of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or some of his companions;] and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [Agrippa.] desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified: nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a Sanhedrim without his consent: whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus, the son of Damneus, high priest.[1\[10\]](#)*

Given that the apostles and church were held in high esteem by the Jewish people at the time

Caiaphas was removed ([Acts 5:12-16](#)) and that many of the priests were obedient to the faith ([Acts 6:7](#)), it is quite possible that the persecution of the church contributed to the request Caiaphas be removed from office, much as it did thirty years later when Ananias was removed by Agrippa II for having stoned James.

Undaunted by the loss of the *ius gladii* in the person of Pilate, Saul would go on to press the persecution to foreign cities, seeking letters from the high priests to imprison those calling upon Christ. However, Saul would never reach Damascus, but would instead himself become a disciple of the Lord. ([Acts 9](#)) The conversion of Saul marked the end of the first great persecution.

*The had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; waling in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. ([Acts 9:31](#))*

Agrippa I would slay James, the brother of John, with the sword, but his persecution ended almost as abruptly as it started by Agrippa's untimely death. ([Acts 12](#)) Agrippa II was too young to manage his father's kingdom, so Claudius returned Judea to a province and sent thither Fadus as procurator. The church thus had the protection of law under Roman rule until the death of Claudius when Nero ascended the throne.

Revelation indicates the persecution under Caiaphas, Pilate, and Paul lasted three and a half years. Beginning with the death of Stephen until the conversion of Paul is three and a half years. Paul states that he went up to Jerusalem three years after his conversion; then, he went again fourteen years later to the Jerusalem Counsel to settle the question whether Gentiles needed to be circumcised and obey the law of Moses. ([Gal. 2:1](#); [Acts 15:2](#)) Most authorities place this at A.D. 50. He returned two or three years later, while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia. ([Acts 18:12, 22](#)) From an inscription found at Delphi, we know that Gallio was proconsul in A.D. 52-53. Moreover, mention of Claudius' expulsion of the Jews from Rome further fixes this date, for Claudius expelled the Jews in the eleventh year of reign, or A.D. 52. ([Acts 18:2](#)) Two years later, he went up again and was arrested. ([Acts 19:10](#); [20:22](#); [24:17, 18](#)) Paul remained in custody under Felix for two years. ([Acts 24:27](#))

We know that Festus replaced Felix in A.D. 59-60. Thus, A.D. 59-2-2-14-3 = A.D. 38. From the martyrdom of Stephen in A.D. 34 to Paul's conversion in A.D. 38 accords perfectly with the three and a half year persecution portrayed in Revelation twelve.

### Conclusion

Revelation twelve depicts the birth of the Savior, his earthly ministry, and the persecution that erupted over the martyrdom of Stephen. The wisdom and foresight of God removed the *ius gladii* from the tribe of Judah and placed it in Roman officials for the protection of the church. Had God not so provided, the church and gospel could not have survived and would have been extirpated at its very birth.

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Where 501 (c) (3)  
corporate churches have  
brought our (once)  
Christian Nation



America's Muslim  
President