

The Disappearance of Peace

Four Horsemen and the Coming World Madness – Part III

Revelation 6:3-4; Ezekiel 38-39

Introduction

This is the way history books record it: on July 13, 1977, at exactly 8:37 p.m. lightning struck a power station on the Hudson River, tripping two circuit breakers. A loose locking nut combined with a delayed upgrade cycle kept the breaker from reclosing and allowing power to flow again. Then lightning struck again and two transmission lines went out, causing others to become overloaded. Approximately twenty minutes later, another bolt of lightning struck, taking out even more transmission lines. Con Edison had already begun dropping the power supply to New York City and surrounding areas, but it was not enough. Thermal overload caused even more problems. At approximately 9:36 p.m., the entire Con Edison power system shut down – one hour after the first lightning strike. This plunged New York City into a total blackout.

People poured into the streets to help store owners close up shop and offer assistance in public places for those in need.

Actually, I made up that last sentence. This is what really happened: people by the thousands headed for the streets. Looting and arson erupted. On Broadway Street, the rumble of iron store gates begin forced open and the shattering of glass preceded scenes of couches, televisions, and heaps of clothing being paraded through the streets by looters who were both defiant and gleeful. The looters began looting other looters, and knives came out. Thousands were hurt as riots broke out all over the city.

In one night of darkness, 1,600 stores were looted and 1,037 fires were started. The cost of damages for

one night without light was more than 300 million dollars.¹

For just one night, the lights could not be turned on in New York City, and people believed they were beyond the reach of the law and the demands of civility. They evidently thought God could not see in the dark either.

It was actually a revelation of human nature. When we remove the restraining influence of lights, alarm systems, and video surveillance cameras, people are capable of great unkindness, abandonment of civility, open theft, and even murder.

Ladies and gentlemen, the blackout of 1977 is just a taste of what will happen worldwide one day in the future. When the restraining presence of the Holy Spirit through the church is removed at the rapture, the results will actually be far worse than we can imagine.

We have discovered thus far in our study of Revelation that soon after the rapture, a man who had already risen to a place of distinction will offer peace and safety for Israel. He appears in Revelation chapter 6 as the seals are beginning to be opened for the seven year period known as the Tribulation.

John the apostle sees the Lamb open the first seal of the special scroll. A white horse gallops forward with a rider who represents the culmination of spiritual deception and diplomatic skill. His pseudo-peace treaty will promise Israel the peace accord for which they have longed for centuries.

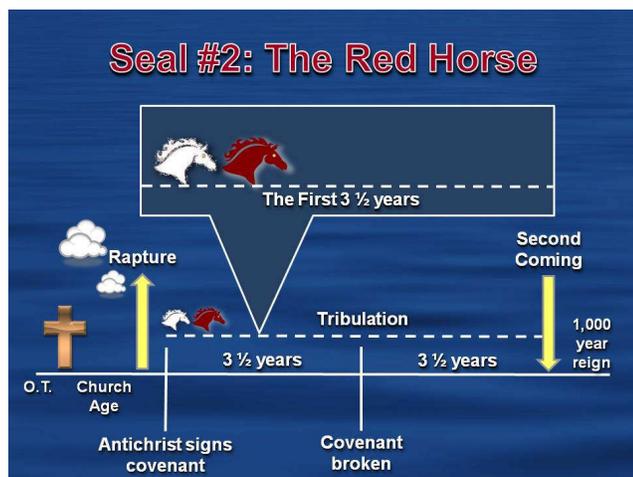
The peace of the antichrist will soon be interrupted by wars breaking out around the globe – most specifically by a coalition of nations that are

intent on looting and stealing from Israel. They will, in fact, be intent on annihilating the Jewish people from the planet.

Does this desire exist today? It is open and admitted. However, it is restrained by the civility of people who defend Israel – primarily from countries who believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

A day is coming, though, when no one will step forward to defend her as surrounding armies come to destroy her. This will be the end, not of Israel, but of them.

The Red Horse



With your Bibles open to Revelation chapter 6, let us watch as Jesus Christ opens the second seal while the Tribulation period continues in its opening days. Look at verses 3-4.

When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!”

And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

This is where the story turns ugly and remains that way until the true King returns to establish His kingdom.ⁱⁱ

One of the four creatures before the throne of God gives the command and the rider on a red horse gallops across the earth. The color of this horse perfectly fits the nature of terror and bloodshed which will ride on the heels of this horseman.

The Greek word for “red” is “purros (πυρρος)”. It is a word that can be translated “fiery”.ⁱⁱⁱ

This is the color of blood. This horseman is riding a blood-red horse which will unleash

bloodshed and war of all kinds that will reach the entire world.

There will be mass rioting and killing like the world has never seen, and it all begins with this horse. As Jesus Christ Himself intimated, it will grow in intensity like the birth pangs of a woman in labor until it climaxes with the Battle of Armageddon as the Tribulation comes to a close.

Revelation is the book of prophecy, so this has yet to happen.

Some would say that the rider of this horse was Nero and the battles that erupt were persecutions against Christians. However, that would make this scroll a book of history and not of prophecy, which John the apostle clearly said it was.^{iv}

This is the second birth pang of Matthew 24, predicted by Christ in His Mount Olivet Discourse. This is the unfolding of the first days of tribulation, primarily the first 3½ years.

I found it interesting that the Didache – the oldest extra-biblical Christian document known to exist – was rediscovered in 1873. It is basically a commentary on early Christian life and practice, including commentary on scripture.

Most secular and Christian scholars believe it was composed around the close of the first century. In other words, it was written a few years, or perhaps a few decades, after the book of Revelation.

This document reveals that the Christian community living after the temple was destroyed in AD 70 and after the outbreak of severe persecution – as well as after the writing of this book of Revelation – believed the events prophesied in Christ’s Mount Olivet Discourse and the seals of Revelation 6 were still entirely in the future. Furthermore, they believed these events would literally be fulfilled.

Listen to a few sentences from the Didache, which is a word that simply means, “The Teaching”.

For in the last days the false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied . . . and love shall be turned to hate. For as lawlessness increases they shall hate one another and shall persecute and betray. And then the world-deceiver shall appear as a son of God [a false messiah]; and shall work signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands; and he shall do unholy things, which have never been since the world began.^v

This corresponds perfectly with Christ's words spoken on the Mount of Olives and with John's vision of these first horsemen – they are yet future.

The preterist and others who believe these events have already occurred have to not only spiritualize the literal fulfillment of these signs away, but contradict the oldest record of the church community that taught all these things were still in the future.

Now it is true that mankind has been able to catalog the ever-present existence of war somewhere in the world. War is not new.

I have read that by the twelfth century, more than 2,000 wars had been fought. That number increased to more than 13,000 by the twentieth century. One author estimated more than 10 billion people have been killed in the wars of the human race.^{vi}

When General Dobey, British commander of Malta during World War I, was stationed in Israel in 1916, an aide made a comment to him on one occasion. He said, "Sir, this is a funny war we're fighting. The Muslims won't fight on Fridays, the Jews won't fight on Saturdays, and Christians won't fight on Sundays." With a twinkle in his eye, Dobey responded, "Well, if you can find four other world religions that refuse to fight on Monday through Thursday, you will have solved the problem of world peace."^{vii}

In the last century alone, 37.5 million died in World War I, and 45 million died in World War II. The Vietnam conflict caused the death of or injury to a half million soldiers. The wars involving our country and Iraq have caused the death toll to rise even more.

We are still not finished – not just our country, which fights for the rights and the peace of people abroad, but countries that desire to conquer others and expand their empire.

War and bloodshed stain nearly every page of history.

Four hundred years before John wrote the book of Revelation, Plato complained, "Only the dead have seen the end of war."^{viii}

So how is the red horseman bringing in anything new? Certainly this is history!

The red horseman signifies a time of increasing world anarchy, disorder, and murder. He comes and completely engulfs the world, not necessarily in a world war, or in wars between major nations alone, but in wars, fighting, revolutions, and rioting everywhere.

This would be analogous to having the French Revolution, the Civil War, World War II, the Iraq Conflict, the China wars, the African Tribal wars, and the Korean conflict all at the same time. And that is just the start.

John writes of the red horseman in Revelation 6:4,

. . . [he] was permitted to take peace from the earth . . .

This has global implications. The Greek language "ek tes ges (εκ της γης)" clearly states this is not limited to Israel or the Roman Empire – this is the outbreak of war and conflict worldwide.^{ix}

The red horseman will ride in and take any vestige of and desire for peace from the planet. He strikes the transformers that have kept the lights of civility and peace burning; he knocks out the power grid of the global surveillance system. Then looting and bloodshed break out all over the world.

I was in the middle of working on this sermon – in fact, at this very point – when a thunderstorm came rolling in and lightning struck. It knocked out our power at home and caused my computer to blink off. I sat there in the dark and thought, "Lord, is this a sign? Do You want me to wrap up the sermon at this point?" I did not hear a voice, so I took it to mean that I should keep going!

Notice in Revelation 6:4 that,

. . . [the] rider was permitted to take peace from the earth . . .

He has to have permission!

As bad as it is and as terrifying and bloody as it gets – in the same way as the white horse, the red horse is on a leash.

God is the designer of all judgment and this is the expression, not of the wrath of Satan, or of the wrath of man, even though they are secondary causes, but of the wrath of God. This is His plan.

So the red horseman can gallop as fast as he wants, but there is a fence; a divinely ordained corral to keep him from going any further than God has designed in these days of wrath.

It is not surprising to me that the next horseman will come, representing a time of great worldwide famine, as these wars bring about global economic hardship and deprivation.

What Happened to Peace in Israel?

Perhaps you are wondering what happened to peace in Israel?

When the first horseman appeared, he brought peace. However, God now moves in this second seal – the second horseman; the second birth pang – to show the frailty and futility of the peace of man.

The amazing rider of the first horse – the white horse – will be initially known as the Peacemaker. He will undoubtedly win the Nobel Peace Prize that year.

However, his peace will not last. Ladies and gentlemen, the peace treaties of planet Earth will never last.

Out of World War I came the League of Nations – but it failed. Out of World War II came the United Nations – but it too has failed to keep peace on the planet.^x

Historian Gustave Valbert chronicled that from 1500 BC to AD 1860, European nations alone signed more than 8,000 peace treaties – each meant to remain in force forever. On average, they remained in force for twenty-four months. And just think of all the treaties that have been signed and broken since 1860!^{xi}

Even though the antichrist has brokered peace with Israel, that peace will be threatened within a matter of months by those who do not wish to see the Jewish nation breathe one more breath of air in Israel. Peace will be disturbed, not because of the antichrist – not in the initial days, but because of the surrounding nations that come to annihilate Israel at the outset of the Tribulation.

One of the wars that breaks out on the planet during the gallop of this red horse takes place in the Middle Eastern region. This is what authors call the coming Russian Islamic Invasion – described by the prophet Ezekiel as the War of Gog and Magog.

Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 give numerous details about this coming, predicted battle as nations converge on Israel. Gog and Magog are involved. This leads some to believe that the battle takes place at the end of the Millennial Kingdom described in Revelation chapter 20, since Gog and Magog are mentioned there as well.

By closely comparing Ezekiel’s details regarding a coming war with the battle in Revelation 20, several key differences are easily noted.

Battle of Gog & Magog Ezekiel 38-39; Rev. 6:3-4	Final Battle Revelation 20:7-10
Invaders killed by earthquakes/hailstones	Invaders killed by fireball
Dead are buried	Judgment of mankind begins (Great White Throne)
Weapons burned over several years time	Millennial kingdom ends
Life goes on	New heavens/earth created

In the early Battle of Gog and Magog, the invaders are killed by earthquakes and hailstones, among other things. In the final battle of Revelation 20, the Lord simply brings down one huge fireball to consume all the armies that have marched against His throne.

Furthermore, in the Battle of Gog and Magog, the dead troops will be buried over several months time, according to Ezekiel 39:12. However, after the final battle, the judgment of the Great White Throne commences and the dead are raised to stand before God.

Another difference is seen in the fact that the Battle of Gog and Magog concludes with the burning of all the weapons over several years’ time – time that may well stretch into the Millennial Kingdom. However the final battle of Revelation 20 will occur at the end of the thousand year reign of Christ – the Millennial Kingdom, and the weapons will not burn as refuse for seven years.

In addition, after the Battle of Gog and Magog life goes on, as normally as it can. However, after the battle in Revelation 20, life changes almost immediately with the creation of a new earth and a new heaven.

The Battle of Gog and Magog is clearly not the final battle in Revelation chapter 20.

There are others who believe this battle takes place in Revelation chapter 16 – that the Battle of Magog is the same as the Battle of Armageddon. I do not believe it is this battle either, for several reasons.

Battle of Gog & Magog Ezekiel 38-39; Rev. 6:3-4	Battle of Armageddon Revelation 16:12-16
During times of peace	During times of plagues
Involves 6 allies	Involves all the nations
Covers northern Israel	Covers all of Israel
Invading alliance destroyed	Many nations destroyed
Commences the Tribulation	Climaxes the Great Tribulation

Again, by comparing the two battles, we discover that the Battle of Armageddon takes place during an outbreak of plagues and unrest. However, Ezekiel clearly states that the invasion of Israel will be at a time when the nation is enjoying peace and rest (Ezekiel 38:8). Gog and Magog march on Israel during a time of security and peace – something Israel has not had since their Babylonian captivity!

In fact, if a country were to invade Israel right now, it would not be a fulfillment of prophetic scripture because the prophet Ezekiel and Revelation 6 clearly indicate a peace accord first – a time of security *before* the invasion of Gog and Magog.

In this day, every Jewish male in Israel has to sign up for compulsory duty of three years in the military and every female for two years. Just read the newspapers – this is certainly not a time of peace and security for tiny Israel.

However, a time of peace *is* coming – brief though it may be. Daniel 9 recorded and Revelation 6 reported the vision of a coming peacemaker who will sign a peace accord with Israel. At this point, his white horse has already galloped throughout the earth.

Furthermore, the Battle of Gog and Magog involves six allies marching against Israel. The Battle of Armageddon involves all the nations – certainly more than six.

This early Battle of Gog and Magog covers the region of northern Israel, while Armageddon covers all the land of Israel.

Another distinctive is that the alliances of Gog and Magog are destroyed. In the battle of Armageddon, many nations are wiped out.

The early War of Gog and Magog fits perfectly the scene prophesied by Daniel – a time of peace,

interrupted by a war which occurs at the beginning of the time of trouble, which is the Tribulation. The Battle of Armageddon, on the other hand, climaxes the ending of the Tribulation as the enemies of Israel are wiped out when Christ returns, described in glorious detail in Revelation 19.

For these reasons, and more, the Battle of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38-39 does not match up with the details of the Battle of Armageddon in Revelation chapter 16. They are clearly not the same battle.

The Battle of Gog and Magog

So, just what and when is the Battle of Gog and Magog?

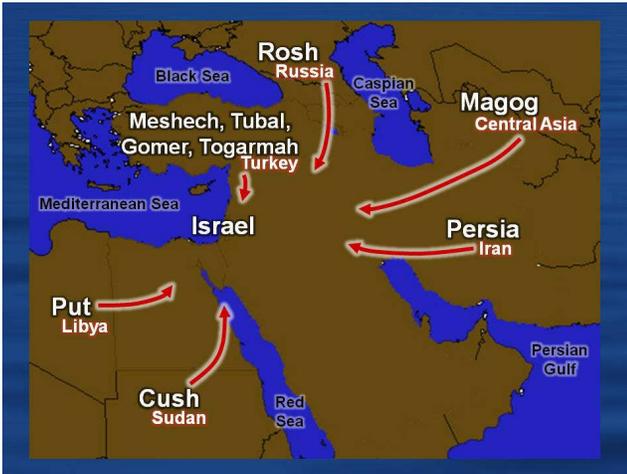
This terrific battle, prophesied by Ezekiel, fits into this period of temporary peace established by the antichrist as the Tribulation period begins. In fact, it is the only time period we know of in which Israel rests in safety and security, following the peace accord offered by the antichrist.

This season of peace and security comes riding on a white horse. The battles that break out, including the Battle of Gog and Magog, take place during the coming of the red horse.

War and bloodshed around the world give the nations surrounding Israel the perfect opportunity to march against Israel, undeterred by the rest of the world. And they are right, for there is no mention in scripture of any other nation coming to the defense of Israel.

Who are these six nations that Ezekiel prophesied would form a coalition against Israel, and at this point, against the antichrist who has pledged to defend her?

By the way, that was not a slip of the tongue. At this point the antichrist is actually a distraction for this coalition. He is not feared as of yet as a great warrior. He is a man of peace, and is in the way of these six nations.



Let us look at the six member coalition of Gog and Magog.

1. First and foremost in this coalition is Rosh, which many Bible scholars identify as modern Russia.

Rosh is often translated as the common noun “chief”. However, the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, translates Rosh as a proper name. As a result, Ezekiel 38:2 reads, “O Gog, prince of Rosh.”

From all the evidence I have studied, Rosh refers to what we know today as the land of Russia. And her prince will be Gog, the ruler of Russia.^{xii}

This is the kingdom that will come from the north, as predicted by Ezekiel.

2. The next coalition member is Magog.

Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, identified that the ancient Scythians inhabited the land of Magog. This helps identify another northern territory that comprises Central Asia – or what we know today as the former Soviet Union.

Magog might also include modern day Afghanistan. This region alone is currently populated by more than 90 million people – and they are predominantly Muslim.

In fact, the unifying thread of this coalition, should it come together in our generation, is the religion of Islam – a religion that believes Israel is a nation that should be annihilated.

3. The next coalition member, according to Ezekiel, is Persia – or modern-day Iran, which is a country that is openly anti-Jew.

The president of Iran has recently said the following, and I quote:

- “The Zionist regime [Israel] is heading toward annihilation. The regime is a rotten,

dried tree that will be eliminated by one storm.”

- “A new middle east will prevail without the existence of Israel.”
- “The Zionists and their protectors are the most detested people in all of humanity, and the hatred is increasing every day.”
- “Israel is destined for destruction and will soon disappear.”

Even now, ladies and gentlemen, the internal news media of Iran is talking about the preparations for the great war in which Israel, referred to as the beloved of the West – meaning America – will be conquered. One editorial said, and I quote, “The great war is ahead of us, [and will break out] perhaps tomorrow, or in another few days, or in a few months, or even in a few years. The nation of Muslims must prepare for the great war, so as to completely wipe out the Zionist regime, and remove this cancerous growth.”^{xiii}

The ancient region of Persia is occupied now by the country known as Iran. It is a country that dreams of wiping Jews off the planet, and their quest for nuclear power is fueled by this growing desire to destroy Israel and all who would defend her.

4. The next member of the coalition, Ezekiel says, is the land of Cush. Most scholars believe Cush represents the area east of Egypt and west of the Red Sea, or modern-day Sudan.^{xiv}

This region is extremely anti-Israel and, in fact, harbored al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden from 1991 to 1996. It would gladly join in a coalition to attack Israel, if it had the chance.

5. The next member of the coalition is ancient Put, or modern Libya, which is another region filled with hostile Islamic extremists and a deepening hatred of Israel.

6. The final member of this coalition is the modern land of Turkey, identified by Ezekiel as several kingdoms. Turkey is also an Islamic nation with a growing allegiance to Russia.

Although the Tribulation could be a thousand years away, and there is no biblical reference to anything either hindering the rapture or forcing it to happen, there is little imagination needed to see the potential of an imminent invasion by Islamic nations which now virtually surround the tiny state of Israel.

According to Ezekiel's prophecy, when these nations begin their march toward Israel, it will look like the biggest mismatch in history. This is David against Goliath all over again. There seems to be absolutely no way Israel can survive.

The antichrist is powerless to stop the invasion and Israel cannot defend herself. He can only watch from his rebuilt palace in Iraq – his newly built Babylon, which interestingly enough, is not a part of the coalition. It is strangely absent. Why? Because the antichrist is still offering peace to Israel.

However, these countries offer no peace. They finally have their chance to destroy the Zionist regime and wipe the people of God's promise off the face of the land.

Ultimately, Satan can only hope that they will finally succeed in destroying the potential for Israel to welcome her Messiah back to the land of promise.

Israel can only wait and tremble as these armies march toward her.

However, then Ezekiel writes of God's response,

But on that day, the day that Gog shall come against the land of Israel, declares the Lord God, my wrath will be roused in my anger.

For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that day [I will act] . . .

(Ezekiel 38:18-19)

Several things happen in quick succession, according to Ezekiel's prophecy.

- First – an earthquake (38:20),
- Then – the coalition will turn on one another (38:21),
- Then – plagues, torrential rain, and hailstones (38:22),
- Finally – a fire will sweep over the armies, destroying these kingdoms.

Imagine, in a matter of a few hours, Russia will be decimated, as will Iran, Libya, the Sudan, and the proud armies of the eastern people who fight against Israel.

There is little doubt in my mind that the antichrist will claim the victory as his own and further entrench himself as the leader in that part of the world, claiming to be the Messiah for the entire world. But that is another study.

What Happened to America?

Now, before we close the book on the red horse, the horseman of war, and the disappearance of peace the world over, one question comes to the mind of most people in our country who study passages like these. There is no sign or sight of any western ally defending Israel in these scenes. America, Great Britain, France . . . none of the allies that normally step up to defend Israel will appear to fight for her.

What happened to America?

The short answer is simply, "We're not told."

However, with great caution, let me suggest a few possibilities.

- It could be that the rapture decimates so many key leadership and economic positions in our country that they are still scrambling to pull on their boots when this coalition marches on Israel.
- It could be that America has become so multicultural and pluralistic that it no longer has a national sense of respect for the Bible and the God of Abraham, along with a desire to protect Israel. This possibility does not take much imagination, does it?
- It could be that this Middle Eastern coalition shuts down the flow of oil to the west and America, due to an energy and oil crisis, is unable to purchase fuel to mount an army.
- It could be that America is preoccupied with its own internal rioting and fighting as the red horse races throughout our country as well. Race riots, economic strife, union wars, and perhaps some form of civil war could require our military to be so engaged in trying to bring order to our own country that it can no longer engage in warfare abroad.
- It could be that America is no longer America, but is perhaps divided into sections owned and ruled by different world powers.

It could be the effects of the rapture, a lack of interest in God, a fuel crisis, internal rioting and distraction, or the breakup of the nation as we now know it. Or, it could be something entirely different that we cannot even imagine in our generation.

We do not know why America does not rush to defend Israel; we only know that it does not. For me, that is a sad day, as it relates to my country.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, today the world is a powder keg, the likes of which have never been seen before. We have more ways to kill entire people groups than ever before, such as chemical weapons, biological weapons, and nuclear weapons.

Omar Bradley once wrote of our generation, “We are in a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants.”^{xv}

Ladies and gentlemen, there was nothing prophetically preventing this red horseman from ridding in at the end of the first century – and the church was waiting.

He might not ride across the planet for another two thousand years, if God designs it. There is nothing to force him to come now.

However, we have to admit that if we put our ear to the ground, we can almost hear the rumbling of the hoof beats of the red horse. More than ever before in world history, the stage seems perfectly set for the coming of this horseman.

This leads me to say that right now the most important peace treaty you need to know about is not the peace treaty between the antichrist and Israel. It is also not the peace treaty between some nations that may last for a year or two.

You need a peace treaty that lasts for eternity. It is the peace treaty between you and God, signed by the blood of Christ, which justifies and cleanses those who believe in Christ alone.

You sign this peace treaty by placing your faith in Christ’s work on the cross. Believe in your heart that God raised Him literally, physically from the grave; believe that He even now intercedes; believe that He is coming back one day, so that you can say with Paul the apostle,

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

(Romans 5:1-2)

This is the peace treaty between you and God, through Christ.

There is no lasting peace apart from the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah the prophet wrote,

For to us a child is born; to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called

Wonderful Counselor,

Mighty God,

Everlasting Father,

Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

(Isaiah 9:6-7)

Sign the peace treaty with the only true Messiah – Jesus Christ. This Prince of Peace will establish peace between you and God – and that peace, His peace, is everlasting.

His peace will last from this time forth and forevermore.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 6/15/2008 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City_blackout_of_1977.

ⁱⁱ John MacArthur, *Revelation: Volume 1* (Moody Press, 1999), p. 180.

ⁱⁱⁱ Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Regency, 1976), p. 826.

^{iv} Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation: Volume 1* (Moody Press, 1992), p. 426.

^v John MacArthur, *The Second Coming* (Crossway Books, 1999), p. 424.

^{vi} Mark Hitchcock, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (Multnomah, 2004), p. 54.

^{vii} *Ibid.*, p. 53.

^{viii} *Ibid.*, p. 54.

^{ix} Thomas, p. 428.

^x Lehman Strauss, *Revelation* (Loizeaux Brothers, 1964), p. 158.

^{xi} Hitchcock, p. 54.

^{xii} Mark Hitchcock and John Walvoord, Armageddon, Oil, and Terror (Tyndale, 2007 ed.), p. 90.

^{xiii} Ibid., p. 104.

^{xiv} John Walvoord, Prophecy Knowledge Handbook (Victor Books, 1990), p. 192.

^{xv} Samuel Gordon, Worthy is the Lamb: A Walk Through Revelation (Ambassador, 2000), p. 154.