Revelation: A Biblical Approach

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Summary presentation for Avon Bible Class presented by Brother Dean Brown, May 2007
Ground Rules – same as last week

- Description without “cheerleading” for or against. This applies to all of us. No arguing for or against tonight.
- Simple framework and confusing details.
- Questions about the basic description and basic logic are allowed, but not questions about details, otherwise we’ll get bogged down.
Chapter 7 - The Date of Revelation

The date of the writing of Revelation is a matter of fundamental importance. Two possible dates have been suggested: A.D. 95 in the reign of Domitian, and A.D. 66 in the reign of Nero. It is hoped to show that the evidence for A.D. 66 is overwhelming.
Revelation was written before 1, 2 Peter and therefore before the death of Peter which is known to have happened in A.D. 66 approximately.

This then must fix the date of the writing of Revelation and this in turn must influence not a little the interpretation of a book concerning "things which must shortly come to pass."
Chapter 8 - How Bible Prophecy Is Fulfilled

At the time when the prophecy was given to John, the outstanding circumstances of importance to the early believers were the ferocious persecution of the Christians by Nero, and the seething restlessness and turmoil in Judea which already gave plain promise of worse to come in the troubles of the Jewish War. It would be strange indeed if this latest and most wonderful example of Bible prophecy were to show no sign of the proximity of these critical developments.
Seals, Trumpets, and Vials will be fulfilled together in a tremendously powerful complex of divine judgements on an evil system. And there are clear hints in the Vials that its fulfilment is to be regarded as contemporaneous with or even after chapter 17.
Whilst the general symbolism of the Seals (or of some of them!) may be easy of interpretation, *e.g.* Seals 2, 3, 4 clearly signify War, Famine, Pestilence - to what particular events does the series refer? For without question, the details of some of the Seals are of such a precise and particular character as to make it certain that they have reference to specific events.
John Thomas and others have suggested an impressive correspondence between [some sections of Revelation] and certain epochs of Roman and Church history, a correspondence running right through the Trumpets, Beast Visions and Vials to the titanic events associated with the coming of the Lord.

Whilst there may be places where the equation of prophecy and history staggers somewhat, there can be no question that in general the way in which the one answers to the other is impressive. But it is necessary to point out a fact much overlooked, so much overlooked, indeed, that at first some will be loath to believe the truth of it. This "continuous historic" method of interpreting Revelation is, of necessity, un-Biblical.
When a prophecy like Revelation is considered in detail, its symbols interpreted in a reasonable fashion, and the prophecy then given an application to certain epochs in world history, there cannot - from the very nature of the case - be any Biblical warrant for so doing. The only sanction available lies in a resemblance between a piece of history and the interpretation that has been put on the symbols of a certain portion of Revelation.
Thus, whilst it is possible in the study of a great many Old Testament prophecies to have one's feet planted on the solid foundation of New Testament authority, from the very nature of the case this is \textit{not} possible with the "continuous-historic" method of interpreting Revelation.

At the same time it has to be insisted that lack of Biblical confirmation does not at all constitute disproof. And certainly the resemblances between history and this particular scheme of interpretation of Apocalyptic symbol should not be dismissed with an airy wave of the hand.
But it has to be said that even the warmest enthusiasts for the continuous historic exposition must admit, and usually do so concede, that the results of this approach are somewhat unequal. For example, most students find the historic link-up of Revelation 11 and 12 less satisfactory than other sections of the prophecy. But this does not necessarily mean that the rest is of no consequence.
Next, attention must focus, and must remain focused, on a big fact concerning Revelation which - to one's lasting surprise - has been almost completely ignored in the standard interpretation of the middle section of Revelation. This big (biggest!) fact about Revelation is that the entire book from beginning to end is a masterly mosaic of quotations from and allusions to the rest of the Bible.
The use of the rest of the Bible to elucidate Revelation leads to the emphatic conclusion that practically all the book from chapter 6 onwards applies either

(1) to the grim events associated with the fall of Jerusalem in AD. 70 and God's rejection of Israel, or else

(2) to the great events prior to and contemporary with the return of the Lord, or else

(3) to both.

[Note: it is improper to label Brother Harry’s approach as simply “preterist”]
Thus, both method and results in this study will prove to be drastically different from those of the familiar continuous-historic interpretation yet *neither need exclude it*. (In this study emphasis will not be put on the continuous-historic scheme simply because it has already been set out elsewhere fully and completely).
Chapter 10 - The Seals

Chapter 11 - The First Four Seals: A.D. 70

Chapter 12 - The First Four Seals: The Last Days

Chapter 13 - The Fifth Seal

Chapter 14 - The Sixth Seal: Jewry Destroyed

Chapter 15 - The 144,000

Chapter 16 - The Great Multitude
Chapter 17 - Seven Angels with Seven Trumpets

Chapter 18 - The First Four Trumpets: A.D. 70

Chapter 19 - The First Four Trumpets: The Last Days

Chapter 20 - The Fifth Trumpet: A.D. 70

Chapter 21 - The Fifth Trumpet: The Last Days

Chapter 22 - The Sixth Trumpet - A.D. 70

Chapter 23 - The Sixth Trumpet: The Last Days
Chapter 17 - Seven Angels with Seven Trumpets (8:1-6)

The general scheme of interpretation of the Trumpets, then, follows the same pattern as that of the Seals:

(a) Fulfilment immediately after the writing of Revelation, in the destruction of Jerusalem.

(b) The “continuous-historic” fulfilment, expounded in “Eureka,” applies the Trumpets to the break up of the Roman Empire by irruptions of Goths, Huns, Vandals, followed by the scourge of Saracen and Turkish invasions.

(c) A rapid, intensive recapitulatory fulfilment in the Last Days.

In this study attention is to be concentrated on the first and third of these. For obvious reasons it will not be possible to give the third interpretation in detail.
It may be urged as an objection against the view of the Trumpets now being advanced that if they merely recapitulate the judgments already made known by the Seals then this part of Revelation is fruitless repetition.

Sufficient answer to such objection is to be found in the repetition of Joseph’s dreams and also Pharaoh’s and Daniel’s. It is God’s way of being emphatic about anything.
Chapter 25 - The Two Witnesses (11:1-13)

The measuring of the sanctuary and altar means the inauguration of a new temple consisting of people - the worshippers are symbolized by temple and altar.

The court that is immediately outside the Sanctuary, that is, the court of the Israelites (to which Gentiles did not normally have access) is now “cast out” (excommunicated). This is the symbol of Jewry bereft of fellowship with their God.

Here, then, is a prophecy of the rejection of Israel, of summary judgment against Jerusalem, and of the gospel being committed unto others, Gentiles, instead.
The Witnesses can be identified as being the Jews. The evidence for this is astonishingly varied and copious, and all of it Biblical. There is no need to rely on what might be fortuitous historical resemblances.

Two conclusions result:
(a) The two witnesses represent the nation of Israel in the Land.
(b) The death of the witnesses represents (temporary) political extinction of the state of Israel, but not an utter end of all the Jews in the Land.
After a description of their witness and its effects comes the story of their destruction by “the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit.” Since, as has been demonstrated, this chapter is dealing with events of the Last Days, the beast must be interpreted as being a great enemy of the people of God at that time. Thus the slaying of the witnesses requires an invasion of Israel and the complete destruction of the new homeland for the Jewish people.
The period of 3½ days probably stands for 3½ years. This suggestion is made, not on the basis of “a year for each day,” but simply from the appropriateness of the imagery employed. To have said, “they shall see their dead bodies three years and a half” would have been to import into the prophecy too big an element of unreality. What dead bodies would lie exposed anywhere for three and a half years?
In *The Last Days*, it was argued that [the 70 Weeks] prophecy in Daniel 9 shares the characteristic feature common to the visions of Daniel 2, 7, 8, 11, in having a big gap between the main body of the prophecy and its culmination at the Time of the End.

Thus, linking Daniel 9 and Revelation 11 together, there is presented the picture of the People of God having a 3½ year witness and tormenting of their enemies, followed by their devastation by the Beast, and political “death” for a further 3½ years.
If the thesis discussed in the Appendix be accepted, then at the time when the Revelation was given there was still the possibility of this prophecy and these periods having fulfilment round about A.D. 70.
All moderately-careful readers of the Bible notice the frequent appearance in the New Testament, and especially in Revelation, of passages which read as though the writers expected the return of the Lord from heaven within a comparatively short time - certainly not after a lapse of 2,000 years! In the Apocalypse statements of this kind are particularly plain and copious.
That *the Holy Spirit inspired these New Testament writers* can be no manner of doubt. Then *what they wrote concerning the return of their Lord must have been absolutely correct when they wrote it*. How comes it, then, that their God-guided anticipations have proved to be in error?

It can only be because *God Himself has brought about a wholesale deferment of the consummation of His purpose, so that what was originally to have happened in or soon after A.D. 70 is to be fulfilled instead in the 20th Century.*
This suggestion may seem extraordinarily difficult of acceptance. The reader is asked to curb any impatience with it until there has been a careful and unprejudiced examination of the evidence.

First, it is necessary to realize that similar postponements of declared developments in the divine purpose have taken place before.
The following examples are both illuminating and provocative.

1. “Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus” (Acts 3:19, 20 R.V.). Omitting the intervening clauses in order to throw the main point into sharper relief: “Repent ... so that he may send the Christ ... “
10. Perhaps this is the proper place to draw attention to Mark 13:32. “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father.” If an understanding of the chronological framing of the ages can be gained from a study of Bible “times and seasons,” then even in the days of his flesh that knowledge would have been the Lord’s, so masterly was his insight into the Word. That he did not know must surely be taken to mean that *from the human point of view* the precise time still remained indeterminate.
This study has submitted a fair amount of Bible evidence for believing:

(a) that the Apostles and the early church had an inspired expectation of an early return of Christ;

(b) that God has, at different times in His dealings with Israel, deferred the fulfilment of His promises (or threats) beyond the time originally indicated;

(c) that the Second Coming of the Lord is repeatedly made contingent on the repentance of God’s people and their acceptance of the Gospel.
In the light of these findings, the conclusion seems to follow that the divine intention that Jesus should come again some time in the First Century suffered a drastic postponement because of the general rejection of the Gospel, especially by Israel.
Suppose, then, that the Lord had come in A.D. 70. The time when “Jerusalem was trodden down of the Gentiles” would have been the (3½-year) period of the Roman War, A.D. 67-70, or, just possibly, an equivalent period following immediately on A.D. 70.

The big and mysterious gaps in the prophecies of Daniel and elsewhere now find immediate explanation. They are there because the original “program” did not include the long period, which has elapsed between the First Century, and the Twentieth. The view now being suggested reduces to much smaller proportions a number of other difficulties in Daniel.
Happiest result of all is the elimination of the problem of the many passages anticipating an early return of Christ.

Further, the double and even treble fulfilment of large parts of Revelation is now precisely what one would expect. Deferment of the Second Coming has involved in a like wholesale deferment, a great accumulation of detailed Bible prophecies. A.D. 70 and its horrors provided an only partial fulfilment. The greater reality is yet to be.
DIFFICULTIES.

But of course arguments are raised against this view. It is therefore proposed to list some of the obvious ones - possible snags that have been brought to the attention of the present writer in the course of many a discussion - and to offer such answers as are available, so that the reader may have the main pros and cons before him.
Objection 1: Is there not flat contradiction between the undoubted fact that God knows the end from the beginning and this suggestion of a change in the divine scheme?

Objection 2: ...

Objection 3: ...

Objection 4: ...
The woman in heaven bears all the marks, which identify her as a symbol of the nation of Israel.

Since the woman is seen in heaven, she must represent Israel at a time before the nation was cast off and disowned by God.
At first glance, the Man Child is the Lord Jesus Christ himself; for does not Revelation itself apply these very words to him in his glory (19:15)? But, then, it applies them also to those who are approved in Christ and deemed worthy to share his glory (2:26, 27).

Choice then must be made between these two interpretations. There is good reason to discard the first and seemingly more obvious, in favour of the other. This vision goes on to describe an attempt to destroy the Man Child after he has been brought forth.

The man child, then, represents the early church, those in Christ born so to speak, out of the travail of the nation of Israel.
The dragon with its tail sweeps away “the third part of the stars of heaven,” i.e. a third part of those twelve stars which form the woman’s crown. The language is reminiscent of the earlier Trumpets, and also of Ezekiel: “Remove the diadem, take off the crown ... I will overturn, overturn, overturn it.” Here, then, in effect, the woman loses her crown - her kingdom is overturned. It is one of the three overturnings of Israel: either B.C. 606, or A.D. 70, or the overthrow of the state of Israel by the fierce Invader in the Last Days. It must surely be the second of these.

Now the infant church is “caught up unto God and to his throne.” That is, the spiritual status of converts to Christ was far higher than that of those who were members of God’s covenant-race merely by virtue of circumcision.
No sooner has John witnessed these dramatic happenings than he sees the woman fleeing into the wilderness. This is Israel now disowned by God; fellowship with the divine has been withdrawn. Israel is in the wilderness of the nations, scattered, despised, unloved, persecuted. The wilderness has ever been the place of probation. It was, for Moses, for Elijah, for Paul - for Jesus himself. And now, once again Israel must face the testing of the wilderness - a long-drawn-out trial, as it has proved, of nigh on two thousand years, and still their hearts remain hard as tables of stone.
By any pattern of interpretation the 1260 days present an outstanding problem. No continuous-historic assumption of “a year for a day” has come within a hundred years of supplying a satisfactory time period. Following what has been said elsewhere on this theme (e.g. “the Last Days”), that here there is no adequate Biblical reason for “a year for a day,” this period is taken to be literally 3½ years in the time of the end.
The passage may mean that the duration of the woman’s time in the wilderness is not specified, until in the Last Days Israel finds herself in the “wilderness” once again, this time for 3½ years. In other words, 12:6 is to be read as having a long gap in the middle of it. The prophecy leaps suddenly from the First Century to the Twentieth.[1]

[1] The ideas suggested in the Appendix have an important bearing on this paragraph.
Interpretation of the war in heaven is not to be sought in the world of European politics (the kind of obsession which has bedevilled so many attempts to unveil the Apocalypse). In the Last Days the serpent-dragon is, as always, the embodiment of human opposition to the will of God in the world. In this particular instance it may be possible to identify the “heaven” where the conflict takes place as being Jerusalem. In a nutshell, what needs to be recognized is that, because the sanctuary of the Lord was in Jerusalem, the holy city is spoken of as “heaven,” and the Holy Land is referred to as “earth”.
The power of Rome very adequately fulfils the necessary First Century conditions - that the dragon be a hater and persecutor of both Jews (the woman) and Christians (the man child). What dragon power is there in the Holy Land today, which is a hater of Jews and [true] Christians?

At the time of writing [ca. 1976], the answer to this enquiry must be:

none. But ...

there is every likelihood, from the standpoints of Bible prophecy and modern politics, that before long Israel will be over-run by their Arab enemies (helped, of course, on a massive scale, by Russia). ...

...
But to accept such a solution is to share one of the biggest blunders of conventional interpreters of Revelation, who have turned a blind eye to the massive perversions of Truth by Donatists and Waldenses and Albigenses and Huguenots in desperate attempts to identify them with the Lord’s faithful remnant. There is another and better way out of this difficulty. Chapter 25 and also “The Last Days,” Chapter 7; and “The Time of the End,” Chapter 2, bring together some of the copious Bible evidence for a partial repentance of Israel before the coming of the Lord.
The similarities between the Trumpets and Vials are very striking and also important. The Trumpets were seen to be the expression of God’s judgments on Israel. Now the same retributions are poured out on those who have ravaged Israel, and for very good reason: it is a rendering unto them of the reproach wherewith they have reproached the Almighty (compare Zechariah 1:15).
It is usually assumed that the war in Israel, which will herald the return of the Lord, will be the focus of a titanic struggle there between Russia and the Communistic bloc in the north and America and Britain holding the south. But this picture ignores altogether certain important facts.

The Gog-Magog invasion of Ezekiel takes place after the coming of the Lord. The use of “dwelling securely” would appear to be decisive on this point.
“And the water thereof (of the great river Euphrates) was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.” In the prophets the drying up of a river is a very evident symbol of the end of the political power of a nation. The prophets use Euphrates specially as THE symbol of Babylon. Accordingly, the drying up of Euphrates (v. 12) is speedily followed by the vision of the destruction of Babylon. The two go together.
Here the identification of the dried-up Euphrates is inseparably linked with the identification of the apocalyptic Babylon. The familiar equation of Euphrates with the power of Turkey depends on rigid geography. Yet no one dreams of giving “Babylon” a geographical interpretation. To refer this prophecy to Turkey one has to go back in history to a time well antecedent to the events foretold in the vials - and especially the Sixth Vial. The incongruity does not seem to have been recognized as clearly as it might. The Turkish Empire was dried up over a period of more than four centuries in order that, about a hundred years after that drying up, Armageddon might take place. Can this be regarded as satisfactory?
At the time of writing it seems transparently obvious that within a very limited time the mischievous influence of this communist policy in the Middle East will gather the kings of the whole world to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

This will be World War III. The troubles besetting the Land of Israel will be only a small part of a global conflict in which the fate of Israel will go almost unnoticed. The western powers will regard Israel as expendable. America, already war-weary after Vietnam and warily muttering: “Never again,” will be cautious about further entanglement in another remote little-nation war.
This section of Revelation is usually regarded as one of the least problematical of the whole book. The harlot is Babylon, that is, Catholic Rome priding itself on its independence, power and influence, and glorying in persecution of the faithful.

On the strength of this Scripture there have been many confident expectations of a sensational increase in Papal power in the Last Days. Speculation has often run on to forecast a grand alliance between the church of Rome and the dominant political powers of the world against the authority of Christ when he is revealed in divine glory.
The daring character of these speculations is hard to match in all the history of the interpretation of Bible prophecy. Especially is this seen to be so when reconsideration is given to the interpretation (which usually goes with it) of Revelation 13; for by far the commonest exposition of chapter 13 equates its details about these Beasts with the Catholic church and the Holy Roman Empire.

One is left guessing as to how the Babylonian harlot riding the Beast and then ravaged by the ten kings can represent the Papacy controlling the Roman church and then destroyed by those who are themselves subject to it. Indeed, how harlot and Beast can both be identified with the apostasy of Rome deserves the name Mystery nearly as much as the woman in the vision!
It would seem almost inescapable that this part of Revelation was framed with primary reference to the city of Rome, whatever further interpretation may evolve from that basic idea: “The seven heads (of the Beast) are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth” (17:9). “The woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (17:18). Could any early Christian, reading his copy of the Apocalypse for the first time, think of anything but Imperial Rome?

The references to persecution also come in very appropriately, for at the time when Revelation was first given, Rome was busy harassing the Christians.
The copious Biblical allusions, scattered throughout Revelation 18, to imperial Babylon and commercial Tyre, the purpose of which is so difficult to evaluate as long as eyes are kept on papal Rome, are now seen to be intensely relevant. The Rome of the emperors was in all essential respects the contemporary counterpart of the massive grandeur and resourceful brilliance of Babylon and Tyre.
Thus, to the early Christian the prophecies in Revelation concerning the Harlot on the Beast may have suggested Rome, the queen of the world. And to them the Beast, commanding the allegiance of the kings of the world, would be the Empire.

These early brethren would then infer that in due time God would bring judgment on the persecuting city by causing it to be ravaged by the nations of the Empire. This happened, but ...

It has to be conceded that in each case these invaders did not belong to the Empire, but came from outside it. Neither did they utterly destroy the city, as the language of Revelation 18 seems to require.
A Jewish “Babylon”

Then is it possible that here is a lead to another completely different identification of the Harlot? When this working hypothesis, that “Babylon” is Jerusalem, is tried out, a quite surprising number of details fall together into a harmonious pattern of a marked Biblical character.
17:9: *The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth.* Rome is not the only city in the world built on seven hills. Is not the same true of Jerusalem? What expositors very often overlook is the fact that the hills of Rome are hardly hills, they are certainly not mountains, which is the word used in Revelation 17:9. Indeed, the highest of the seven hills of Rome is a mere 150 feet. In sharp contrast with Rome, Jerusalem is built on seven *mountains.*
18:24 *In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all that were slain on the earth (in the Land).* The words are difficult of application to the Catholic church, but are the exact equivalent of: “it cannot be that a prophet shall perish out of Jerusalem,’ (Luke 13: 33).
Difficulties

There are difficulties also. The name Babylon itself is a problem. So also is the long series of allusions to the Babylon and Tyre prophecies in the Old Testament. What is the relevance of these to a denunciation of Jerusalem?

A possible explanation appears to be on these lines: the early church regarded itself as the true Israel of God. Thus any enemies of the Truth of Christ whether Jew or Gentile, were regarded as in the same category as the enemies of ancient Israel. In this way there would be considerable fitness in rereading the prophecies about judgment on Israel’s oppressors as being prophecies also of God’s later judgments on the persecutors of the faithful in Christ.
So far as a primary First Century reference goes a choice has to be made.

The Beast answers to the Empire, and the Harlot represents either the Apostasy in Rome the capital, or Judaistic Jerusalem, carried by the Beast and yet ravaged by it. The last suggestion runs fairly smoothly most of the way, and may commend itself to those who insist that the Old Testament allusions must be found room for.

But certain difficulties still remain. [see chapter 35 for a fuller discussion]
There is something grotesquely familiar about the main events in this next vision. The dragon is brought to naught and buried in the abyss, where he is chained and sealed. Nevertheless, after a time he comes forth again and manifests himself to his disciples who are as the sand of the sea for multitude!
In Revelation 12 the prototype of this dragon is fairly evidently the opposition of pagan Rome to the gospel. In the Last Days the counterpart to this great antagonist is probably scientific rationalism, which dominates human thought and activity today as much as the power of Rome ever did. It is the pagan religion of the Twentieth Century, making unlimited claims, working all kinds of signs and lying wonders, accepted in blind faith by millions.
This wretched philosophy will receive a setback at the coming of the Lord, which may at first seem like its final annihilation. The return from heaven of one whose name is called “The Word of God” will be the conclusive answer to the derisive question which the Serpent has put so confidently ever since Eden: “Yea, hath God said?” The fact of the existence of an Almighty God who has been ceaselessly active through all human history will be vindicated by the dramatic events in which His Son is manifest to the world.
A LITERAL THOUSAND YEARS?

This phrase has been almost universally read with a dogmatic literalism which is somewhat surprising in a community which has just as dogmatically insisted that the Book of Revelation is given in a multiplicity of signs and symbols. Perhaps the idea of a Messianic reign of 360,000 years is deemed to be self-confuting.

More positively, the argument from the symbolism of the Genesis week of Creation is considered adequate support: Six thousand years of the rule of man, to be followed by a thousand years of rule by God’s Messiah.
A more probable and more satisfying development of this idea of a week of Creation emphasizes the Covenants of God rather than a rigid chronological timetable. Certainly it is remarkable that God’s Covenants of Promise mark off human history into six epochs:

1. Adam to Noah.
2. Noah to Abraham.
3. Abraham to Moses.
4. Moses to David.
5. David to Jesus.
6. Jesus to Christ (the Second Coming).
7. Christ to God (1 Corinthians 15:28).
Considerations such as these suggest that the “Millenium” of Revelation 20 is an apocalyptic phrase for the Kingdom, rather than a hard-and-fast chronological period\[1\] of precisely one thousand years. At first it will be a Holy Kingdom in a world not fully consecrated.

\[1\] This is not to say that the reign of Christ will not last for precisely one thousand years. There may be a literal fulfilment also, but this should not be insisted on.
REBELLION - WHEN ?

For the sake of continuity, it is desirable to resume this exposition with a consideration here of the ultimate fate of the Dragon and his allies (20:7-10). The section that follows is reprinted from Chapter 13 of “The Last Days” (by this writer)

At the end of the millenial reign of Christ there will be a mighty rebellion against his authority.

Nevertheless there are big difficulties about such a conception. For instance:
The prophecies of lasting peace in the kingdom of Christ are quite explicit: “they shall learn war no more”.

Also, there is to be lasting godliness: “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart” (Jeremiah 3:17). “Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders” (Isaiah 60:18). “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Isaiah 9:7).
A SERIOUS PROBLEM

On the one hand, the text is explicit that “when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations ... Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle.” Apparently nothing could be plainer.

Nevertheless, on the other hand, there are copious Scriptures and various associated problems and difficulties, which seem to rule out the possibility of such a rebellion.

Can it be, then, that Scripture contradicts itself? God forbid!
A possible meaning is now seen to be this: The power of Sin is restrained during the period (seven years? forty years?) of the establishment of the Kingdom. Then comes the great Gog-Magog rebellion.
Ezekiel 38 also can now be read as the precise equivalent of Revelation 20. In an earlier chapter [of this book] Biblical reasons were advanced for applying the Gog-Magog invasion to a time *after* the enthronement of the Messiah. The details of Revelation 20:9 correspond exactly with those in Ezekiel.

This easy harmonization with other prophetic Scriptures provides additional confirmation of the validity of the interpretation proposed. Also, the picture now presented is entirely according to what might be expected. When a war-shattered world has licked its wounds and begins to realize that the Land of Israel is the headquarters of a new Power which now proclaims the hated Jews as the head of the nations and not the tail, there will be no great lapse of time before the authority of this King of the Jews is challenged.
Conclusions:

- Don’t ignore the copious Biblical allusions.
- The date of the writing of Revelation is of extreme importance.
- Double (or even treble) fulfillment, largely because of the principle of Divine Deferment.
- Israel is an unwitting witness, but a witness nonetheless. During the time of Jacob’s trouble, when the nation of Israel is made “politically dead”, there will be a partial repentance of the Jews, which will “trigger” the return of Christ to the earth.
- Within a relatively short period (i.e. – not a literal 1000 years!), the single Gog-Magog rebellion will occur, after which Christ will hand the kingdom over to the Father, who will be all in all.