



Psalm 119.105

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THE BEAST AT THE CENTER OF THE WORLD

How The Prophets and Apostles Understood The End Time Geography

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Contents

The Short Version	2
The Problem	3
The Center Of The World	3
The Genesis Of Geography	5
The New Testament Cosmos	8
The World Of The Revelation	10
Beastland	11
Objections!	12
The Time Of Jacob's Trouble	17
Armageddon Survivors	19
The War Against Mystery Babylon	20
In The World You Have Tribulation	21

The Short Version

Biblical prophecies of redemption have global application, but prophecies of End Time events only refer geographically to the greater Mediterranean world. While many biblical statements about “the earth,” particularly with reference to its creation, clearly designate the whole planet, the same biblical language often refers to a much smaller geographical region, even when speaking of “the whole earth.” It is naïve to read our Bibles as though its every reference to the “world” or to the “whole world” refers to our entire globe.

The Bible speaks of “the earth” in three important and increasingly delimited ways: (1) as the created planet, (2) as the inhabited world known in biblical times, and (3) as *the land* of Israel. The same Hebrew and Greek words can be used in all three cases, and we distinguish their meanings in the biblical text with the help of modifiers in the context. Context usually makes the specific meaning of “the earth” unequivocal, but Scripture presents us with many passages that remain ambiguous with regard to this detail.¹ The ambiguous passages, particularly in eschatological texts, prompted this treatise.



As one reads from Genesis to Revelation, the Hebrew and Greek phrases translated “the earth” or “the world” increasingly refer to the region that surrounds Israel and extends roughly to the boundaries of the ancient Roman Empire. The delimited meaning of “the whole world,” particularly in the prophetic and apocalyptic books, in no way jeopardizes the Bible’s ability to speak of global phenomena when necessary. The equivalence of “the whole world” of Bible prophecy with “the Roman world” of antiquity has direct implications for our understanding of the Great Tribulation and the reign of Antichrist.

¹ For example, does God’s threat to “smite the earth with a curse” (KJV) apply only to the land of Israel, or to a wider region?

The Problem

In the English language, we often use the same word or phrase to mean very different things. As examples, consider these two pairs of statements:

“The communists wanted to take over the *world*.”

“The *world* is laughing at my plaid pants.”

“The astronauts photographed the *earth* from their shuttle.”

“See how rich the *earth* is in my garden.”

The first pair of statements shows us that on one hand *world* can mean “all nations,” but when uttered by an adolescent it can mean “a few of my schoolmates” on the other. We of course multiply the possible meanings of words when we add synonyms. *World* and *earth* can mean the same thing, but with these two words we express four very different meanings in the above examples: *nations*, *schoolmates*, *planet* and *soil*.

Usually, the context of a narrative or conversation will alert us to the intended meaning of a word or phrase, but occasionally we need clarification. The short text message, “My world has gotten very hot,” could mean:

I resent global warming.

I hate Arizona in the summer.

My colleagues have all turned against me.

Our platoon has come under more frequent bombardment.

We see that while the semantic ranges of words and phrases enrich human language, they also challenge our faculties of interpretation, whether we try to decipher an abbreviated text message or attempt to exegete a biblical passage.

Because popular books on eschatology have tended to overlook this semantic reality when interpreting passages about the Great Tribulation and the future career of Antichrist, I offer the following analysis of apostolic geography. To understand how the apostles thought of “the world,” we must study two things at once: (1) the biblical words and phrases used to speak of “the earth” or “the world,” and (2) the Hebraic focus upon the Holy Land.

The Bible’s Israel-Centric Geography

The Center Of The World

God values the earth as the place of man’s habitation, and cares for the land of Israel in particular as the place of His special presence. He taught the Hebrew people to value the land as He did, and so the Israelites honored the land as the realm of God’s redemptive work (Psa. 74.12) and the sphere of their own future hope (Psa 37.29,34; Isa 57.13; 60.21; Eze 47.13,14).² For the Israelite, the eschatological Kingdom would come on the earth and in the land, not up in the heavens (Dan 2.35,44; 7.27; Zec 14.9; Mat 6.10; Rev 5.10). Consequently, the Hebrew word *eretz* (*earth*) appears in the Old Testament³ five times more frequently than the Hebrew word *shamayim* (*heavens*).

2 I follow the three-letter scheme for abbreviating the names of biblical books used by the *BibleWorks* program, and use a period rather than colon as the separator between chapter and verse.

3 I will henceforth abbreviate *Old Testament* as *OT*.

The Hebrew Bible uses the word *eretz* as a general term that can refer to “the planet” (Gen 1.1), “dry ground” as opposed to “the sea” (Gen 1.10), or simply the “ground” (Gen 18.2). However, the biblical text makes *eretz* more specific in two ways. First, when combined with a proper noun, *eretz* can designate a specific country such as “the land of Babylon” (Jer 51.29, *eretz bavel*). Secondly, when combined with the Hebrew article, *ha* (the), it becomes *ha-aretz*, *the land*, and frequently means *The Land* of Israel (Gen 12.1). *Ha-aretz* can also refer to the planet (Isa 40.28) or the ground (Isa 55.10), but as one proceeds through the OT, the phrase more frequently occurs in place of the more explicit *ha-eretz yisrael*, the Land of Israel.⁴ This semantic development parallels the Bible’s progressive revelation regarding the messianic hope and the future apocalypse (with both its judgments and blessings); these eschatological realities have *the Land of Israel* as their setting.⁵

“God has not replaced Israel with the Church...”

The peoples of the old world were infected by what we call “the *omphalos syndrome*,” a condition named for the Greek word for navel.⁶ Whether Babylonians or Greeks, nations of antiquity conceived of their lands and their holiest cities as the navel or center of the world. Israelites thought this way too, but with a crucial difference: the sanction of YHVH! Because of its central importance in God’s redemptive plan, *ha-aretz*, the Land of Israel, *is* the center of the world (Eze 38.12). The rabbis even applied the Septuagint’s rendering of Eze 38.12 to Jerusalem’s Temple Mount, calling it — that’s right — the “navel of the earth.”⁷ At this spot, the rabbis said, God planted the foundation stone around which the rest of the world was formed.⁸ More importantly, the Bible explicitly marks out this geographical region as the Land of Promise, with

Jerusalem as the city where God has chosen to uniquely place His Name in the past *and in the future* (1Ki 8.29; 11.36; Eze 43.7).

God’s declared intent to dwell among the Israelites forever in terrestrial Jerusalem is one of the many problems with a system of belief we call “replacement theology.” Contrary to this theology, God has *not* replaced Israel with the Church, and has *not* renounced His calling upon Israel as a nation (Rom 11.25-29).⁹ God still has vital, redemptive purposes for national Israel, and for that reason the world of the biblical prophets has the territory of

4 Even as “the city” sometimes stands for “the city of Jerusalem” (Eze 7.23).

5 This treatise focuses upon the Land of Israel’s spiritual importance, but let’s not forget its commercial importance as part of the land bridge between three continents.

6 Davis, Kenneth C.; *Don’t Know Much About Geography* (Avon Books, New York, 1992), p. 42.

7 The Septuagint is the ancient Greek translation of the OT often used by the apostles, and is often designated by the Roman numerals LXX for the number of its translators. Regarding the “navel of the earth,” see also Jubilees 8.19.

8 “The Holy One, blessed be He, threw a stone into the sea; from this the world was founded; for it is said: On what are its (the earth’s) foundations sunk, and who has laid its foundation stone? (Job 38.6).” “What did the Holy One, blessed be He? With his right foot he sank the stone to the depths of the primal flood, and made it the keystone of the world, like a man who sets a keystone in an arch. For this reason it is called אֶבֶן שֵׁטֶיִךָ, for there is the navel of the earth, and from there the whole world was extended, and on it stands the temple.” (S. Schulz. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964-c1976. Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin. (G. Kittle, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (Vol. 6, p. 96). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.)

9 If it could be proved that God had renounced Israel as a nation, God’s promise in Jer 31.35-37 would be broken and we could no longer rely upon His word.

that nation at its center.¹⁰

We shall examine “the world” of the OT prophets more closely, but first let’s note the subtleties of metonymy, hyperbole and perspective in the use of the word *eretz* in the OT. Metonymy is a figure of speech that substitutes one noun for a related one. For example, sometimes, “the earth” means *not* the land nor the planet, but *its inhabitants*. In Genesis 11.1,9, the text uses “the whole world” (*kal-haaretz*) as a metonymy to speak of all the inhabitants of the world, namely, the descendants of Noah who would gather on the plain of Shinar and attempt to build a tower to the heavens. Similarly, David used hyperbole, or perhaps spoke from his own limited geographical perspective, when he told Goliath, “This day the Lord will hand you over to me ... and the whole world (*kal-haaretz*) will know that there is a God in Israel” (1Sa 17.46, NIV). Clearly, by “the ... world” David meant not the planet but its inhabitants, and by “whole” he could only mean — from his perspective — all the peoples known to the Israelites of the 10th century BC. Again, with both metonymy and hyperbole the author of 1 Kings wrote that “The whole world (*kal-haaretz*) sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart” (1Ki 10.24, NIV). No expositor of our time would suggest that “the whole world” that sought audience with Solomon included emissaries from North America and Japan. Rather, the whole world that basked in Solomon’s wisdom was the Middle Eastern world surrounding the Holy Land.

We see again that the semantic range of *ha-aretz* in Scripture does not limit us to its meaning of *the whole planet* as in Gen 1.1. While the phrase often does mean *the created world*, the prophets frequently use the same phrase to mean *only* the land of Israel. For example, context determines the first use of the phrase *ha-aretz* by Isaiah, in Isa 1.19, to refer specifically to the land of Israel. This same usage — *ha-aretz* = the land of Israel — occurs over and over again in both major and minor prophets.¹¹ Sometimes, the prophets added the pronoun *this* to clarify that by *ha-aretz* they meant “this land [of Israel]” (literally, “the-land the-this” (Jer 26.20; 32.22), but most often they designated the territory of Israel simply by *ha-aretz*, the land.

The Genesis Of Geography

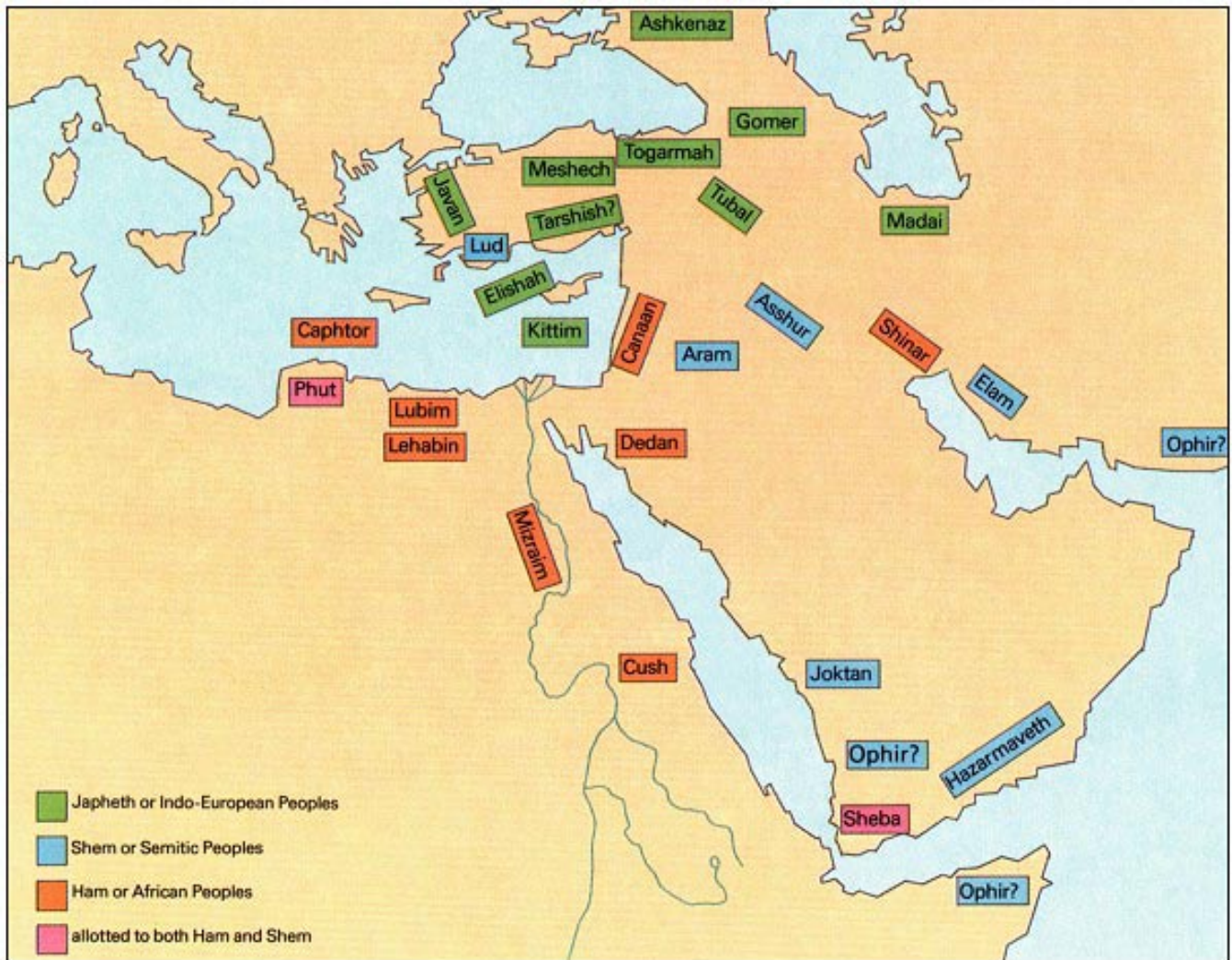
The prophets came by their Israel-centric geography naturally. Perhaps we should say “supernaturally,” because Israelite geography derived directly from the inspired Torah. For the Israelites of biblical times, the starting point for understanding the geopolitical world was the so-called The Table of Nations in Genesis 10. When Israelites thought of “the nations,” they thought specifically of the *finite number* of people groups mentioned in that chapter as descended from the three sons of Noah. “Rabbinic literature often refers to the 70 (or sometimes 72) nations/languages of the world....This figure is derived from counting the names on the Table of Nations.”¹²

10 For example, Daniel’s visions focus only upon four empires that exercised sovereignty over Israel, and ignore other dominions like the Mongolian and Incan that never held sway in the Holy Land.

11 Isa 4.2; 5.8; 6.12; 36.10; Jer 1.14-15,18; 3.9,18; 4.20, 27; 6.12; 7.34; 8.16; 9.12; 10.18; 12.4; 13.13; 15.10; 16.13; 22.12,27; 23.10,15; 24.6; 25.9,11; 26.17,20; 30.3; 34.19; 35.11; 36.29; 37.2,19; 40.7; 44.21; 52.6,16; Eze 6.14; 7.2,7,23,27; 8.12,17; 9.9; 12.19; 15.8; 17.13; 20.15,28,42; 22.29,30; 33.24,28,29; 34.13; 36.18; 36.35; 37.25; 38.16; 39.12; 45.1; 47.13; 48.14; Dan 9.6; Hos 1.2,11; 4.1,3; Joe 1.2,14; 2.1; Amo 3.11; 7.2,10; Mic 7.2; Hag 2.4; Zec 3.9; 7.5; 11.6; 12.12; 13.2,8; 14.10. (underlined references are to verses that use *kal-haaretz* to mean “the land of Israel”).

12 “Geography and the Bible (Early Jewish Geography).” Freedman, David Noel (Ed.); *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Doubleday, New York, 1992).

This Genesis-based geography resulted in a mental picture of the world as contained within the Middle East. The *New Bible Atlas* illustrates this graphically:



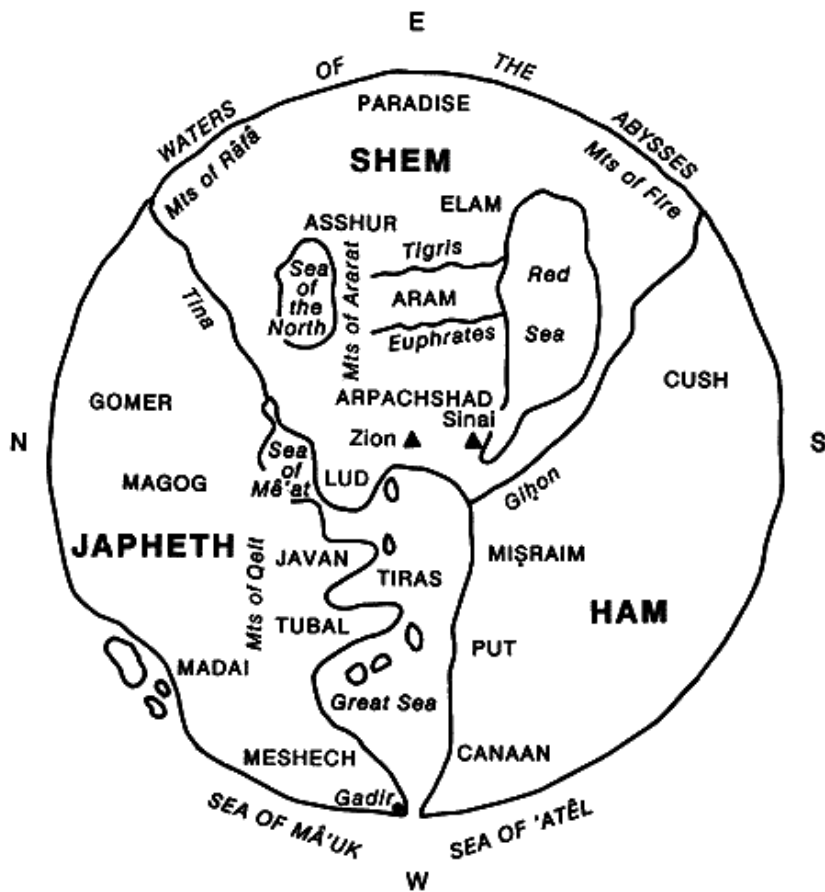
The above map is based on the ‘Table of Nations’ in Gen 10, showing possible connections between the names in the Table and the names of peoples or regions known from extra-biblical inscriptions.¹³

The Expanding Geography Of Empire

The Genesis-based geography of the Israelites continued into the intertestamental period, but expanded westward with the advent of the Greek empire. The fascinating map below derives from a pseudepigraphal book, the Book of Jubilees, chapters 8-10, dating from the 2nd century BC.¹⁴ We must mentally rotate it 90° clockwise to view it with our customary north-south orientation, and then we will see that it pictures a world extending roughly from Persia in the east, past the Greek and Italian peninsulas in the west, to Gibraltar where the Mediterranean Sea empties into the oceanic void. Zion still marks the center of the world, of course.

¹³ *New Bible Atlas* (Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, 1985).

¹⁴ From *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, “Geography and the Bible (Early Jewish Geography)”.



The Greeks envisioned a somewhat larger world, based on their explorations in the first millennium BC. The maps of Anaximander (c. 550 BC) and Ptolemy, and the geographical works of Strabo (66 BC - AD 24), expanded the terrestrial horizons of their students. By the time of Jesus and the apostles, it was possible for a Middle Eastern person to have an awareness of the N Atlantic up to Scandinavia and of Asia as far as the southern coast of China. Though probably preceded by the ships of Solomon, Greeks also explored the E coast of Africa down to what is today Mozambique.¹⁵

Still, for the Israelites, the world remained centered around *ha-aretz*, and only extended to the outer limits of those empires that had conquered Jerusalem. The rule of Rome cemented this perspective.

The New Testament's Roman-World Perspective

The New Testament¹⁶ says a great deal about “the world” in Roman times, and uses three distinct Greek words to do it: *yeē*, *eecoomeneē*, and *kosmos*.¹⁷ Our English New Testaments translate all three of these words as “earth” or “world.”

15 “Scholarship, Greek and Roman: Greek Scholarship.” Evans, Craig A.; *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 2000).

16 I will henceforth abbreviate *New Testament* as *NT*.

17 In Greek script they are γῆ, οἰκουμένη and κόσμος respectively. I follow Professor George Pappageotes’ simple system of transliterating Greek words, based on their sounds in Modern Greek (*Say It In Greek*, Dover Publications, New York, 1956). The word *yeē* while pronounced today with a Y sound, is spelled with the Greek gamma, and is the root of our English words relating to geography.

The New Testament Cosmos

For the English speaker, the Greek word *kosmos*, pronounced with long o's, sounds familiar. Let's analyze this word first. For the NT writers, *kosmos* meant first of all (1) *the created world* (Joh 1.10; Act 17.24; Rom 1.20). The apostles chose this word to use in expressions mentioning "the foundation of the world."¹⁸ However, *kosmos* also served as a more generic term much like our English word, *world*, referring among other things to:

- (2) the whole Jewish community,¹⁹
- (3) the Mediterranean world of apostolic endeavor,²⁰
- (4) the terrestrial realm in contrast to the heavens,²¹
- (5) the general population, society or the human race,²²
- (6) the world's inhabitants whom God loves,²³
- (7) the Gentile peoples,²⁴
- (8) the unbelieving lost, or as yet unredeemed population²⁵
- (9) the realm of the living,²⁶
- (10) the temporal, material realm and its priorities,²⁷
- (11) the ungodly spiritual kingdom or world order.²⁸

None of these listed usages of *kosmos* inherently connote geographic boundaries except for numbers 1, 2 and 3. When referring to the created world, the implied boundaries of *kosmos* were the horizons that separate the earth from the heavens. However, when Jesus told the high priest, "I have spoken openly to the world (*kosmos*)," Joh 18.20, the context implies "the world" of the Palestinian Jewish community, and implies a geographical region no greater than the Holy Land. As Jesus had said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mat 15.24). Similarly, when Paul told the Roman believers, "your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world (*kosmos*)," Rom 1.8, the implied theater of testimony had as its boundaries only the furthest reaches of the current apostolic evangelism. Therefore, "the whole world" for Paul lay between Britain and India and between the Black Sea and Ethiopia.²⁹

The fourth usage listed, "the terrestrial realm," relates closely to the first meaning of *kosmos*, "the created world." However, Jesus used *kosmos* in this fourth sense only to emphasize a vertical distinction between heaven and earth, a distinction which conveys nothing about the territorial extent of the world in view (Joh 8.23; 16.28; 17.11).

18 Mat 13.35; 24.21; 25.34; Luk 11.50; Joh 17.5,24; Eph 1.4; Heb 4.3; 9.26; 1Pe 1.20.

19 Joh 18.20.

20 Rom 1.8; Col 1.6; 1Jo 4.1; 2Jo 1.7.

21 Joh 8.23; 16.28; 17.11.

22 Joh 7.4,7; 12.19; 14.19,22; 16.20; 17.9; Rom 3.6,19; 5.13.

23 Joh 1.29; 3.16; 6.51; cf. Luk 12.30: "For the Gentile world (*kosmos*) eagerly seeks all these things..."

24 Rom 11.12,15.

25 1Co 6.2; 11.32; Eph 2.12; Heb 11.38; 1Jo 2.2; 3.1; 1Jo 5.19.

26 1Co 5.10; 1Ti 6.7.

27 1Co 7.33,34; Gal 6.14; 1Jo 2.15,16.

28 Joh 12.31; 14.17,27; 15.19; 16.33; 17.14,16; 18.36; 1Co 1.20,21; 2.12; 3.19; Gal 4.3; Col 2.8,20; Jam 1.27; 4.4; 1Jo 2.17; 4.5; 5.4,5; Rev 11.15.

29 William Steuart McBirnie, Ph.D. has provided the best research into the travels of the apostles in his book *The Search for the Twelve Apostles* (Tyndale, Wheaton, 1973).

The other usages of *kosmos* are more relational and spiritual than spatial in their connotations. As such, some of them like usage 9 could potentially convey a global meaning, but in their contexts they simply speak of phenomena ubiquitous to the region in view or universal to human experience. In other words, when Paul told Timothy, “we have brought nothing into the world (*kosmos*), so we cannot take anything out of it either,” 1Ti 6.7, his use of *kosmos* (meaning “realm of the living”) conveys nothing about the extent or boundaries of that realm.

The Inhabited World

The apostles used the more specific word *eekomenee* (rhymes with *eeh-oooh-many*) to indicate the inhabited world, that is, the known world of the Roman Empire. We see this usage clearly in the familiar nativity verse, Luk 2.1, where Luke reports that “there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that *all the world* (*eekomeneen*) should be taxed” (KJV). In recognition that “all the world” in this case did not include Brazil or Japan, the CSB renders it “the whole empire” and the NIV interprets it “the entire Roman world.” Likewise in Act 11.28 when Agabus predicted a great famine “throughout all the world (*eekomeneen*)” (KJV), or “all over the world” (NASB), the NLT and NIV correctly interpret “the entire Roman world.” Again, the “world” (*eekomeneen*) that the apostles “turned ... upside down” (Act 17.6) was only the greater Mediterranean world, with a focus in this case upon the regions of Asia Minor and Greece.³⁰

The New Testament Earth

In contrast to how they used *eekomenee*, the NT writers used the Greek word *yeē* generically, even more so than *kosmos*. The Greek word *yeē* can mean:

- (1) earth as contrasted with heaven,³¹
- (2) a land (specified with modifiers), or a general region,³²
- (3) *the* land of Judah or Palestine,³³
- (4) the OT world, i.e., the Middle East,³⁴
- (5) the ground,³⁵
- (6) soil,³⁶
- (7) land as contrasted with sea,³⁷
- (8) the inhabited world (like *eekomenee*),³⁸
- (9) the land (or realm) of the living,³⁹ or
- (10) the ungodly, immoral realm.⁴⁰

30 See also the usage of *eekomeneen* in Act 19.27; 24.5.

31 Mat 5.18; 6.10.19; 16.19; Act 2.19.

32 See Mat 2.6 and Mat 9.26 respectively.

33 Mat 27.45; Luk 4.25; 21.23.

34 Mat 12.42; Rom 9.17.

35 For example, Mat 10.29.

36 Mat 13.5,8.

37 Mat 14.24.

38 Mar 13.27.

39 Act 8.33; 22.22.

40 Col 3.5.

The World Of The Revelation

With this background, we can now intelligently interpret the passages referring to “the world” or “the earth” in the book of Revelation. John uses the Greek word *yeē* 82 times in the Revelation, *eecoomenee* 3 times, and *kosmos* 3 times.

John uses the word *kosmos* in the Revelation when he speaks of our world in the planetary sense. We see this clearly in the two passages that mention the “foundation” or “creation” of the world:

Rev 13.8b ...written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world [*kosmoo*].

Rev 17.8b ...written in the book of life from the creation of the world [*kosmoo*]...

This informs our interpretation of Rev 11.15. We see that Christ’s future reign *will be* global, i.e., over the whole *planet*:

Rev 11.15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world [*kosmoo*] has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.”

In contrast to John’s use of the word *kosmos*, he uses the word *eecoomenee* as other NT writers do to indicate the known, habitable world of the first century. As we’ve already seen, the *eecoomenee* was roughly equivalent to the territory of the Roman Empire. Rev 3.10a confirms this usage. Jesus said to the church in first-century Philadelphia, “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world [*eecoomenee*]...” The “hour of testing” Jesus mentioned in this verse refers to the Great Tribulation of Dan 12.1, called “that hour” in the Septuagint, when “many must be tested” (Dan 12.10). The geographical context which Daniel paints for this great tribulation is *the Middle East*. Daniel describes the End Time conflicts leading up to the Tribulation as occurring primarily between the King of the North (= the Seleucid or Syrian king) and the King of the South (= the Ptolemaic or Egyptian king). The territories of these two kings were and will be the easternmost quadrants of the splintered Greek empire. While the Great Tribulation will most certainly embroil the entire Mediterranean world, for Daniel the “hour of testing” would come upon Israel and upon the nations directly surrounding it. Thus, in the allusion to Daniel’s vision made by Jesus in Rev 3.10, we must once again understand the “whole world (*eecoomenee*)” as referring not to the entire globe, but to the Roman world that had swallowed up the territories of the preceding Greek empire.

“For Daniel the hour of testing would come upon Israel and the nations directly surrounding it.”

The Revelation also uses *eecoomenee* in 12.9a to speak of the vast but delimited Roman setting for Satan’s activities:

The great dragon was thrown down — that serpent of old called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world [*eecoomenee*] astray.

Satan deceives people *all over our planet*, but this is not John’s emphasis here. In this passage, the apostle reminds his fellow Christian sufferers that the reason they face widespread persecution is because *their* whole world, i.e., all the Roman Empire, has been subjected to Satan’s intense campaign of deception, even as it will be in the End Time.

John’s final use of *eecoomenee* occurs in Rev 16.14 where he describes the assembling of “the kings of the *whole world*” to the place called Armageddon (Rev 16.16, NIV). These kings are assembled for “the battle on the great day of *God, the almighty*.” John describes this same battle further in Rev 19 as the apocalyptic battle won by “the Word of God” (Rev 19.13) who expresses the “wrath of *God, the almighty*” (Rev 19.15). The victorious “Word of God” is none other than the “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Rev 19.16). Therefore, while not explicit, it appears that “the kings of the whole world” in Rev 16.14 are synonymous with, or at least primarily consist of, **the ten kings** of Rev 17.12-14 who “will wage war against the ... Lord of lords and King of kings.” This points us once again to the visions of Daniel which preface and inform those of the Revelation. It was Daniel who first introduced the ten kings of the apocalypse (Dan 7.24), and he was explicitly told by his angelic interpreter that these kings would arise “out of [the fourth beastly] kingdom.” Expositors universally acknowledge Daniel’s fourth kingdom as the empire of Rome.

We see then, that when John in the Revelation speaks of the “whole world” in terms of the *eecoomenee*, we can consistently and biblically understand this as indicating the peoples of that Mediterranean world once ruled by the Caesars of Rome. *Eecoomenee* in the Revelation does not refer to the whole planet Earth as we know it today, nor to all its rulers and peoples.

Beastland

However, John most often used a third word, *yee*, when he spoke of “the earth” in the Revelation. This is the word the apostle used when he wrote that “the whole earth [*yee*] was amazed *and followed* after the beast” (Rev 13.3, NASB), and “all who dwell on the earth [*yee*] will worship him” (Rev 13.8). It is primarily on the basis of these passages that the notion of a coming one-world government of Antichrist has taken hold in the evangelical church. At least since the 1970s we’ve endured a barrage of one-world-government speculation about such things as the United Nations taking over the world, or a super computer in Europe being used to control every individual on the planet, or microchips being inserted under people’s skin which will make the whole world’s currency obsolete. Now, warnings fill the worldwide web, telling us that globalism will open the door for Antichrist to rule the planet.⁴¹ But when John said that “the whole earth [*yee*] ... *followed* after the beast,” would his first-century

41 The fact is that we already have a global economy, thanks to global transportation and communications systems, and this is both a blessing and a curse: we enjoy wider international markets and more often suffer the economic repercussions of distant political upheavals. But our present global economy does not presage a global hegemony of Antichrist that will bring the mark of the Beast to America. Booming international commerce is something entirely different than the unification of all the disparate cultures of the globe under the authority of a single, coercive government.

readers have understood this to predict a *planetary* rule? Certainly not. The “whole earth” (*yee*) that John and his first readers envisioned was the greater Mediterranean world.

Rev. 7.1 demonstrates that John in the Revelation describes a delimited geographical area with the word *yee*:

After this I saw four angels standing at *the four corners of the earth [yee]*, holding back the four winds of the earth [yee], so that no wind should blow on the earth [yee] or on the sea or on any tree.

Biblical expressions mentioning the “four corners of the earth” or the “four winds of heaven” are at once all-inclusive and geographically delimited. They are all-inclusive for they speak of the whole world (all the way to its four corners) of the original audiences’ experience, but geographically delimited for the same reason: the whole world of the original audiences’ experience was only the greater Mediterranean world. This passage, Rev 7.1, shows us this. Notice that John mentions only “the sea” (singular) as contained within “the four corners of the earth.” The landscape John sees borders or perhaps surrounds the Mediterranean Sea, but does not extend to other great seas nor oceans.

Furthermore, there is a literalness to the expression “four corners”: the earth (*yee*) that John sees is literally demarcated by four corners. Commenting on this verse, Moffat writes, “The earth is a rectangular plane or disc on which John looks down from heaven’s dome ...” John indeed looks down upon a delimited region of the earth, even if that region covers most of what we now call a hemisphere. What John sees is a portion of the planet that can be defined within four points, whether compass points on the perimeter of a circle, or corners of a rectangle. Biblically, the phrase “four corners” always describes the literal corners of a more or less rectangular structure or space. The Bible does not really use this phrase figuratively.⁴² Rather, when biblical writers mention the “four corners of the earth,” they envision a two-dimensional geographical region, having boundaries marked off at four definite corners. Isaiah 11.10-12 illustrates this mind-set:

“...And He will lift up a standard for the nations, And will assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the **four corners of the earth.**”

The preceding context of Isaiah 11 defines the region in view as stretching north to Assyria, south to Ethiopia, east to Elam and Babylonia, and west to “the islands and coast-land of the Mediterranean, together with the whole of the insular continent of Europe.”⁴³ In other words, the vast region delimited by “the four corners of the earth” in Isaiah is a rectangle.

The terrestrial expanse contained within the four corners of Isaiah’s *eretz* and John’s *yee* is roughly equivalent to that territory once contained within the Roman Empire. *This is the world the Revelation has in view.*

Objections!

The only time anyone has ever walked out of my class as I taught eschatology, was when I made the statement that Antichrist’s rule would *not* be global. I thought that my listeners

42 That the phrase “four corners of the earth” is not figurative, does not imply that it carries no connotations. Easton says that “The ‘four corners of the earth’ in Isaiah 11.12 and Ezekiel 7.2 denotes the whole land.” This is correct, as long as we understand “the whole land” to be a limited region that can be literally defined by corners on a map. Nor does the phrase “four corners of the earth” imply that the Hebrews thought Earth was flat (see Isa 40.22).

43 Delitzsch, F.; *Isaiah* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1973), p. 289.

would receive this as good news, but unfortunately the idea that Antichrist will rule a universal, one-world government has so taken hold on the American evangelical imagination that for some it is almost a tenet. I say *unfortunately*, because the doctrine that Antichrist will rule the entire globe has bred confusion in biblical eschatology and fueled other unbiblical beliefs.

Nevertheless, the debate continues. If anyone suggests that the empire of Antichrist will have limited boundaries, they should expect objections from other students of eschatology. Some will argue that the Bible mentions modern nations, and that therefore we should understand Antichrist's rule as global. The arguments hinge on only several phrases, so let's consider them.

“The doctrine that Antichrist will rule the entire globe has... fueled other unbiblical beliefs.”

Didn't The Biblical Writers Envision Nations Of The New World?

The Ends Of The Earth

Sometimes the Bible mentions nations from “the ends of the earth”; wouldn't this include North and South America? No, the Bible describes Israel's *familiar enemies* as coming from the “ends of the earth” (*miqtseh ha-aretz*). For example, Deu 28.49 and Isa 5.26 prophesy of Assyria or Babylon as a nation coming “from the end of the earth.” Deu 28.64 likewise describes the nations of Israel's prophesied exile (again, Assyria and Babylon) as nations stretching “from one end of the earth to the other.” Similarly, Deu 13.6 uses this designation to describe the near and distant nations whose false gods might entice Israel (in this verse, *miqtseh ha-aretz* is very Israel-centric).

The Distant Islands

How about those lands to which the Bible refers as “distant islands”? Could they refer to the lands of the western hemisphere? The Hebrew word *iy* (plural *iyiyim*) in the OT translates to either “islands” or “coastlands.” Gen 10.5 connects the “islands/coastlands of the nations” with the sons of Japhet. “These Japhetic peoples ... seem to represent the nations furthest removed from Israel geographically. [Some of them] reflect Israel's western horizon, in Asia Minor and the Greek Islands.”⁴⁴ As the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* explains,

“...most of the OT's references to islands occur in Isaiah, where they form an element of the prophet's universal vision. The islands are an image of the far-flung and little-known nations across the Mediterranean world. God will reach out his hand to the dispersed remnant of his people, scattered among the nations and even the isles, and gather them (Isa 11.11)... For Isaiah the islands are images of the ends of the earth, borders of the known world that nevertheless fall under the sovereignty of Yahweh.”⁴⁵

When we read prophecy about God sending emissaries “to the distant coastlands” (Isa 66.19), or “the distant coastlands of the nations” bowing to God (Zep 2.11), we Americans

44 Wenham, Gordon J.; *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 1: Genesis 1-15* (Word Books, Dallas, 1987).

45 “Island.” Ryken, Leland (Ed.); *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1998).



Image by NASA and USGS

feel tempted to see a reference to our own geographical region. However, the furthest islands and coastlands mentioned in scripture are *the islands of “the sea”* (Isa 11.11, or “of the west,” CSB), that is, of the Mediterranean.

All The Nations Of The Earth

Well, surely when the Bible speaks of “all the nations of the earth,” that would include the United States, right? Wrong! When Jewish authors spoke of “all the nations” or “all the kingdoms” of the earth (Isa 10.14; 37.16; Jer 33.9; 34.17), they generally had the Table of Nations of Gen 10 in mind. As we’ve already noted, “Rabbinic literature often refers to the 70 (or sometimes 72) nations/languages of the world.... This figure is derived from counting the names on the Table of Nations.”⁴⁶ We can generally assume, then, that “all the nations of the world,” means all the nations surrounding Israel roughly from Persia to Spain, and from Ethiopia to Scythia. However, context will sometimes indicate that “all the earth’s kingdoms” is a hyperbolic phrase, referring to an even smaller set of nations. For example, Jer 34.17 uses the phrase “all the kingdoms of the earth” to refer only to those nations near enough to Israel to react to her vicissitudes.

As we move into the NT era, the phrase “all the nations of the world,” or “under

⁴⁶ “Geography and the Bible (Early Jewish Geography).” Freedman, David Noel (Ed.); *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Doubleday, New York, 1992).

heaven” takes on an additional connotation. Since the Jewish diaspora had grown by this time, “all the nations under heaven” more often speaks in the NT of those far flung nations to which Jews have migrated or been exiled. Note this usage in Acts 2:

Acts 2.5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, **from every nation under heaven.** 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and marveled, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 “And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? 9 “**Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs** — we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.”

“Biblical geography constrains us to a specific part of our planet.”

For first-century Jews, “every nation under heaven” only included those nations within a geographical region that “stretches from Persia in the E to Italy in the W, from the Black Sea in the N to Egypt in the S.”⁴⁷

Once again, biblical geography constrains us to a specific *part* of our planet. The more thoroughly we study the geographical terms and phrases of Scripture, the more confirmation we find that the biblical writers understood the “whole world” to be the greater Mediterranean world, centered around the land of Israel.

Didn't The Prophets Prophecy Beyond Their Understanding?

Okay, granted that Isaiah and John had a limited geographical perspective, but the omniscient Holy Spirit obviously knew about the Western Hemisphere and the future development of the New World. Couldn't the Holy Spirit have spoken through the prophets about future nations unknown at the time?

Certainly, but the Holy Spirit did not pervert language as He spoke through the prophets. The Spirit did not say *red* when He meant *blue*, nor *Greece* when He meant *Japan*. Had God revealed something to the prophets about the New World, they would have spoken about “regions *beyond* the distant coastlands.” *The fact that they could have but didn't, assures us that Bible prophecies only speak of the Old World.* To our disappointment, the Bible nowhere uses terms specifically and unequivocally referring to New World nations.

How Then Does The Bible Speak Of Global Realities?

But doesn't the Bible speak repeatedly of the whole world in a global sense? After all, didn't “God so love the world,” meaning everybody? Did Jesus only send His disciples “into all the Mediterranean world”? And another thing, did Noah's flood only inundate the Middle East?

These are appropriate questions. If the Bible is the worthy metanarrative we believe it is, it must speak of global realities — and it does!⁴⁸ When Scripture intends us to think

47 Ibid.

48 A metanarrative is “an overarching, all-embracing story of humankind” which serves as the basis for a culture's worldview.

beyond the greater Mediterranean world, it will amplify the meaning of generic terms for “the world” with phrases about totality, the biosphere or all humanity.

The Bible Indicates Global Phenomena By Expressions Of Totality

For example, Genesis 1.1 employs a figure of speech known as a *merismus* or *merism*.⁴⁹ This figure of speech indicates the totality of something by mentioning its extremities or outer limits, just as we might say a person was “drenched from head to foot” to mean that their entire body got wet. In this same way, the Bible uses the phrase “from Dan to Beersheba,” mentioning Israel’s northern and southern extremities to indicate the entirety of the nation’s territory (Jdg 20.1; 1Sa 3.20; etc.). It’s by this figure of speech that we’re told that God created the whole planet, not just some part of it: “the heavens and the earth” indicates the totality of everything created, including the heavens, the earth and anything in between (cf. Acts 17.24). The merism assures us that creation did not just include the ground, or the Middle East, but the whole globe.

The Bible Indicates Global Phenomena In Terms Of The Biosphere

Another way the Bible speaks of global realities is in terms of the biosphere. For example, we who interpret the Flood of Noah as a global event do so primarily for two reasons: (1) the Bible describes the flood as covering the highest mountains, and (2) the Bible states clearly that *every breathing thing* outside of the ark perished (“all flesh,” Gen 6.13,17; “every living creature,” Gen 7.4).

God told Noah He would destroy “the earth” (Gen 6.13), but we do not assume the global nature of the flood from this statement alone. None of the verses stating that the flood covered *the earth*, taken by themselves, would have told us that the flood was global. As we’ve seen, *ha-aretz* has a generic and flexible meaning. If the Bible only said that the flood had covered *ha-aretz*, we could very reasonably interpret it as meaning that the waters had only covered *the land* of Mesopotamia — a view entertained by liberal interpreters.

However, the statements about the universal destruction of the non-oceanic *biosphere* (Gen 6.13,17,21) do tell us the flood was global. These passages describe a globe-drowning water level, and the meaning is not limited by one’s understanding of the shape or extent of the earth. Whether the early readers of Genesis conceived of the world as spherical or flat the message was the same: everywhere there was earth it was fatally covered by water.

On a more positive note, the OT wonderfully employs a reference to the biosphere to describe the universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Joel 2.28 used the same phrase that appears in the Genesis flood narrative, “I will pour out my Spirit upon *all flesh*.” *All flesh* is the most general and unabashedly inclusive designation possible, that assures us of the global availability of the Holy Spirit’s power to all God’s people wherever they may live (cf. Act 2.39).

The Bible Indicates Global Phenomena By Referring To The Set of All Persons

We have a similar basis for understanding the Great Commission as sending us to the entire globe. Had Jesus only said “go into all the world” (Greek *kosmos*, Mar 16.15a), we might wonder if he meant just the whole Roman World. However, since Jesus added, “and preach

⁴⁹ See Copan, Paul and Craig, William Lane; *Creation Out Of Nothing* (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2004, p. 43).

“The global application of the Great Commission does not depend upon geographical designations.”

the gospel to every creature (Greek *kteesees*)” (Mar 16.15b, NKJV) we know that the intended scope of the Great Commission is global.⁵⁰

Of course, geographical references are not our primary basis for understanding the global application of the Great Commission. That understanding follows logically from the biblical offer of salvation to all persons who will believe (Joh 3.15,16; 6.40; Act 13.39; Rom 1.16; cf. Act 2.21; Rom 10.13). Since both the OT and the NT make it explicit that God in Christ offers salvation to both Jew and Gentile, and since the Bible teaches that all human beings have sinned and desperately need salvation, we do not depend upon geographical designations in the text to realize that the Great Commission compels us to evangelize *our whole world*.

We see then that when the Bible speaks geographically, it normally indicates a delimited region, but when speaking soteriologically, i.e., regarding salvation, Scripture has no problem applying redemptive principles to all mankind. Since, therefore, no fatal objection negates the Bible’s delimited geography, the burden of proof falls upon those who propose that the rule of Antichrist and the theater of the Great Tribulation will extend beyond the greater Mediterranean world. We have seen that unless context indicates otherwise, any biblical mention of the land, the world or even the whole world is apt to have the Land of Israel as its primary referent. If a wider region is in view, it will be the world known to Israel in biblical times, and with Israel as its spiritual center and geographical crossroads. Therefore, it is not enough for eschatological “globalists” to quote Rev 13.3 and 8, “the whole earth [yee] was amazed *and followed* after the beast,” and “all who dwell on the earth [yee] will worship him.” The proponent of a global rule of Antichrist must provide evidence that when John said “earth [yee]” in these passages he meant a much wider region than he normally did.

Confirmation Of A Geographically Delimited Theater For The Great Tribulation And Reign Of Antichrist

The Time Of Jacob’s Trouble

Speaking of evidence, is there anything besides semantics to support the idea of a geographically delimited Tribulation? Yes! First of all, Jeremiah calls the Tribulation “the time of *Jacob’s* trouble” (Jer 30.7). Secondly, Daniel confirms the geographical centrality of Israel in the Tribulation under Antichrist. “At the time of the end,” Daniel says, the king of

50 The Greek word *kteesees* can mean “creation” or “creature.” The translation “creature” is preferred for Mark 16.15 since the gospel is clearly preached to persons rather than to the impersonal elements of the world. However, when the text speaks geographically, we should translate *kteesees* with “creation.” In Col 1.23 (NASB), Paul tells the Colossians that the gospel had already been “proclaimed **in** all creation (*kteesees*) under heaven.” While the topic is again the preaching of the gospel, Paul uses the preposition *in* to make it clear that he is thinking geographically or cross-culturally at this point. Interestingly, when the phrase “all creation” is used geographically, it still refers to only the Roman world!

the North who “will exalt himself above every god” will “go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many,” and “will pitch his royal tents between the [Mediterranean] sea and the beautiful holy mountain [of Zion]” (Dan 11.36,40,44,45). It’s “*at that time,*” Daniel says, when the Antichrist is encamped at the edge of the Judean highlands below Jerusalem, that “there will be a time of distress such as has never occurred since nations came into being until that time” (Dan 12.1). *Daniel’s people*, those “found written in the book will escape,” but the Great Tribulation begins and ends in Israel!

In Luk 21.21-27, Jesus describes the coming Roman destruction of AD 70, but he presents it as a typological event prefiguring the later invasion of Antichrist that precipitates the apocalypse. Jesus said:

Luk 21.21 “Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city; 22 because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 “Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people...

We cannot miss the Judean focus in these verses. Those in Judea must flee because it is a time of wrath upon “this people.” Zechariah maintains this same Judean focus in his vivid description of the apocalypse in Zec 12-14. Frankly, novels and movies that feature the



The Jewish-Palestinian settlement Oasis of Peace, situated near where Daniel’s “Little Horn” will encamp between the Mediterranean Sea and Jerusalem. Photo by Howard Shippin, 2002. Released to the public domain.

United States or Western Europe as the setting for the major events of the Great Tribulation betray an Anglo-centric cultural bias.

Jordan's Escape

I do not suggest that the rule of Antichrist and the rigors of the Great Tribulation occur exclusively within the borders of Israel. Many nations will become embroiled in Antichrist's military bid for hegemony, and many nations will join him in the final attack upon Jerusalem. However, the territories of present day Jordan will escape Antichrist's rule (Dan 11.41)! Clearly, if even one nation or region successfully resists Antichrist's sovereignty, the Beast's rule cannot be global.

The Refuge Of The Israelite Woman

Also, God will shelter the woman of Rev 12 in the wilderness for the whole three and a half years of the Tribulation. Not even the Dragon himself can reach her there, so certainly neither can the Beast nor other human persecutors whom the Dragon empowers. The Revelation does not make the identity of this woman explicit, but the symbolism surrounding her strongly suggests that she represents an Israelite entity, and a large group rather than an individual (Rev 12.1,2).⁵¹ The wilderness where she finds protection could lie within the territory of Jordan, already mentioned as exempted from Antichrist's domination, but with all the Revelation's OT allusions, Rev 12.6 and 14 probably point us to *the* wilderness of Israel's earlier testing, the wilderness of their Exodus wanderings. We can probably subtract both Jordan and the Sinai peninsula from the map of Antichrist's rule, but there's more!

Armageddon Survivors

As part of their teaching about the apocalyptic Day of YHVH, the prophets assure us that many people will survive the apocalypse, not only in Jerusalem (Joe 2.32) but in far away nations (Isa 66.16-19). Those who survive in the distant nations will not have heard of God's fame and glory. These non-Christian Gentiles will turn to the Lord *after* His coming. Even from those nations that had joined Antichrist in attacking Jerusalem, some will live and come to faith (Zec 14.16-19). All these survivors will enter the Millennium as mortals, and will travel to Jerusalem in recognition of God's blessing upon Israel (Zec 8.20-23). These are the nations over whom the raptured Church will reign on the earth (Rev 2.26,27; 5.10; 20.4-6; cf. Isa 32.1-5).

Let's recognize the implications of the fact that mortals will survive the apocalypse. These people, Jews and Gentiles, will survive Armageddon as unbelievers who will repent

“Let's recognize the implications of the fact that mortals will survive the apocalypse.”

51 Were she an individual, the woman of Rev 12 could only be Mary the mother of Jesus, but a futurist interpretation of this passage precludes this identification. If she is not the *individual* who gave birth to the child who will rule all nations (Rev 12.5), then she must be the nation, or a subset of it, who gave birth to Messiah.

only when the Lord comes and they see Him (Zec 12.10-13.1). However, the fact that they repent and find salvation proves that they will have not accepted the mark of the Beast, for God eternally condemns all who receive that mark (Rev 14.9-11). So, besides those who take the mark of the beast and the believers who refuse it (Rev 20.4), a third group of people will have neither accepted nor refused the mark required for buying and selling within the Beast's domains. This means that Antichrist's economic dominion will *not* be global.

The War Against Mystery Babylon

The vision of Mystery Babylon further confirms the limited reach of Antichrist's sovereignty. This vision in Revelation chapters 17 and 18, tells us that there will be two End Time federations in the Mediterranean world, not one. The vision is more complex than we can fully analyze in this article, but suffice it to say that Mystery Babylon, also called the Great Prostitute, first rides the Beast and then is destroyed by him. In other words, the Great Prostitute at first exerts control over the Beast and over many nations (Rev 17.15). Later, the Beast, resenting her control and seeking her power for himself, allies with ten kings to destroy her (Rev 17.16). As long as the Great Prostitute exists, she precludes the geographic totality of the Beast's rule.

Since the time of the Reformation, Protestant interpreters have seen Mystery Babylon — the Great Prostitute — as a religious entity, usually the Roman Catholic church. This interpretation allows the idea that the respective sovereignties of the Great Prostitute and of the Beast overlap geographically, for the authority of the one is seen as religious and that of the other as political. This understanding in turn permits the interpretation that the Beast, Antichrist, rules the entire Mediterranean and only later in his career turns upon the religious system long present *within* his domains. However, this is to put the horse on top of the rider. The Great Prostitute is not at first under the Beast's sovereignty, but the Beast is under the Prostitute's. Furthermore, a careful reading of the Revelation, unbiased by Protestant antipathy toward Catholicism, tells us that neither the Great Prostitute nor the Beast in Rev 17 and 18 represent overtly religious systems, but both represent *competing commercial federations*.

God will use the commercial power of the East (the Beast and 10 kings) to destroy the commercial power of the West (Mystery Babylon the Great Prostitute), but this very fact demonstrates the delimited character of Antichrist's geopolitical domain. One could argue that once the Beast and his ten kings destroy the Great Prostitute, the Beast's rule becomes universal, but the flow of the Revelation argues against this. Granted, the visions of the Revelation do not all proceed in a chronologically sequential manner, but after the fall of Mystery Babylon the text announces the Marriage of the Lamb, the return of the King of Kings, the destruction of the Beast and his armies, the binding of Satan and the resurrection of the saints. There is no hint that the Beast overcomes the Great Prostitute early enough in his career to inherit her domains. Rather, as soon as the Beast accomplishes God's purposes against Mystery Babylon, God calls the Beast to account (Rev 17.17). Nowhere does Scripture indicate that Daniel's Little Horn of the East, the Revelation's Beast, will ever take over the westernmost domains of the old Roman Empire, the territory of the Great Prostitute. Far less does Scripture imply that the Beast, the Antichrist, will take over the entire planet.

In The World You Will Have Tribulation

None of this negates the fact that persecution and tribulation is normal to Christian experience and can flare up anywhere and at anytime in our world (John 16.33). Believers will perish in the coming Great Tribulation (Rev 20.4), and believers are being persecuted to the death right now (please visit www.persecution.org). However, the good news is that nothing about the coming Tribulation and career of Antichrist precludes the Church from zealously pursuing spiritual and cultural transformation throughout our world *right up to the end of the age*.

Dispensationalist teachers have done us a great disservice whenever they have implied that the earth is a “late great planet.” Urging the Church to adopt a “lifeboat” or “fortress” mentality has resulted in sequestering us from our local culture.⁵² Proclaiming that the world, and sometimes even the Church, is already beyond redemption is a “doctrine of demons” invented to keep us from our mandate of cultural transformation.⁵³

Integral to this deception is the idea that “the earth is the Antichrist’s and everything in it” (contra Psa 24.1). Yes, Scripture does teach a final apostasy under Antichrist before the Lord’s return (2Th 2.3). However, contrary to the pop eschatology of our day, our study of biblical geography has shown us that the rebellion under Antichrist will directly embroil only a limited region of the Mediterranean world. The Great Tribulation will undoubtedly have economic, political and ecological repercussions for our entire planet, but only the peoples of the Roman world will ever be threatened with the mark of the Beast. Therefore, let’s throw off the defeatist idea that the worldwide Church will be swallowed up in the end-time apostasy! Whose spirit do we really think birthed such an idea? The Beast will make his stand at the center of the world, but he will never swallow it up nor capture its heart.

The Church is not going down; Christ is building her up (Mat 16.18). She will not be polluted, but prepared (Rev 21.2). Rather than battenning down the hatches and prioritizing self-protection, let the Church advance God’s kingdom in every sphere possible. Some of the nations where the Church brings cultural transformation today may well become strategic countries of refuge in the coming time of Jacob’s trouble. Ω

“The Beast will make his stand at the center of the world, but he will never... capture its heart.”

52 Dwight L. Moody, who himself survived a shipwreck, is often quoted as saying, “I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said to me, ‘Moody, save all you can.’” I honor Moody as a great evangelist and share his desire to save all the people we can; the problem has to do with Moody’s heirs looking “upon this world as a wrecked vessel.”

53 Please see my treatise on “The Cityward Mind of God,” available gratis at www.tmin.org.