

An Evaluation of the Muslim Antichrist Theory

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The question as to whether or not the Antichrist will be a Jew or a Gentile has been hotly debated by Bible prophecy experts ever since the revival of the study of end time Bible prophecy some 400 years ago. In recent years the debate has taken on a new flavor by some who are obviously impressed with the resurgence of Islam worldwide. They have developed a whole new scheme of end time events in which one of the most prominent features is a Muslim Antichrist.

For those of you interested in pursuing this topic in greater detail, I would recommend that you consult two books and a website. The website is called "The Beast from the East." It can be found at www.beastfromtheeast.org. The two books are *Antichrist: Islam's Awaited Messiah* by Joel Richardson and *God's War on Terror: Islam, Prophecy and the Bible* by Walid Shoebat with Joel Richardson.

Richardson and Shoebat

Richardson's book, which was published in 2006 is considered to be the cornerstone of the whole movement.¹ It was picked up by WorldNetDaily and republished by them in 2009 under the title *The Islamic Antichrist*.² WorldNetDaily has promoted the book vigorously ever since. The book features ten endorsements by various pastors, professors, and heads of ministries. Not a one is a Bible prophecy teacher or recognized expert on Bible prophecy.

Joel Richardson is an excellent writer who knows how to make a persuasive argument, particularly if the reader knows nothing about Bible prophecy.

Walid Shoebat's book is more detailed and is much longer (516 pages to Richardson's 276 pages).³ As most of you know, Walid Shoebat is an outstanding speaker on the topic of Islamic terrorism. But he is not a writer. His writing is very tedious and difficult to follow. Even worse, the organizational format of the book is chaotic and confusing. I can say without hesitation that his book is one of the most difficult ones I have ever tried to wade through in my lifetime of reading. To me, it was like trying to read and make sense out of the Quran!

Although most of you are familiar with Walid, for those who are not, let me point out that he claims to be a former Palestinian terrorist.⁴ I doubt that few, if any of you, know anything about Joel Richardson. And it is difficult to find out anything about him because that is not his real name. He reveals that fact in the introduction of his book and then states that he uses a pen name due to fear of Muslim threats on his life.⁵

That revelation really turned me off because I believe that people who speak out publicly on political, social or theological issues should be willing to put their name to their words. It is one thing to use a pen name in writing fiction, it is another to resort to a pseudonym when writing non-fiction. It prevents the reader from being able to evaluate the credentials of the writer.

After reading Joel's book, I contacted him by email and told him I saw no validity to his reason for refusing to divulge his true identity. I pointed out that I had found a website of his on the Internet and that on the site he provides his speaking schedule. "If someone wanted to kill you," I wrote, "all I they would have to do is go to one of your speaking engagements and shoot you."

That prompted him to give me a call. He said it was not so much his life he was trying to protect as it was the lives of his family members. I told him I still could not understand his hesitancy

in revealing his identity. I pointed out that I have written extensively on Islam, that I have posted the articles on the Internet, and that I have made statements far more inflammatory than anything I had read in his book. “But,” he asked, “has your life been threatened?” I told him no. “Well,” he said, “mine has been.” Then, for some unknown reason, he suddenly told me his real name and asked me to keep it secret!

I took advantage of his call to ask him a question that had puzzled me ever since I had read Walid Shoebat’s book. I said: “Joel you are an excellent writer. Shoebat’s book is very poorly written, yet your name is on the cover. What was your contribution to the book? Did you do the research?” Joel responded by saying that he had written most of the book, but that when he got the manuscript back from Walid, “it look like it had been put through a blender.” He said he tried to repair the damage, but again it was returned to him in a disheveled state. He said that at that point he gave up. He then added that Walid has now hired a professional editor to try to salvage the book.

Background Information About Islam

Before I review the rather bizarre theories about the end times that are contained in these books, I think it would be wise to present some background material about Islam. I realize that many of you are well informed about Islam, but I have found that even those who have studied Islam rarely know anything about Islamic eschatology.

As all of you know, the holiest book of Islam is the Qu’ran, which supposedly contains statements of the Islamic god, Allah, which were given to his prophet, Mohammad, by the Angel Gabriel.

Mohammad was illiterate, so scribes wrote down what he said over a 23 year period of time, until his death in 632 AD. Much of the content of the Qu’ran was delivered to Mohammad while he was experiencing seizures that even his first wife considered to be demonic in nature. The scribes began compiling the Qu’ran shortly before Mohammad’s death. The Qu’ran is about the length of the New Testament.

The second most sacred book of Islam is called the Hadith. It is mainly a collection of Mohammad’s sayings that were not considered to be revelations directly from Allah. The Hadith also contains stories about things Mohammad did.

I think it is very important to note that the Hadith was compiled in the 9th Century, about two hundred years after the death of Mohammad. There were several compilations made during that time, but the most authoritative is considered to be the one by al-Bukhari. He collected a total of over 400,000 sayings of Mohammad and stories about him. These came from the writings of both friends and family members. Many came from Mohammad’s 15 wives. Al-Bukhari verified 7,000 as “genuine.” These became the al-Bukhari Hadith, one of several versions of the Hadith that have been produced by other compilers.⁶

Strangely, the Qu’ran contains very little prophecy about the end times. It mainly affirms that history will consummate with what’s called “the Hour.” This is when the resurrection and judgment will take place. So, the Hadith, containing hearsay statements by Mohammed, is the major source of Islamic eschatology.

An Islamic Puzzle

It is extremely difficult to piece together the Islamic concept of the end times. The information is greatly disjointed, being spread throughout the Hadith. Also, unlike Christian prophecy scholars, Islamic students of prophecy have not attempted to systematize their concepts into charts and diagrams which show how all the events are related to each other.

The most helpful source I was able to discover was a book by Dr. Samuel Shahid called *The Last Trumpet*.⁷ He attempts to show that the major concepts of Islamic eschatology were borrowed from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Christian New Testament, and the concepts of Zoroastrianism. The author is the director of Islamic studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas.

Dr. Shahid proves conclusively that Mohammad secured many of his ideas orally from Christians, Jews, and followers of Zoroastrianism.⁸ In the process he got many of the stories and principles confused. For example, the Hadith states that the mother of Jesus was Mary, the sister of Moses!

Dr. Shahid also points out that the Hadith was compiled at a time when Islamic authorities knew much more about the Bible and Christian traditions and literature. Thus, many Hadith passages were manufactured and embellished and were heavily influenced by Christian sources.

Complicating matters is the fact that Hadith passages concerning the end times are highly contradictory, and thus it is difficult to nail down a lot of specifics. Only a general outline of end time events can be compiled.

The Islamic Signs of the Times

One very interesting aspect of Islamic eschatology is that it presents signs of the times for people to watch for. Like Christianity, Islam teaches that only God knows the exact timing of end time events. But there are signs to watch for that will indicate the season of the end times, and these signs fall into two categories: major and minor.

Most of the minor signs have to do with general trends in society. The major signs relate to specific prophesied events that will occur between the time of the appearance of the Antichrist and “the Hour” of resurrection and judgment. The listings of both the minor and major signs vary greatly.

The Minor Signs

Let me give you some examples of minor signs. As I do so, you will see how they mirror the signs prophesied in the Bible.⁹

- 1) An increase in ignorance concerning the fundamentals of the faith.
- 2) Increasing instability of the faith (Muslims becoming Christians overnight).
- 3) An increase in false prophets.
- 4) An increase in apostasy (as evidenced by Muslims following false teachers).

- 5) An increase in religious pretentiousness (as in the building of luxurious mosques).
- 6) An acceptance of astrology.
- 7) An increase in alcohol use and illicit sexual relations.
- 8) An increase in natural calamities.
- 9) An increase in political corruption.
- 10) People longing for death (due to the increase in calamities and wickedness).
- 11) Increasing paganism. (Muslims will increasingly follow the life-styles of non-Muslims.)
- 12) An increase in war and civil wars (even wars among Muslims).

There are many other minor signs that are peculiar to Islam, most of which are fantastical in nature. Here are some examples:¹⁰

- 1) Women will outnumber men by 50 to 1. (No reason is given, but it is likely due to the expectation of many jihad martyrs in the end times.)
- 2) The Arabs must conquer Constantinople. (The city, now called Istanbul, was conquered by Muslims in the 15th Century, but not by Arabs.)
- 3) A people will emerge who eat with their tongues like cows.
- 4) Time will contract, with a year being like a month and a month like a week.
- 5) Wild beasts will speak to men.
- 6) The Euphrates River will uncover a mountain of gold.

The Major Signs

The major signs pointing to “the Hour” are all critical events that are part of the end time sequence of events, beginning with the appearance of the Antichrist. Muslim scholars generally do not try to present a strict chronological order of what is going to ultimately transpire, but the order presented below is representative:

- 1) The appearance of the Antichrist, called the Dajjal.
- 2) The rising of the Islamic Messiah, called the Mahdi.
- 3) The Return of Jesus.
- 4) The Reign of Jesus.
- 5) The Day of Resurrection, called “The Hour.”

6) The Day of Judgment.

There are many other end time events mentioned in the Hadith, but these are the most important. Let's look for a moment at each of these key events in their chronological order.

End Time Specifics

1) The Appearance of the Antichrist, called the Dajjal. He will be a Jew born in Iran to parents who have been childless for 30 years. He will have only one eye. He will claim to be a prophet, and then he will claim to be divine. He will deceive many by his godliness and his miracles. He will go forth with an army of 70,000 Jews and 70,000 Tartars, and he will conquer all the world except Mecca and Medina. His reign will last for 40 days during a time when one day will be like a year. Some passages of the Hadith indicate that he will have the word "Infidel" written on his forehead. His reign is characterized by cruelty and deceit. He has a militaristic mentality. His purpose is to be deified, worshiped, and to reign.¹¹

2) The rising of the Islamic Messiah, called the Mahdi. He will be a descendant of Mohamed who will come on a white horse. He will deliver the world from the reign of the Dajjal. In the process he will conquer Israel and slaughter the Jews. He will establish a new Islamic world headquarters in Jerusalem, and he will rule for 7 years (and possibly 8 or 9 years, depending upon differing Hadith passages). His rule will end with his death.¹²

3) The Return of Jesus. It is not clear at what point in the career of the Mahdi Jesus will return. Some believe it will be as soon as the Mahdi is able to organize his Muslim army to oppose the Dajjal's Jewish army. Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives and then head to Damascus where he will meet up with the Mahdi and submit himself to him as a subordinate. At some point in the Mahdi's wars Jesus himself will be the one who will kill the Dajjal and see to the annihilation of the Jews. Jesus will then serve as an Islamic evangelist, proclaiming Islam as the one and only true religion, and he will establish Islamic Shariah law throughout the entire earth.¹³

4) The Reign of Jesus. Upon the death of the Mahdi, Jesus will assume control of the Islamic worldwide kingdom. He will reign for 40 years. He will be a just ruler. Every harmful beast will be domesticated. There will be abundant rain and plentiful harvests. All weapons of war will be converted into tools of agriculture, and there will be world wide peace. (All of this imagery is taken, of course, from the book of Isaiah.) Jesus will go to Mecca regularly to perform rituals of pilgrimage. Twenty-one years into His reign, He will marry and beget children. Nineteen years later He will die. He will be buried in Medina next to Mohammad where He will await the Day of Resurrection like all other humans who have died.¹⁴

5) The Day of Resurrection, called "The Hour." There is only one resurrection in Islamic eschatology. The saved and the unsaved are resurrected at the same time. Mohammad will be the first human being to be resurrected. All those resurrected will be naked. Abraham will be the first person to be clothed by Allah. He will be seated facing Allah's throne. Mohammad will then be clothed and will be seated at the right hand of Allah.¹⁵

6) The Day of Judgment. At this point Allah descends from Heaven to judge all humanity. Allah will weigh the good and bad deeds of each person. This is called the concept of "the Scale." The deeds of all people will be weighed in Allah's scales to determine their eternal destiny.¹⁶

The Richardson Thesis

Now, with this brief background in Islamic eschatology, let's take a look at the thesis that Richardson presents in his book.

He argues that the Mahdi will be the Antichrist of the Bible and that the Muslim Jesus will be the False Prophet of the Bible who serves the Antichrist and his purposes. Both will be destroyed when the true Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation.¹⁷ The true Jesus will be viewed by Muslims as the Dajjal, or the Islamic Antichrist.

As proof of his thesis, he points repeatedly to the "amazing similarities" and "amazing parallels" between the biblical Antichrist and the Muslim Mahdi.¹⁸ He points out that both are pictured as an unparalleled political, military and religious leader who will come on a white horse and who will team up with a false prophet to conquer the world, and institute a one world religion.

The Bible says the Antichrist will change the laws and the times. Richardson asserts that the Mahdi would do just that, instituting Sharia law and imposing the Islamic calendar.¹⁹ Likewise, the Bible says the Antichrist will behead those who resist him, and Richardson spends an entire chapter emphasizing that execution by beheading is one of the cardinal characteristics of Islam.²⁰

Richardson even points out that there is a Hadith passage that states the Mahdi will make a covenant with the Romans through a Jewish intermediary and that the covenant will be for a period of seven years, just like the seven year covenant the Bible says the Antichrist will make with the Jewish people.²¹

The Similarities Between Islamic and Biblical Prophecies

I personally find nothing startling or surprising about these similarities. As I have already pointed out, Mohammed got most of his ideas concerning the end times from discussions with Christians and Jews. And these ideas were later embellished by his followers who were even better acquainted with biblical prophecies concerning the end times. Furthermore, the one who inspired Mohammed and his followers, namely Satan, was an expert on Bible prophecy!

Nor am I impressed with the similarities he points out. It is only natural that the Mahdi, like the Antichrist, should be viewed as a great leader who will conquer the world and institute a one-world religion. The assertion that the Mahdi will return on a white horse is, of course, borrowed directly from Scripture, as is the idea of the False Prophet.

As for the laws and the calendar, whoever the Antichrist may be, it is certain he will change the laws by instituting a totalitarian system devoid of individual rights, and he will most certainly change the calendar because the calendar followed by most of the world dates from the birth of Jesus.

The point about beheading is flimsy evidence at best. Beheading is not a unique characteristic of Islam. It was one of the stellar characteristics of the French Revolution, and is just the type of horror the Antichrist would institute, regardless of his nationality or religion.

And as for the seven year covenant, the Mahdi makes it with the Romans (which Richardson says should be interpreted as Christians). It is not a covenant with the Jewish people, as the Bible prophesies.

Richardson's End Time Scenario

According to Richardson's end time scenario, the Mahdi and the Muslim Jesus (the False Prophet) will unite the whole Islamic world, reviving the Ottoman Empire.²² They will conquer Israel and establish the headquarters of the Caliphate in Jerusalem. Their rule will come to an end with the Battle of Gog and Magog that is portrayed in Ezekiel 38 and 39, which will occur at the end of the Tribulation, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. And, again, when Jesus returns, the Islamic world will view the true Jesus as the Dajjal, or the Islamic Antichrist.

One glaring problem with this scenario is that Islamic eschatology teaches that the Dajjal, the Antichrist, will come first, and his appearance will signal that the Mahdi is about to arise.²³ Richardson's scenario puts the appearance of the Islamic Dajjal at the end of the Tribulation instead of at the beginning. And so, I ask, "If some person arrives on the scene claiming to be the Mahdi before the appearance of the Dajjal, why would he be accepted by Muslims?"

Contradictory Concepts of the Mahdi

Nor is it likely that any person claiming to be the Mahdi would be immediately accepted by the whole Islamic world. The reason is that the concept of the Mahdi is one of the key elements in Islamic eschatology that separates the Shi'ites from the Sunnis.²⁴

The Sunni branch of Islam believes that Mohammed's successor, Abu Bakr, selected in 632, rightfully took his place as the leader of the Muslim world. The Shi'ites, on the other hand, believe that Mohammed's successor should have been a blood relative and not just a person selected on the basis of Islamic piety or politics. Abu Bakr was Mohammed's father-in-law. The Shi'ites favored Ali ibn Abi, the prophet's cousin and son-in-law. Ali ultimately became the fourth successor of Mohammed, reigning from 656 to 661.

After the death of Ali, his heirs were overcome by a military leader named Mu'awiya Umayyad, who proceeded to establish the Umayyad Dynasty centered in Damascus. Shi'ites refused to recognize his leadership since he was not a blood relative of Mohammed. They looked, instead, to the surviving heirs of Ali for their leadership.

The blood line of Mohammed through Ali became extinct in 873 A.D. when the last Shi'ite Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, who had no brothers, disappeared within days of inheriting the title at the age of four. The Shi'ites refused to accept that he had died or been killed, preferring to believe that he was merely "hidden" and would one day reappear. This event is referred to in Shi'ite theology as "The Great Occultation" (the hiding).²⁵ This boy was the Shi'ite's Twelfth Imam, and he is the one they expect to return as the Islamic Mahdi. The Sunnis strongly reject this concept, particularly since many Shi'ites teach that the Twelfth Imam will declare that the Shi'ite version of Islam is the orthodox version.

Islamic historian Timothy Furnish has summed up the difference between the two groups over the Mahdi by observing: "For Shi'ites he has already been here, and will return from hiding; for Sunnis he has yet to emerge into history: a comeback versus a coming out, if you will."²⁶

The Mahdi being heralded by Ahmadinejad is the Twelfth Imam. If he were to suddenly appear, he would be rejected by Sunnis, and the Sunnis constitute 90% of all the Muslims in the world.

God's Covenant with Ishmael

Another problem with Muslim unity is that the whole idea is contradictory to one of the promises God made in His covenant with Ishmael (Genesis 16:10-12). In that covenant, in which God promised that the descendants of Ishmael would be greatly multiplied and would be given all the land east of Israel, God also stated that the Arab peoples would be like wild donkeys for they would always be in conflict with each other.

As Jacob Prasch has pointed out in his writings on this subject, this aspect of the covenant with Ishmael has been manifested throughout history to this day through the internecine wars between the Arabs.²⁷ They fought each other for centuries in pre-Islamic Arabia. Mohammed believed that he could unite them through the advocacy of a monotheistic religion, but he failed. Sunis and Shi'ites have hated and warred with each other since the 8th Century. Consider the modern day war between Iran and Iraq, and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, with the intent of conquering all the Middle East.

Prasch sums up the problem of Arab unity by declaring, "The curse of Genesis prevents Islamic unity from developing a united empire over-running the West."²⁸ He further observes: ". . . the greatest Islamic Empire was strategically dominated by Ottoman Turks who subjugated the Arab Moslems as serfs and slaves . . ."²⁹

The Extent of the Antichrist's Kingdom

One of the most peculiar aspects of Richardson's end time scenario is his insistence that the Mahdi's revived Ottoman Empire will be a regional one and not a worldwide one as is claimed in both Islamic and biblical prophecy.

In order to sustain this totally revisionist interpretation of end time prophecy, Richardson goes to great pains to deny the clear meaning of Revelation 13:7 which reads as follows: "And it was given to him [the Antichrist] to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him."

Let me ask you a question: What more would God have to say to convince us that the Antichrist will have a worldwide kingdom?

Yet, Richardson tries to dismiss this verse as nothing but hyperbole. He does so by quoting Daniel 5:18-19 where it says that Nebuchadnezzar, was feared by "all peoples and nations and men of every language." Richardson then asks, "Did every single nation in the earth fear Nebuchadnezzar?"³⁰ My answer would be, "Yes, all nations that were aware of him." That's all the statement means in its context.

Richardson then quotes 1 Kings 4:34 which says that men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, "sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom." He then asks derisively, "Was Solomon's wisdom so impressive that not a single king in all the earth failed to hear of it?"³¹ That's not what the verse says. Read it again. It says the kings who had heard of his wisdom sent representatives — not all kings.

Context determines meaning, and the context of Revelation 13:7 clearly means that the Antichrist kingdom will be worldwide, not just a regional coalition of Muslim nations. His attempt to limit the kingdom of the Antichrist to a regional area is reminiscent of the attempt of Genesis

revisionists to limit the worldwide flood of Noah to the Middle East.

Furthermore, the worldwide nature of the Antichrist's kingdom is affirmed in Daniel 7:23 where the prophet states that the Antichrist will "devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it." Richardson ignores this verse.

The Revived Ottoman Empire

Richardson's claim that the final Gentile empire of the Antichrist will be the revived Ottoman Empire forces him to deal with Nebuchadnezzar's vision of Gentile kingdoms, recorded in Daniel 2:31-45. The traditional interpretation of that vision is that its succession of empires ends with the Roman and that it is the Roman Empire that will be revived in the end times and provide the platform from which the Antichrist will arise.

To accommodate his thesis, Richardson argues that the Roman Empire continued to exist in the form of the Byzantine Empire until 1453 when it fell to the Ottoman Empire. It is therefore the Ottoman Empire, which ceased to exist in 1923, that will be resurrected in the end times, and not the Roman Empire, and thus the Antichrist will arise out of the revived Ottoman Empire.

The first problem with this interpretation is that it denies the historical fact that the Roman Empire ceased to exist in 476 with the collapse of Rome. What was left of the empire in the East, which is referred to by modern historians as the Byzantine Empire, was Roman in name only, reminiscent of The Holy Roman Empire that existed in the Germanic areas of Europe from 800 to 1806, a political entity that Voltaire characterized as "neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire."³²

Another problem is that Nebuchadnezzar's dream does not provide for the insertion of the Ottoman Empire. The head of gold stood for the Babylonian Empire; the chest of silver for the Medo-Persian Empire; the thighs of bronze for the Greek Empire; and the legs of iron for the Roman Empire. The feet of iron mixed with clay represent the final Gentile empire out of which the Antichrist will arise. The traditional interpretation has been that the feet stand for a revival of the Roman Empire.

But if the Ottoman Empire is to be inserted into the picture following the Roman, where is the symbol of it? Do the feet represent both the Ottoman Empire and its end time revival? There just are not enough body parts to provide symbols for both the Ottoman Empire and its revival.

The same problem occurs when you consider Revelation 17:10-11. In this passage the Apostle John is told that there are seven kings or empires to be considered in world history and that "five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, it must remain for a little while. And the beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction."

At that point in history, the five fallen would have been Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. The one existing would have been the Roman. The one to come would be the revival of the Roman, out of which the eighth and final empire, the worldwide kingdom of the Antichrist would arise.

If you insert the Ottoman Empire into this list, where does it fit? If it is the seventh, then its revival would be the eighth, and there is no place left for the final worldwide empire of the Antichrist. I suspect this is the reason that Richardson insists that the revival of the Ottoman Empire

will be the final empire out of which the Antichrist will arise, and that it will not develop into a worldwide empire, as both Islamic and biblical prophecies specify. There just are not enough empires mentioned in Revelation 17 to include the Ottoman Empire, its resurrection, and its evolution into the final worldwide empire of the Antichrist.

Another problem with Richardson's Ottoman Empire thesis is that he completely ignores the prophecy in Daniel 9:26 that says the Antichrist will arise out of the people who will destroy the Jewish Temple. It was the Romans who destroyed the Temple in 70 A.D. and it is from the Romans that the Antichrist must come. To me, it is just incredible that Richardson would totally ignore this prophecy.

The War of Gog and Magog

The final problem with Richardson's thesis that I would like to mention concerns his interpretation of the War of Gog and Magog that is pictured in Ezekiel 38 and 39.

Richardson denies that the war described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 will be led by Russia or that Russia will even have a part in it. Of course, he has to take this position since he argues that the invading force will be the revived Ottoman Empire, which Russia was never a part of.

He says that the only reason people have ever included Russia as part of the invading armies is because Ezekiel says the invasion will be led by the prince of Rosh, and that the word, Rosh, sounds like Russia.³³ This assertion is, of course, patently false. Many authors, including Mark Hitchcock and Ron Rhodes have gone to great pains to present historical evidence that identifies Russia with Rosh.³⁴

The passage in question, Ezekiel 38:2, says the invasion will be led by "Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal . . ." It is important to note that both Josephus in the First Century and Jerome in the Fifth Century identified Magog with Scythian tribes in Russia.³⁵

Richardson favors Turkey as the leader of the coalition.³⁶ Yet, Ezekiel 38 clearly states that the invasion will be led by the Prince of Rosh coming from "the remote parts of the north" or "the uttermost parts of the north" (Ezekiel 38:15). There is no way that Turkey could be considered a nation located in "the remote parts of the north." Again, this is a verse that Richardson completely ignores.

Richardson never reveals when he believes the Ezekiel 38 invasion of Israel will occur, but it must be at the end of the Tribulation since the invading army will be the army of the Mahdi (the Antichrist) and will be destroyed by God. Thus, he must equate the battle of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 and 39 with the Battle of Armageddon. But these are not the same battles.

The battle of Gog and Magog involves Russia and certain specified allies who come against Israel either at the beginning of the Tribulation or, most likely, before it begins. One of the tip-offs as to the timing of this invasion is the statement that following the defeat of the invading armies, the Jews will spend seven years burning the leftover weapons (Ezekiel 39:9).

Many have equated this seven years with the Tribulation, thus putting the invasion at the start of that period of time. But we know that in the middle of the Tribulation the Antichrist is going to turn on the Jews and try to annihilate them, causing them to flee the nation (Revelation 12:13-17). This will make it impossible for them to continue the burning of weapons during the last half of that terrible period. So, most likely, the battle will occur before the Tribulation begins.

In contrast, the Battle of Armageddon occurs at the end of the Tribulation. And there really is no battle at all. The armies of the Antichrist are destroyed in an instant when Jesus returns to the Mount of Olives and speaks a supernatural word, causing their flesh to drop from their bodies (Zechariah 14:1-13). In the Gog and Magog battle, the invading armies will be destroyed on the “mountains of Israel” (Ezekiel 39:4), not in the Valley of Armageddon, and they will be destroyed by pestilence, hailstones, fire and brimstone (Ezekiel 38:22).

Another difference can be found in the motivation of the wars. The War of Gog and Magog results from God “putting hooks in the jaws” of the invading nations and dragging them down against Israel to capture spoil and to seize plunder” (Ezekiel 38:4 & 12). In contrast, the armies of the world that will be assembled at Armageddon will be gathered by demon spirits (Revelation 16:13-16).

Another serious problem with placing the Gog and Magog war at the end of the Tribulation is that Ezekiel 38 says the invasion will occur at a time when Israel is living in peace with unwalled cities (Ezekiel 38:11). That will not be the case at the end of the Tribulation. The land of Israel will be in absolute chaos at that time.

A Final Argument

Richardson wraps up his arguments with the observation that the Antichrist must be a Muslim because Islam is the most perfect incarnation of the antichrist spirit.³⁷ He makes this assertion because Islam denies the Trinity, rejects Jesus as the Son of God, and repudiates the crucifixion of Jesus, arguing that someone else was killed in His place.

I do not agree with this observation. To me, the most perfect incarnation of the antichrist spirit is, and always has been, Humanism in all its various forms. Islam points people toward a god, even though he is a false god. Humanism encourages people to worship Man. God is denied. Man is exalted. And I believe the rejection of God, together with the exaltation of self, is the ultimate antichrist spirit.

Anticipating Objections

Richardson concludes his book by dealing with what he calls “potential problems with his thesis.” He mentions only two.

The first is the fact that the Bible states that in the middle of the Tribulation, when the Antichrist goes to Jerusalem and desecrates the Temple, he will declare himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Richardson says this is possibly the strongest argument that can be made against his thesis since it is inconceivable that any Muslim would ever claim to be God. Nonetheless, he argues that the Muslim Antichrist will become so self-absorbed that he will do so, and he claims that when it happens, the Muslims will be too embarrassed to confess that they have been deceived!³⁸

I’m sorry, but I find this very hard to believe. To me, that is like saying that the Muslims would be willing to agree that night is day and day is night. There is a limit to deception. A person would have to cease being a Muslim in order to believe that any man could be God.

I believe the bizarre behavior of the Antichrist described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, where it states that he will proclaim himself to be God, rules out any possibility that the Antichrist might prove to be a Muslim.

An equally important fact that I think rules out the possibility of a Muslim Antichrist is that prophecy states the Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel that will guarantee the nation's security (Daniel 9:27 and Isaiah 28:14-22). I think it is preposterous to believe that Israel would ever trust its security to a Muslim leader or that a Muslim leader would be interested in guaranteeing the safety of Israel.

The second problem Richardson anticipates relates to his scrambling of the Islamic order of end time events by placing the appearance of the Islamic Dajjal at the end of the Tribulation instead of at the beginning. Incredibly, he says that the Muslims will simply overlook this problem due to the inconsistency of Hadith traditions. As he puts it, once the Mahdi has conquered Israel and taken Jerusalem, the Muslims will accept him regardless of the fact that the Dajjal was supposed to come first.³⁹

But again, this overlooks the fact that according to biblical prophecy, the first thing the Antichrist will do is make a peace treaty with Israel, not defeat Israel. And I would contend that any Muslim leader who would make peace with Israel would be rejected by the Muslim world, just as was the case with Anwar Sadat, the President of Egypt, when he signed a peace treaty with Israel. He was assassinated by Islamic fundamentalists almost immediately.

There are other serious problems with Richardson's scenario that he does not acknowledge. How, for example, does he explain the miraculous resurrection of the Roman Empire in the form of the European Union? It's a development that prophecy experts have been telling us to watch for, and those alerts go back several hundred years. Is the revival of the Roman Empire just an accident of history? I think not. I believe that, just as the Bible prophesies, it is going to serve as the platform for the ascension of the Antichrist.

Another problem Richardson must deal with is the worldwide destruction that Revelation describes in chapters 6-9. Those chapters reveal that one-half of the world's population is going to die during the first half of the Tribulation. Is this going to happen as a result of a regional conflict? Or, is all this just more "biblical hyperbole"?

Two Questions

When I finished reading Richardson's book, I found myself wanting to ask him two questions. The first was what is he going to do with Psalm 83?⁴⁰ This psalm portrays an attack on Israel by a Muslim coalition consisting of Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Gaza, Saudi Arabia and Assyria (Syria). The Bible clearly teaches that God will protect Israel against all such attacks in the end times (Zechariah 12:6).

The outcome of this war most likely is detailed in Zephaniah 2:4-5. These verses indicate that the attacking nations will be devastated by Israel. It is during this war that Damascus, the capital of Syria, will probably be destroyed completely, never to be rebuilt again (Isaiah 17:1-14 and Jeremiah 49:23-27). That is most likely why Syria is not mentioned in Ezekiel 38 as one of the Russian allies.

The outcome of the Psalm 83 war is what will most likely produce peace for Israel, the peace that it is prophesied to be enjoying when Russia and its allies decide to launch the Ezekiel 38 invasion.

The war of Psalm 83 followed by the war of Ezekiel 38 will result in the annihilation of nearly all the armies of the Muslim nations of the Middle East, and these wars are most likely going to

occur before the Tribulation begins! Thus, if the Antichrist is a Muslim who is going to rule a Muslim empire in the Middle East during the Tribulation, then he is going to rule over an empire that has been reduced to ashes!

The second question Richardson left hanging relates to the timing of the Rapture. He never mentions the event, leaving the clear impression that he identifies it with the Second Coming of Jesus.

Shoebat's Book

The book published in 2008 by Walid Shoebat with the aid of Joel Richardson, adds very little to the debate, but it does clarify some issues.

With regard to the Rapture, Shoebat dismisses it out of hand as being of no importance. Specifically, he writes: "Whether the Rapture is a Pre-Tribulation, Mid, or Post-Tribulation event is irrelevant . . ." He then adds, "I do daily pray for a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, and always prepare for a Post. I am of neither position."⁴¹

Regarding the timing of the war of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 and 39, he confirms that he and Richardson believe it will occur at the end of the Tribulation and that it is, in fact, the same as the Battle of Armageddon.⁴²

The meaning of Psalm 83 is specifically addressed.⁴³ Shoebat attempts to prove that the war described in this psalm between Israel and its adjacent Arab neighbors is one that will occur at the end of the Tribulation, after the Second Coming of the Messiah. In other words it will be a part of the Armageddon Campaign that will include the Battle of Gog and Magog. Thus, he argues it will be a conflict between forces led by Jesus and those led by the Mahdi. I was astonished to read this interpretation because I have studied this psalm in detail, and there is not one verse in it that even implies that Jesus will be present on this earth when the battle occurs.

So, I looked for Shoebat's scriptural proof of Jesus' presence. Believe it or not, the proof he provided was quotes from two other psalms:

- 1) Psalm 82:8 — "Arise, O God, judge the earth!"
- 2) Psalm 80:14 — "Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts."

Neither one of the psalms are related to Psalm 83. Both are prayers by Asaph for the Lord to return to the earth to bring justice. Neither one states that the Messiah is on the earth.

This kind of incredibly sloppy proof-texting can be found throughout Shoebat's book. Whenever he wants to make a point, he goes fishing for a verse. When he finds it, he reels it in and applies it to the issue under consideration, whether it is related to that issue or not.

Another example can be found in the second argument he gives for placing the Psalm 83 war at the end of the Tribulation. He says it must occur at that time because it is a war triggered by the Antichrist's desecration of the Jewish Temple — a temple that will be rebuilt during the first half of the Tribulation. And what is his evidence? He quotes Psalm 79:1 — "O God, the nations have invaded Your inheritance; they have defiled Your holy temple."⁴⁴ Once again, he tries to prove a point about Psalm 83 by quoting a verse from an unrelated psalm that is most likely describing the destruction of Solomon's Temple.

Strained Logic

Shoebat displays some tortuous logic throughout his book. A good example can be found in his attempt to explain away the meaning of Daniel 9:26, a passage Richardson avoided dealing with in his book. The plain sense meaning of this passage is that the Antichrist will come from the people who will destroy the Temple.

Shoebat tries to dispel this meaning by arguing that the Roman legions that carried out the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD were composed primarily of Syrians and Turks. He therefore concludes that the Antichrist will arise from the Syrians or Turks and will be a Muslim.⁴⁵

On the contrary, Bible prophecy scholar Sean Osborne has proved that the Roman legions were composed of Roman soldiers, recruited from what is present day Italy, and were led by Roman officers of historical renown. Local Syrians and Arabs were recruited as auxiliaries to take care of menial tasks, and had, at best, logistical support roles. "They were in no conceivable manner representative of 'the people of the prince who shall come.'"⁴⁶

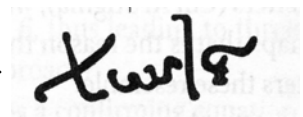
But Shoebat's argument here is really grasping at straws in the wind! For one thing, the ethnicity of the soldiers is irrelevant because the Romans never used mercenaries. All their soldiers were citizens of Rome. But it would not have made any difference if the legions had been composed of Australian Aborigines, for it was the Roman government that decided to destroy Jerusalem, it was the Roman government that gave the orders, and it was Roman generals who carried out the destruction. Rome was the rod of God's judgment and it is from the Roman people that the Antichrist will arise.

Strange Points

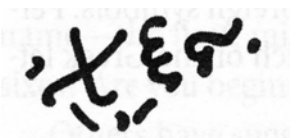
At times Shoebat gets absolutely weird. For example, he says that one day while he was examining the Codex Vaticanus Greek text of the Book of Revelation, he noticed "that the supposed Greek letters (Chi Xi Sigma) that are used to translate to the number 666 very much resemble the most common creed of Islam . . . written in Arabic."⁴⁷

The lower case Greek letters for Chi Xi Sigma are as follows: 

The condensed Islamic creed, shown to the right, literally means (reading right to left): "In the Name of Allah," followed by the symbol of crossed swords.



He then observes that the Greek text for 666 (shown to the right) looks like the Islamic creed except that the word, "Allah," is presented vertically, with the crossed swords to the left of it.



He then asks, "Is it possible that the Apostle John, while receiving his divine revelation, did not see Greek letters, but instead was supernaturally shown Arabic words and an Islamic symbol, which he then faithfully recorded?"⁴⁸

A Recent Revision

While I was working on this presentation, Joel Richardson came out with a new explanation of Daniel 9:26, undoubtedly in response to the withering criticism that the previous explanation had

received.⁴⁹

He begins his new interpretation by pointing out that the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD did not fall within the first 483 years of Daniel's 490 year prophecy. Rather, it occurred 40 years after the close of that period. Thus, he surmises that the prophecy concerning the Temple's destruction most likely points to the last seven years of Daniel's prophecy — the period of the Tribulation when he believes the Temple will be destroyed by the Mahdi.

He admits that the Scriptures do not specifically state that the Temple will be destroyed during the Tribulation, but he says the destruction is implied in Revelation 11:1-2 where it states that the Gentiles "will trample on the holy city for 42 months." He also points to Luke 21:20 where it is stated that Jerusalem will experience "desolation," but that verse clearly applies to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. ⁵⁰

So Richardson has gone from completely ignoring Daniel 9:26 to arguing that it was not the Romans who destroyed the Temple in 70 AD to now stating that the prophecy probably relates to a future destruction that is yet to occur during the Tribulation.

I think what we have here is a perfect illustration of a desperate attempt to manipulate both Bible prophecy and Islamic prophecy to conform to a pre-conceived end time scenario.

Even a cursory look at Daniel 9:26 reveals that the destruction of the Temple that it prophesies, occurs *after* the Messiah has been "cut off," that is, after the end of the first 483 years and *before* the beginning of the final Tribulation period of seven years.

The European Union

Another recent article by Richardson gloats over internal problems being experienced by the European Union. It was titled "EU Collapse: Doom for popular Bible prophecies?"⁵¹ Richardson observed: "Many staunch adherents to the Euro-centered end-time theory are slowly awakening to the possibility that soon there may not even be a European Union at all." He goes so far as to compare the prediction of an end-time revival of the Roman Empire to the Watchtower's proclamation that Jesus would return in 1975! I found this comparison to be downright ludicrous considering the fact that Jesus did not return in 1975 but the Roman Empire has been revived, as predicted, in the form of the European Union.

Further, I found this attack to be amusing, because I consider the internal problems of the European Union to be a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. After all, what was the symbol of the revived Roman Empire in Nebuchadnezzar's dream? It was the feet mixed of iron and clay. Such a mixture is inherently unstable, and I have always interpreted it to mean that the revived Roman Empire of the end times would be a loose confederation of states before being galvanized into a powerful empire by the Antichrist.

Muslim Triumph or Defeat?

Rather than a great Muslim triumph under the leadership of a Muslim Antichrist, I believe the most likely end-time scenario for the Muslim world will be one of overwhelming defeat, first in the regional wars of Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38 and then in the world wars of Revelation 6, 8 and 9. Muslim power in the Middle East will be dealt a terrible blow in the wars of Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38, both of which I think will most likely occur before the beginning of the Tribulation.

But the biggest portion of the Muslim world lives outside the Middle East. The largest Muslim nations today are Indonesia, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. It is these nations that I believe will offer the strongest resistance to the European Antichrist, and I believe they will be destroyed in the world war the Antichrist will launch, a war that begins as a conventional one in Revelation 6 but which appears to eventually morph into a nuclear one in Revelation 8 and 9, resulting in the destruction of one half's the earth's population.

Concluding Thoughts

Overall, I think what Richardson and Shoebat are presenting as a possible end time scenario of events is a hodgepodge of ideas drawn from Bible prophecy, Islamic prophecy, and their own rich imaginations. What they present is not true to either Bible prophecy or Islamic prophecy.

Two final observations. First, beware of Lone Ranger interpretations of prophecy that are not widely shared. God does not reveal the meaning of prophecy only to a person or two. 2 Peter 1:20 says, "no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation." Private and peculiar interpretations like the recent "Pre-Wrath Rapture," usually make a big initial splash and then fade quickly when submitted to critical review.

Second, I think the current rush to identify the Antichrist as a Muslim is a classic example of newspaper exegesis — of reading the news headlines into the Bible rather than letting the Bible speak for itself. It would be good to keep in mind a comment made by the great Bible teacher Ray Stedman: "What determines the future is what God has done in the past and what He has promised to do in the future. So don't look horizontally at current events."⁵²

Notes:

- 1) Joel Richardson, *Antichrist: Islam's Awaited Messiah*, (Enumclaw, WA: WinePress Publishing, 2006), 276 pages.
- 2) Joel Richardson, *The Islamic Antichrist: The Shocking Truth About the Real Nature of the Beast*, (Los Angeles, CA: WND Books, 2009), 271 pages.
- 3) Walid Shoebat, *God's War on Terror: Islam, Prophecy and the Bible*, (Lafayette, LA: Top Executive Media, 2008), 512 pages.
- 4) Walid Shoebat, *Why I Left Jihad*, (Lafayette, LA: Top Executive Media, 2005), 412 pages. Shoebat's claim to have been a former Palestinian terrorist has been hotly disputed in several articles that can be found on the Internet.
- 5) Richardson, *Antichrist*, pages xv-xvi.
- 6) Wikipedia, "Sahih al-Bukhari," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sahih_al-Bukhari#Number_of_hadith.
- 7) Samuel Shahid, *The Last Trumpet: A Comparative Study in Christian-Islamic Eschatology*, (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2005), 305 pages.
- 8) Shahid, page 28.
- 9) Ibid., pages 30-33. See also: G. F. Haddad, "Signs of the Hour," www.livingislam.org/n/signh_e.html.
- 10) Ibid., pages 34-42.
- 11) Mission Islam, "Who is the Evil Dajjal?" www.missionislam.com/nwo/whoisdajjal.htm. See also, Shahid, pages 45-47.
- 12) Idara Dawat-o-Irshad, USA, Inc., "Identification of the Prophesied Imam Mahdi," www.irshad.org/islam/prophesy/mahdi.htm. See also Richardson, *Antichrist*, pages 40-51.
- 13) Mufti A.H. Elias, "Jesus (Isa) in Islam, and his Second Coming," www.islam.tc/prophecies/jesus.html. See also, Shahid, pages 73-89.

- 14) Elias, "Jesus in Islam . . ." See also, Shahid, pages 111-113.
- 15) Wikipedia, "Islamic Eschatology," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_eschatology. See also, Shahid, pages 167-191.
- 16) HilalPlaza, "The Day of Judgment," www.hilalplaza.com/islam/day-of-judgment.html. See also, Shahid, pages 192-210.
- 17) Richardson, *Antichrist*, pages 50-51 and 78-79.
- 18) Ibid., pages 80, 94, and 187.
- 19) Ibid., pages 67-68.
- 20) Ibid., pages 136-154.
- 21) Ibid., pages 66-67.
- 22) Ibid., pages 110-114.
- 23) Shahid, Pages 45-72. See also, Wikipedia, "Masih ad-Dajjal," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masih_ad-Dajjal.
- 24) HNN Staff (History News Network), "What Is the Difference Between Sunni and Shiite Muslims – and Why Does It Matter?" <http://hnn.us/articles/934.html>.
- 25) Wikipedia, "The Occultation," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Occultation.
- 26) HNN Staff, "What is the Difference . . ."
- 27) Jacob Prasch, "The Islamic Antichrist: the Unresolved Problems with Joel Richardson's Theory," September 11, 2009, www.moriel.org/MorielArchive/index.php/news/uk/the-islamic-antichrist, page 3.
- 28) Prasch, "The Islamic Antichrist . . .", page 3.
- 29) Ibid., page 3.
- 30) Richardson, *Antichrist*, page 215.
- 31) Ibid., page 216.
- 32) Wikiquote, "Voltaire," <http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Voltaire>.
- 33) Richardson, *Antichrist*, pages 103-104.
- 34) Ron Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2008), pages 104-109. See also: Mark Hitchcock, *The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2002), pages 31-32.
- 35) Ron Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, pages 102-104.
- 36) Richardson, *Antichrist*, page 109.
- 37) Ibid., pages 121-128.
- 38) Ibid., pages 197-202.
- 39) Ibid., pages 203-204.
- 40) Bill Salus has written an excellent book on the prophetic implications of Psalm 83. It is titled, *Israelestine*, (Lecompton, KS: Highway Publishers, 2008), 350 pages.
- 41) Shoebat, *God's War on Terror*, pages 197-198.
- 42) Ibid., pages 267-274.
- 43) Ibid., pages 240-243.
- 44) Ibid., page 241.
- 45) Ibid., pages 349-353.
- 46) Sean Osborne, "Some Additional Thoughts on 'Debunking the European Antichrist' by Rodrigo Silva," <http://eschatologytoday.blogspot.com/2009/02/some-thoughts-on-debunking-european.html>. Further comments by Sean Osborne can be found on the Prophecy Depot blog in response to an article by Bill Salus, "Does Daniel Debunk the Assyrian Antichrist?" <http://prophecydepot.blogspot.com/2009/01/does-daniel-debunk-assyrian-antichrist.html>.
- 47) Shoebat, pages 369-371.

- 48) Ibid., page 371.
- 49) Joel Richardson, "Daniel 9:26: Who Are the People of the Prince to Come?" www.joelstrumpet.com/?p=2440.
- 50) Ibid., pages 3-4.
- 51) Joel Richardson, "EU Collapse: Doom for Popular Bible Prophecies?" www.wnd.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=160393.
- 52) Quote supplied by Lambert Dolphin (<http://ldolphin.org>).