

Comments on *The Islamic Antichrist* by Joel Richardson

Karl Kemp April 2011

I don't know much about Joel Richardson, the author of *The Islamic Antichrist*. (This book, a second edition, was published by WND Books, copyright © 2009; a first edition with a different title was published in 2006.) Recently several Christians asked me what I thought about his end-time teaching. They recommended that I watch the Sid Roth "It's Supernatural" program¹ where he interviewed Joel, and someone recently gave me a CD of a Glenn Beck program where he interviewed Joel. And now I have read Joel's book. He seems to be a sincere, intelligent, evangelical Christian, who believes the Bible, and he is an effective communicator.

When I quote the Bible in this paper, I use the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 edition. Sometimes in this article I make comments in the middle of quotations using brackets [].

I don't mean to show disrespect for Joel, but I totally disagree with his major premise that Antichrist will turn out to be the Muslim Mahdi and that he will arise in the Muslim world, *not in the revived Roman empire*. Based on past experience and what I have heard from Christians so far, I expect Joel's teaching to cause considerable confusion among many Christians. As he knows, his viewpoint contradicts the very widely accepted viewpoint that Antichrist will arise in the revived Roman empire. I believe this very widely accepted viewpoint is clearly taught in the Bible, as I will demonstrate in this article. I should also mention that this very widely accepted viewpoint was already being taught in the early Christian church, in Irenaeus, for example, who was an important church Father, who lived from about AD115 to about 202.²

Joel spends much of his time in this book discussing Muslim views on the end times, and he discusses the rise of Islam in our days. I agree that the Muslims will undoubtedly play some major roles in the last few years before the millennial kingdom begins. They could, for example, play a major role in the very intense warfare of the sixth trumpet (Rev. 9:13-21), which is (I believe) to be equated

¹ Many Christians need to be warned, and warned again, that many things that are *supernatural* are not from God. Many miracles and revelations come from Satan and his kingdom of evil, and those miracles and revelations are carefully designed by the angel of light to look quite good. We must be humble and very carefully check out everything that is supernatural. First and foremost we must check everything against the Word of God, and we must humbly and continually seek God's wisdom and guidance, realizing that many demonic counterfeits are manifesting in our day. God has warned us!

² Irenaeus knew Polycarp (martyred about AD156), who knew the apostle John, the one who wrote the book of Revelation, by revelation, about AD95. On the topic of Antichrist arising in the (revived) Roman empire, see, for example, "Irenaeus Against Heresies," book 5, chapters 25 and 26. Irenaeus (and other Christian writers), who lived in the days when the Roman empire was still flourishing, spoke of the ten horns (the ten rulers of the revived Roman empire) arising at the end of the Roman empire, not in a *revived Roman empire*.

with the warfare of the short great tribulation. I believe the short great tribulation will take place during the one-month period that will take place between Antichrist's abomination of desolation and the return of Christ and the rapture in the middle of the seven-year period that is sometimes called Daniel's 70th week.³

Even if you disagree with me on the timing of the rapture, etc., you will still want to read this article. You will be able to fully follow what I say in this article about Joel's end-time viewpoints and why I have to disagree with him. Besides that, I'm confident that many of my readers will be convinced that the mid-week rapture viewpoint is correct if they will take the time to seriously consider that viewpoint.

I am not, of course, making an attempt in this rather brief article to address everything that Joel says in his 282 page book. I have just picked several key items to discuss, but I believe I say enough to demonstrate that his major premise is wrong, for one major thing.

Joel doesn't speak all that much about what the Bible teaches on the end times in the book, but more often than not I disagree with what he does say on that topic. However, *sometimes* he is teaching views that are held by many Christians, but not when he teaches that Antichrist will turn out to be the Muslim Mahdi, who will *not* arise in the revived Roman empire. For one thing, Joel doesn't teach that we will be raptured before Antichrist begins his super-evil reign where he, for one thing, overpowers the saints for three and one-half years. (I believe all true Christians who will have been saved before that time will be raptured in the middle of Daniel's 70th week, and that Antichrist will overpower Christians who will be converted *after* the rapture, which will center in the repentant end-time remnant of Israel.) Several times Joel refers to David Pawson, who teaches the end-of-the-week rapture.

You can learn a lot about Muslim beliefs from this book, including the fact that they put a very high priority on their beliefs regarding the Last Days. "Among the Major Signs, the most anticipated and central sign that Muslims await is the coming of a man known as the Mahdi" (page 21). His coming is the first Major Sign. The Mahdi's reign, which will probably last for seven years according to Muslim traditions, will take over the world for Islam; all who do not convert will be removed by judgment.

Muslims believe that the Bible includes some true accounts of what was said and what happened; other accounts that need to be corrected (like where the Bible says that Abraham was told to sacrifice Isaac, but the Muslims say it was

³ On the *abomination of desolation*, you could start with #7 on page 13 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*. On the *short great tribulation*, you could start with #8 on page 14 of my book. On the mid-week return of the Lord Jesus and the resurrection and rapture of the saints at the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet, you could start with #s 11-13 on pages 15, 16 of my book. For a somewhat brief overview of what the Bible teaches on the end times I recommend my 24 broadcast (half-hour) audio series titled "The Mid-Week Rapture." The written text for those broadcasts is located on my internet site. Google to Karl Kemp Teaching.

Ishmael), and other accounts that are blasphemous (like those that deal with the deity of Christ, or the Trinity, or the atoning death of Christ).

Joel bases a lot on a Muslim tradition regarding a seven-year peace agreement. (That was the primary thing that caught my attention when I heard Glenn Beck interviewing Joel. I wanted to learn more about this peace agreement.) For Joel this is strong evidence that the Antichrist of the Bible and the Muslim Mahdi are to be equated. I'll quote part of what Joel says on the seven-year peace agreement on pages 28, 29, then I'll make some comments. "While there is more than one tradition regarding the nature and timing of the Mahdi's ascendancy to power, one particular hadith places this event at the time of a final peace agreement between the Arabs and the Romans [my underlining]. ('Romans' refers to Christians, or, more generally, the West.) Although this peace agreement is made with the Romans, it is presumably mediated through a Jew from the priestly line of Aaron. The peace agreement will be made for a period of seven years. ...

It appears that the period of this seven-year peace agreement will likewise be the period of Mahdi's reign. While a few traditions specify that Mahdi will reign on the earth for as much as eight or possibly nine years, most traditions state that his reign will last seven years...."

For one thing, I have a big problem with the idea that this seven-year peace agreement is to be equated with the Bible's seven-year treaty of Dan. 9:27 that Antichrist will make, or will confirm, with Israel. They don't seem to have much in common, except for the seven years. As I mentioned, Joel believes that the Antichrist will turn out to be the Muslim Mahdi and that he will arise in the Muslim world, not in the revived Roman empire. Antichrist a great Muslim leader? I don't think so! For one thing, there is a very solid Biblical basis to say that Antichrist will arise in the revived Roman empire:

See Daniel 9:26, for example; it says (in part), "the people of the prince [or, ruler] who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary." The *Romans* fulfilled this prophecy when they destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple in AD70. So, "the people of the prince [or, ruler] who is to come" in Dan. 9:26 are the Romans. "The prince [or, ruler] who is to come" is Antichrist, who is spoken of in Dan. 9:27, and he is called "the prince [or, ruler] of the covenant" in Dan. 11:22. The words "prince [or, ruler] of the covenant" in Dan. 11:22 build on Dan. 9:26, 27, with the word "prince [or, ruler]" being used in Dan. 9:26 and the word "covenant" being used in Dan. 9:27. Also, it is significant that the prophecies of the various world empires in Daniel chapters 2, 7 and Rev. 17:8-13 demonstrate that the world empire that follows the Roman empire *is the revived Roman empire*.

Daniel chapters 2 and 7 demonstrate how closely connected the Roman empire and the revived Roman empire are by lumping them together as one empire, which is very reasonable since they are both *Roman*. It would not be reasonable, however, to lump together as one empire the ancient Roman empire and an end-time Muslim empire. Joel believes that the world empire that follows

the Roman empire in Rev. 17:9-11 is the Turkish/Ottoman (Muslim) empire, which will be revived/restored under the Mahdi and become the next and last (the eighth) empire of Rev. 17:11. We'll discuss Rev. 17:9-11 after we discuss Daniel chapters 2 and 7.⁴

In Daniel chapter 2 it is very widely recognized that the *iron* legs of the statue represent the Roman world empire and the feet of the statue made of *iron* and clay represent the revived Roman world empire of the end times. The two empires are very closely connected, for one thing, by the *iron* in the legs and in the feet. Daniel chapter 7 builds on Daniel chapter 2. In Dan. 7:7 the beast, with its *iron* teeth (note the *iron* here that corresponds with the *iron* in Daniel chapter 2) represents the same two empires lumped together, but in Daniel chapter 7 all the emphasis is on the *revived* Roman empire, which (as we learn as chapter 7 continues) is eventually ruled over by the little horn who grows with a supernatural growth to become Antichrist.

I'll quote Rev. 17:10, 11 and make some comments in brackets; I'll underline the verses: "and they are seven kings; five have fallen [referring to the rulers of the first five world empires and their empires, which are the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek world empires], and one is [referring to the ruler of the Roman empire and the empire (the *sixth* empire), which existed when the apostle John wrote the book of Revelation about AD95], the other has not yet come [referring to Antichrist and the revived Roman empire]; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. (11) The beast which was and is not [These words build on Rev. 17:8; Antichrist (and his empire) is the beast "which was and is not." The words "is not" speak of the time when he is gone from the scene, having been killed; but as Rev. 17:8 goes on to show, *he will come up out of the abyss*, which means that he will come back from the dead. In Rev. 11:7 we also read of Antichrist coming back from the dead with the words, "the beast that comes up out of the abyss." Revelation 11:7 goes on the show that Antichrist will kill the two prophets/witnesses after he comes back from the dead.] is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven [I prefer, "and is out of [or, from] the seven." The *eighth* king (Antichrist) with his kingdom emerges out of, or from, and is a continuation of, the *seventh* world empire.

Gigantic changes take place for Antichrist in the middle of Daniel's 70th week. He comes back from the dead in time to kill the two prophets three and one-half days before the rapture. His coming back from the dead is a gigantic change. Even more significant, the devil gives Antichrist "his power and his throne and great authority" right in the middle of the seven years (see Rev. 13:2), and the ten horns, the ten rulers of the revived Roman empire, "give their power and authority to the beast" (to Antichrist) right in the middle of the seven years (see Rev. 17:12, 13). At that time Antichrist will be ready to begin his super-evil three and one-half year reign. That reign will be so evil and powerful that it deserves to be considered a different empire, an *eighth* empire. God will not have lost control. Antichrist will come in accordance with God's plans (see, for example, Dan. 8:19;

⁴ Actually Rev. 17:10, 11 mention kings [rulers], not empires/kingdoms, but the empires were mentioned in 17:9 (the "heads" and "mountains" of Rev. 17:9 both serve a symbols for empires/kingdoms), and the rulers of the empires and the empires go together (see Dan. 2:37-39, for example).

11:36; Zech. 11:15-17; and Rev. 17:16, 17). Antichrist's reign will come to an abrupt end at the end of Daniel's 70th week, when the Lord Jesus will remove him by judgment (see Rev. 19:19-21).

Revelation 17:9-11 prophesy of the Roman and revived Roman empires as the *sixth* and *seventh* empires. When the book of Revelation was written it was reasonable to separate the Roman and revived Roman empires into two empires, since the Roman empire already existed at that time and the revived Roman empire was still in the (distant) future. When the book of Daniel was written, the Roman world empire was still hundreds of years in the future.

In Dan. 7:7 the combined Roman and revived Roman empire was called "a *fourth* beast." In Rev. 17:10 the Roman empire is the *sixth* empire and the revived Roman empire the *seventh*. The difference is explained by the fact that Rev. 17:9-11 included the two world empires of the Bible (the Egyptian and Assyrian empires) that existed before the Babylonian world empire, which was the empire that existed at the time Daniel received the revelations contained in his chapters 2 and 7.⁵

As I mentioned, Rev. 17:12, 13 prophesy of the ten horns (the ten rulers) of the revived Roman empire, who give their power and authority to Antichrist in the middle of the seven-year period.⁶ They will reign with him (and under him) throughout the second half of Daniel's 70th week. It is significant that we already knew about the *ten horns* from Dan. 7:7, 20, 24. Daniel 7:24 even spoke of the ten horns (of the revived Roman empire) arising out of the Roman empire, which further confirms that the seventh world empire is closely related to the sixth world empire, the Roman empire. The really important point for our present purposes is that the seventh world empire (or the eighth) *is not a Muslim empire*.

In chapter 10 Joel argues that the seventh empire of Rev. 17:9-11 isn't the revived Roman empire but is the Turkish/Ottoman (Muslim) empire. That is a gigantic difference! Joel acknowledges that "the most common belief...held almost universally by Bible teachers is that the Antichrist's empire will be a revived Roman empire" (page 94). Joel goes on to say that the eighth empire (of Rev. 17:11) will be the revived/restored Muslim empire under the Mahdi. (Keep in mind that Joel believes that the Mahdi will fulfill the role of the Antichrist of the Bible.) I am quite sure, as I mentioned, that the eighth empire represents Antichrist's empire as it will exist throughout the second half of Daniel's 70th week, after he begins his super-evil three and one-half year reign right in the middle of the seven years. Daniel 7:21, 25; 12:7 confirm that Antichrist's super-evil reign, when he will, for one thing, attack the saints, will take place throughout the second half of Daniel's 70th week.

On page 37 Joel says that "the Bible establishes the fact that the Antichrist will be a spiritual leader whose authority will be recognized worldwide," and he goes

⁵ For more details, see the chapters in my book that discuss Daniel chapters 2 and 7. On Rev. 17:8-13 see pages 281-284 of my book, and see on those verses in my "Paper on Revelation 14:6-19:21," which is located, with most of my papers, on my internet site; Google to Karl Kemp Teaching.

⁶ Revelation chapter 13 (especially see 13:5), for example, shows that Antichrist's super-evil reign will start in the middle of Daniel's 70th week and last for three and one-half years.

on to mention his “role as a universal religious leader” and similar comments. I don’t see the Bible teaching that Antichrist will be a “spiritual leader” or a “universal religious leader.” Those statements would fit the Mahdi, but not the Antichrist of the Bible. As far as I know, the Bible doesn’t say anything about Antichrist’s religious beliefs in the days before his abomination of desolation, but from that time on the Bible shows that he will be against all religion, God, gods, or object of worship; he will demand that he be worshipped (see Dan. 11:36, 37; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4).

On pages 39, 40 Joel says that the *woman* of Revelation chapter 12 is Israel and that the *male child* is Christ, who is caught up to God at His ascension. Many Christians agree with him on those points, but I am very sure that that viewpoint is wrong. The *woman* is *true* Israel (embracing all believers, the believers from Old Testament days and all true Christians, including the repentant end-time remnant of Israel, who will become Christians in the end time, but not in time to be taken in the rapture), and the *male child* embraces all the believers who will have lived before the time of Christ’s return (at the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet, in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week). At the time Christ returns, all those believers who are represented by the male child (those who will have died and those who will still be alive on the earth) *will be born* into the fullness of eternal life, will be glorified, will be raptured, and they will begin to reign with Christ (see Rev. 12:5). They will, as Rev. 12:5 shows, be “caught up (raptured)” to God and to His throne, using the same Greek verb for caught up that the apostle Paul used in 1 Thess. 4:17. (See my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*, under Rev. 12:5, in the chapter on Revelation chapter 12.)

On pages 42-44 Joel speaks of the Mahdi conquering Jerusalem, setting himself up in the rebuilt Jewish temple and then ruling from there. I agree, of course, that Antichrist will enter the temple, stop the sacrifices and demand worship, but I don’t agree that he (who Joel thinks will turn out to be the Muslim Mahdi) will then rule from Jerusalem. I believe the Lord Jesus Christ will claim Jerusalem as His city when He returns right in the middle of the seven years (see under the heading “The Lord Jesus Christ Will Claim Jerusalem as His City” on page 70 of my book).

On page 50 Joel mentions Muslim scholars who interpret Rev. 6:2 of the Mahdi riding on a white horse, and he believes the rider is Antichrist (who he thinks will turn out to be the Mahdi). Many end-time teachers agree with Joel that Rev. 6:2 refers to Antichrist, but I am totally convinced that it refers to the Lord Jesus, or the Word of the Gospel, going forth victorious throughout this age. (It’s very good to be conquered by the rider on that white horse.) That’s quite a difference! (See my “Paper on Revelation chapters 1-10,” which is located on my internet site. In that paper I quoted from H. Alford, a Christian scholar, who says that all Christian scholars understood it the way I understand it, with some room for differences in details, until about AD1500.)

Joel's chapter 6 is titled "The Muslim Jesus." He says that the return of the Muslim Jesus is the second most important Major Sign after the appearance of the Mahdi. The Muslims don't believe that Jesus died but that He ascended into heaven alive and has been with Allah since then. One thing that the Muslim Jesus will do when comes back from heaven will be "to oversee the institution and enforcement of shariah law all over the world" (page 54).

Joel's next chapter is titled "Comparing the False Prophet and the Muslim Jesus." I'll quote his last sentence of this chapter, "The biblical description of the False Prophet and the Islamic description of the Muslim Jesus, on all the essential points, are identical." The Muslim Jesus doesn't sound like the false prophet of Revelation chapter 13 to me. Joel says the false prophet will convert the world to Islam. I can't see the false prophet of Revelation chapter 13 promoting Islam. The false prophet of Revelation chapter 13, who "ministers" throughout the second half of Daniel's 70th week, isn't going to promote Islam throughout that period. It seems clear to me that he is going to promote the worship of Antichrist, who is against all religion, God, gods, or object of worship throughout the second half of the seven-year period (see Dan. 11:36, 37; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4). That's quite a difference!

In chapter 19 Joel admits that the fact that Antichrist (the Muslim Mahdi) will demand that he be worshipped doesn't fit well with his viewpoint (because Muslims don't worship men, only Allah). Nevertheless, he believes the Mahdi will demand worship after the middle of the seven years. "...the Mahdi now declares himself an incarnation of Allah, and as such, he demands worship" (page 183). That doesn't sound right to me, but the primary point I want to make, as I have said before, is that I am quite sure that the Antichrist of the Bible will not turn out to be the Mahdi.

I should point out that, according to the Bible, Antichrist will demand worship at the time of his abomination of desolation (2 Thess. 2:3, 4). The abomination of desolation will take place (I believe) a month before the middle of Daniel's 70th week, before Antichrist has been killed and come back from the dead; before he has begun his super-evil three and one-half year reign in the middle of Daniel's 70th week (see Rev. 13:2, for example); before the "ministry" of the false prophet that is spoken of in Rev. 13:11-18; and before the false prophet has the image of the beast (Antichrist) made to commemorate the fact that Antichrist has come back from the dead and to further demand that Antichrist be worshipped—the false prophet will demand that all people worship Antichrist and his image and take his mark.⁷

I'll briefly comment on one last topic. On pages 215, 216 Joel speaks of Antichrist overcoming/conquering the saints at the end of this age. For one thing he quotes Rev. 7:9-17 and applies these verses to those saints. I believe it is very important

⁷ See the chapter on Revelation chapter 13 in my book. That chapter deals with Antichrist's receiving from the devil "his power and his throne and great authority, with his being killed and coming back from the dead, with the ministry of the false prophet, with the image of the beast, with the number 666, etc.

to see that the saints that Antichrist will overpower for three and one-half years are the saints who will be converted *after the rapture*, centering in the repentant end-time remnant of Israel. Those saints will be very thankful to be saved at the last minute, even *after* the last minute in that the Lord Jesus will have already returned and the resurrection and rapture will have already taken place before they become Christians. I agree with Joel that Antichrist will not overcome the saints spiritually. Those saints will be the real winners, not Antichrist, and they will be glorified and begin to reign with Christ forever by the time the millennial kingdom begins. Antichrist and the false prophet will be in the lake of fire (Rev . 19:20).

Revelation 7:9-17 are not prophesying about the saints who will be attacked by Antichrist throughout the second half of Daniel's 70th week. Those verses prophesy of the large number of Christians who will be raptured from the earth and glorified right in the middle of Daniel's 70th week, just before Antichrist begins his super-evil three and one-half year reign (during which he will overpower the saints). Those faithful Christians (which could include all of us) will have been *kept out of the hour of great testing* (Rev. 3:10) by being raptured from the earth right in the middle of Daniel's 70th week. The "great tribulation" mentioned in Rev. 7:14 is the same as the *great tribulation* of Dan. 12:1 and Matt. 24:21, 22. As I discuss in some detail in my writings, the short great tribulation will start right after the abomination of desolation (see Matt. 24:15, for example) and will end before the Lord Jesus returns in the middle of Daniel's 70th week, at which time the seventh and last trumpet will sound and the resurrection and rapture will take place (see Matt. 24:29-31, for example).⁸

If I have misunderstood Joel or misrepresented him in any way, I want to be corrected. I very much want this paper to be a blessing to the body of Christ. I don't want to show disrespect for any true Christians, even when I disagree with them; however, we desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on every topic, including the end times. I want to be a blessing to every true Christian (to all Gods elect), including Joel.

May God's will be fully accomplished in us and through us, including correcting us anywhere and everywhere we need to be corrected! In Jesus name!

Karl

⁸ On Rev. 7:9-17 see under these verses in my "Paper on Revelation chapters 1-10" and on pages 154-156 in my book.