

Laws Can Have Unintended Consequences

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The Bible predicts a day is coming when God will send a sequence of judgments on the world. The Bible also predicts that mankind will respond to God's wrath with a series of "well-intentioned laws" and unintended consequences will follow. The beast mentioned in the text above is called Babylon in the book of Revelation.

Babylon will be a crisis government that will spring to life shortly after God's judgments begin. While the entities that will develop into Babylon already exist today, Babylon will not form until God's time arrives. Many people do not anticipate the coming crisis that will have no equal in scope or scale since Noah's flood.

God's coming judgments will devastate the world and its infrastructures. The deaths of 1.75 billion people and the smouldering ruins of *thousands* of cities will force world leaders to respond to the reality that there is an Almighty God and He is very angry with mankind. Rising from the "sea of panicked humanity," the beast (Babylon) represents mankind's global attempt to appease God so that His wrath will end.

How the Beast Forms

Governments are sometimes illustrated in Bible prophecy as beasts because beasts will do whatever is necessary to survive. When the political leaders of the world experience God's judgments, they (like everyone else) will be filled with terror and panic.

Fearing that more judgments will follow, world leaders will tell the world's religious leaders to find a solution that will stop God's wrath. I believe religious leaders will gather at a world council to determine the best possible way to appease God so that His wrath will cease. Their options will be limited and they will conclude that one organization having worldwide authority will be necessary.

This "crisis government" (the beast, Babylon) will examine each nation and dictate to its national leaders what is "acceptable and unacceptable behavior" in God's sight. The world's religious leaders will reason that if sinful behavior provoked God's wrath to break out, then righteous behavior should appease God and stop His wrath. Even though this solution will appear logical to most people, there will be a huge problem.

Because the world is religiously diverse, various nations will direct their citizens to appease God in different ways. For example, the mandated solution for Moslem nations will be different than the mandated solution for Catholic nations. The beast's duplicity – one worldwide organization attempting to appease one angry God with different laws in different nations – explains why the beast is called "Babylon." Babylon means confusion.

Martial Law Will Terminate Individual Rights

God's coming judgments (the first four trumpets described in Revelation 8) will devastate the infrastructures of the world. This devastation will necessitate martial law. Governments will suspend constitutional rights and civil jurisprudence will be "set aside until the crisis is over."

Historically, martial law has been a tool used by nations to (a) suspend individual rights, (b) concentrate executive power, (c) expedite decisions, and (d) implement laws that are thought to be necessary for the survival of the government. Anarchy flourishes where there is no government, so martial law is usually justified as the best way to maintain any semblance of order in a crisis. At first, Babylon (the beast) will not dissolve the governmental structures of the nations.

Instead, each nation will implement its own version of martial law and the leaders having executive power will submit to Babylon's directives out of fear for the next event. There will be no need for constitutional amendments or popular vote.

The political leaders will submit to Babylon's demands because survivors will be highly motivated to appease Almighty God so that His judgments will cease, and the leaders will not want to offend God any further. The Bible is clear that civil authorities will carry out Babylon's demands without resistance. ". . . **and all the world wondered after the beast.**" (Revelation 13:3)

Babylon will organize as a result of a world crisis of terror, destruction, and anxiety. Political and religious leaders of the world will have good intentions. After all, what could be more effective in appeasing an angry God than outlawing behavior that God condemns? In their rush to appease God's wrath, Babylon will make and enforce laws that will have unintended consequences. Many innocent people will be hurt by Babylon's laws, and it will be these good people who will be the ones who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

After the worldwide government of Babylon establishes martial law and begins to function, the devil will arrive and take over Babylon's leadership. He will turn the organization into a malicious beast. *Absolute power corrupts absolutely.* The devil himself will give Babylon extraordinary power and authority. ". . . **The dragon [the devil] gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.**" (Revelation 13:2, insertion mine)

Lucifer has a plan. Once God's wrath is released and the beast is born, the devil will make Babylon into his hand puppet. "**And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with *the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.***" (Revelation 12:17, KJV, italics mine)

To change conduct that is offensive to God, *the only tools* that religious and political leaders can use are legislation and punishment. Babylon will create many laws which the nations of the world (functioning under martial law) will implement and enforce. Civil authorities will arrest and impose severe penalties on anyone breaking the laws.

Their justification will be simple: "We have to do whatever it takes to avoid making God angry." God will allow Babylon to gain control over the nations without firing a single bullet. The political

leaders will fearfully submit to Babylon's directives in hopes that compliance will end God's judgments.

This process explains how and why the topic of worship will become an inflammatory matter all over the world. *A time is coming when mankind will attempt to appease God through worship and by outlawing sinful behavior, but the unintended consequences of these laws will be to persecute the saints – the remnant of the woman who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*

History Repeats Itself

When Justinian I (A.D. 483-565) became the ruler of what remained of the Roman Empire in A.D. 527, he aspired to rebuild and restore the empire to its former glory. The empire was in shambles and he faced extraordinary challenges. We can learn about Justinian's efforts by examining the laws he created.

Laws are created by those who have power to resolve problems, and Justinian's laws reveal the problems he faced and his ambitions. In fact, Justinian's codex (his laws) reveals an emperor who was convinced that Christianity could unify a fractured empire.

Historians say that Rome fell for many reasons, but four elements came together in a "perfect storm" and brought down the empire. First, there was a loss of respect and confidence in Rome's leadership. Second, economic problems and lack of funds decimated Rome's military. Third, demographics changed.

Tribal nations became populous, powerful, and assertive. Finally, the spread of Christianity was unstoppable. Christianity undermined Roman authority because Christians would not worship Caesar as God and the relentless persecution of Christians only caused Christianity to flourish. When these four elements are merged, the reason the old Roman Empire fell is rather easy to understand.

When Justinian came to power, Europe and northern Africa had splintered into tribal nations and the city of Rome had been pillaged and burned just fifty years earlier. Western civilization was fragmented by religion, ethnicity, culture, and language. Justinian knew that he could not directly impose Roman authority on the tribal nations that had pulled the empire apart.

He did not have the military might to force them into submission. However, Justinian believed there was an *indirect* way to unify and rebuild the Roman Empire. About A.D. 533 he created this law: *Everyone under the jurisdiction of the empire is required to be a Christian.*

Justinian believed that Christianity would help unify the Roman Empire and compared to other religions, Christianity was a good thing. Christianity exalted honesty, integrity and it had one Supreme God (unlike the polytheistic religion of the Romans).

When Justinian imposed his demand that everyone under the jurisdiction of the empire must be

a Christian, he also bequeathed authority to the head of the Christian Church *at Rome* (the pope) to determine who was a Christian and who was not. (This was a political solution that would later prove to be disastrous.)

The pope could not implement Justinian's law in A.D. 533 because three tribal nations (the Ostrogoths, Heruli and Vandals) were waging war against his authority. These tribal nations were opposed to certain religious views which the pope had endorsed and they wanted to kill the pope for corrupting the Christian faith. To make matters worse, Justinian's law and his deference to the pope made the tribal nations furious.

A series of deadly battles took place between 534 and 537 and eventually, the Heruli and the Vandals were uprooted. In A.D. 537, the Ostrogoths set siege to the city of Rome in hopes of starving the city residents and capturing the pope, but Justinian's general, Belisarius, arrived and broke the siege.

So, Pope Silverius escaped without harm. After the rescue, Belisarius discovered correspondence indicating that Pope Silverius had been secretly negotiating with the Ostrogoths to end the siege and Belisarius was outraged. Belisarius removed Silverius as pope and demoted him to the position of monk. This happened in March, A.D. 537.

When Belisarius removed Silverius from office, Belisarius appointed Vigilius to be the next pope. About a year later, in A.D. 538, Pope Vigilius began to exercise authority that previous popes did not have. As you might expect, Vigilius abused his enormous power and over time, the Roman Catholic Church dominated all of Europe! *Justinian created a law that had unintended consequences for 1,260 years!* Even then, the devil had made a hand puppet out of the Roman Catholic Church. He took control of it and through the Church found a way to persecute God's people.

"When the dragon [the devil] saw that he had been hurled to the Earth [cast out of Heaven on Resurrection Sunday], he pursued the woman [the people of God] who had given birth to the male child [Jesus in 4 B.C.]. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly [escape] to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time [1,260 years], out of the serpent's reach."
(Revelation 12:13,14, insertions mine)

This time period of 1,260 years mentioned in Revelation 12 ended on February 20, 1798 when General Berthier, obeying orders from Napoleon, entered Vatican City and arrested the pope on the grounds that the pope refused to renounce temporal (civil) authority over Europe.

On March 7, 1798, Napoleon's army entered Rome and established the Roman Republic. The civil power of the papacy was finally broken in Europe. When we understand the history of these events in 1798, we can see that Lucifer began chasing God's people in A.D. 538. Using the Roman Catholic Church as a hand puppet, John saw in vision that the devil chased the woman into the wilderness for 1,260 years and history affirms that "the persecuted" eventually became "the persecutors" of the woman.

We Are Living During the Intermission

The Bible indicates there are two periods of persecution for the saints with a short intermission in between. The first period of persecution lasted 1,260 years. (A.D. 538-1798) The second period of persecution lies just ahead and it will last forty-two months.

We are living during the intermission (1798 to the present). Many people believe there will be a pre-tribulation rapture and they will escape the Great Tribulation, but the Bible does not teach this. Instead, it teaches that God has – and will – permit His people to be persecuted! Consider these three reasons. First, persecution purifies the church (the body of Christ). Nominal Christians cannot endure persecution. Second, persecution matures our faith, our love for God, and our love for those who suffer for His sake.

Third, persecution causes God's children to "hunger and thirst" after the Word of God. No martyr ever went to the stake ambivalent about right and wrong. When a person is threatened with suffering and death because of his determination to uphold God's Word, the Word of God becomes his bread and water. Think about this: If salvation comes through faith in God, then faith has to be tested to determine if we are faith-full. History will be repeated. Bible prophecy leaves no room for doubt.

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