



# “The Slave-Girl Will Give Birth to Her Master” as Understood via “Temple Symbolism”<sup>1</sup>

**Richard Worthington**

PhD Graduate in Mathematics, the University of Nottingham, UK. E-mail: rlworth@btinternet.com.

## **Abstract**

The so-called Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL) used the hadith mentioning that “the slave-girl will give birth to her master” to justify its renewal of sexual slavery. This hadith is talking about signs before the end of the world, so it could be interpreted by the same *Temple theology* technique that has been used in the biblical book of Revelation, which is also about the end of the world. “Temple theology” refers to the fact that many obscure and bizarre texts symbolically describe the rituals and politics of the Temple in Jerusalem. Thus, it will be argued that the whole hadith is talking about events that happened prior to the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE (the Temple symbolized the world, so the end of the world refers to this incident). In particular, it will be shown that slave-girl refers to the Virgin Mary giving birth to Christ. The hadith is then linked to the start date of the building the Dome of the Rock in 688 CE, which is the year 999/1000 according to the “Seleucid Era” calendar, implying a nearness to a symbolic end of the world. As such, the “Islamic State” has no Islamic basis to use sexual slavery. As an appendix, the Dabiq hadith concerning the conquest of Constantinople is briefly discussed with reference to the possibility that Constantinople did fall to the Muslims before another symbolic end of the world, the year 7000 according to the Byzantine Calendar.

**Keywords:** Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL), end of the world, Temple theology, Essenes, Dabiq.

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1. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Margaret Barker for all her invaluable support.

## Introduction

We have all been shocked by the treatment of the Yazidi women and girls by the so-called Islamic State in the Middle East. That such atrocities are common in war is terrible enough, yet giving divine legitimization to such actions is shocking. Divine legitimization is exactly what the “Islamic” State thought it had. There is a hadith of Prophet Mohammad which states that before the end of the world “the slave-girl will give birth to her master”:

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: ... He (the inquirer) said: When there would be the hour (of Doom)? (Upon this) he (the Holy Prophet) said: The one who is being asked about it is no better informed than the inquirer himself. I, however, narrate some of its signs (and these are): when you see a slave (woman) giving birth to her master – that is one of the signs of (Doom); when you see barefooted, naked, deaf and dumb (ignorant and foolish persons) as the rulers of the earth – that is one of the signs of the Doom. And when you see the shepherds of black camels exult in buildings – that is one of the signs of Doom. The (Doom) is one of the five things (wrapped) in the unseen. No one knows them except Allah. Then (the Holy Prophet) recited (the following verse): ‘Verily Allah! with Him alone is the knowledge of the hour and He it is Who sends down the rain and knows that which is in the wombs and no person knows whatsoever he shall earn on the morrow and a person knows not in whatsoever land he shall die. Verily Allah is Knowing, Aware [Quran 31:34]. (*Sahih Muslim*, the Book of Faith, #10/7/6)<sup>1</sup>

About this, there “are two possible interpretations: i.e. 1) a time will come when children will have so little respect for their mother that they will treat her like slaves. 2) The slave-girls will give birth to sons and daughters who will become free and so be the masters of those who bore them” (Deshmukh 2010, 251).

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1. Typographical errors have been corrected, both here and in the quotations below.

Therefore, there is a symbolic interpretation and a literal interpretation. A member of the ISIS wrote about these as follows:

Again, it appears that those who drift away from the literal interpretation of slavery [in this hadith] do so because it was already existent and common in their era in such a manner that they found it hard to understand it as referring to actual slavery. But after the abandonment of slavery by Muslims and its subsequent revival, this literal interpretation becomes much more plausible. ("The Revival of Slavery before the Hour" 2014, 16)

In other words, the revival of slavery by the ISIS meant that the end of the world could now plausibly happen, because, in their thinking, for a slave-girl to exist, slavery needs to be re-established. Yet a more convincing interpretation of the hadith of the slave-girl based on Temple symbolism can be presented, which would obviate the need for reintroducing slavery.

### **The Slave-Girl Hadith in Full**

Considering the entirety of the hadith raises interesting questions, which cause us to rethink its whole purpose. The hadith is recorded in numerous sources, with each text having slightly different wording, which have been collated in what follows. According to this hadith, Prophet Muhammad said that the end of the world would come (1) when the slave-girl gives birth to her master (*Sahih Muslim*, the Book of Faith, #8e/5/4; see also #9),<sup>1</sup> (2) when you find the barefooted, poor,<sup>2</sup>

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1. Note that another hadith (*Sahih Muslim*, the Book of Faith, #8a/1/1) has "mistress" instead of "master."
  2. The word "poor" is taken from a hadith (*Jami' al-Tirmidhi*, the Book on Faith, #2610/5) narrated by 'Abdullah bin Buraydah from Yahya bin Ya'mur, and considered "sahih" (authentic) by Darussalam. Note that in this hadith (as in *Sahih Muslim*, the Book of Faith, #8a/1/1; #8b, 8c, 8d), the words "barefoot" and "naked" are applied to those shepherds' building, with "rulers of the earth" being omitted.

naked, deaf, and dumb the rulers of the earth (*Sahih Muslim*, the Book of Faith, #10/7/6, narrated by Abu Hurayra),<sup>1</sup> and (3) when the shepherds of black camels start boasting and competing with others in the construction of higher buildings (*Sahih Bukhari*, the Book of Belief, #50/43/48, narrated by Abu Hurayra).

Upon reading about the “construction of higher buildings,” we might be tempted to think of skyscrapers—so surely, it might be claimed, this prophecy has been partially fulfilled. Then again, construction workers can hardly be called “shepherds of black camels,” even less the architects themselves. Can this have a sensible interpretation, or is it just apocalyptic imagery?

Concerning the “rulers of the earth,” we can see that nowadays politicians do have to suffer a barrage of taunts, and being called deaf and dumb will probably ring true with some of the populace due to the politicians’ perceived unwillingness to listen or to tell the truth.<sup>2</sup> However, the politicians and “ruling elite” being described as “barefooted, poor, and naked” probably would not cross people’s minds, not even symbolically: as mentioned previously, to be described as deaf and dumb would instantly be recognized as not listening to the people and not telling the truth, yet “poor” would surely not be instantly recognizable even if a moral interpretation was meant. And personally, I can think of no way in which politicians could be described as being “barefooted.”

## Temple Symbolism

Apocalyptic imagery also occurs in the Bible, especially in the book of Revelation, which is also about the end of the world, “the hour of Doom”:

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1. The mention of “rulers of the earth” is only found here and in *Sahih Muslim* (the Book of Faith, #8e/5/4; see also #9).
  2. Indeed, in the quotation in the Introduction, the translator inserts an interpretation for “deaf and dumb” as meaning ignorant and foolish to avoid its literal meaning.

When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine." (Revelation 6:5-6)

While a black horse is not an apocalyptic image, yet the living creatures each had six wings (Revelation 4:8) and were identified as cherubim (Ezekiel 1:5-22; 10:1). Yet Solomon's Temple not only had figures of cherubim on it (1 Kings 6:29) but also had horse statues<sup>1</sup> in front of it (2 Kings 23:11). The strange imagery derives from certain physical attributes of Solomon's temple. Yet the mention of wheat and barley as being very expensive would be indicative of a famine. And this passage has been linked to the famine which happened during the reign of the Roman emperor Claudius (Barker 2000, 156). Indeed, "there is a remarkable similarity between the portents and oracles reported by Josephus [writing about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE] and those in the Book of Revelation" (Barker 2000, xii). In other words, the main theme of the book of Revelation is the temple in Jerusalem even though it claims to be the end of the world: "the hour of His judgment has come" (Revelation 14:7). The key point is that the temple symbolized the creation,<sup>2</sup> which is why the "end of the world" could happen in 70 CE, because the symbol of the earth (the temple) had been destroyed.

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1. While the Masoretic text has been understood to mean living horses, yet the Greek Septuagint (Antiochene text) has that the horses were "burned" instead of merely "removed," implying that the horses were statues (Uehlinger 2018, 449). Since the archaeological discovery of models of horses in Israel, this verse could be taken to imply that the horses were indeed statues (House 1995, 388).
  2. "The temple in Jerusalem, and Moses's tabernacle of the desert tradition, represented the creation, and so creation theology is temple theology. The Genesis story of the six days of creation was related to the ceremonial building of the tabernacle/temple which was in two parts, divided by the veil. Each day represented one stage in the building" (Barker 2008, 21).

Additionally, 70 CE could also have been considered a significant year for those at Qumran, who “estimated the history of the world, past and future, at a hundred jubilees or 4,900 years” (Beckwith 2005, 130-1). Now, according to the Masoretic text, Abraham could have been born in the equivalent of 1955 BCE (Hasel 1980, 56), and the Book of Jubilees, used extensively at Qumran, has Abraham being born 1876 years after Adam (Beckwith 2005, 123). Accordingly, the end of the world would be 1070 CE:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} -1955 & \text{CE} \\ -1876 \\ +4900 \\ +\quad 1 & \text{(there is no} \\ & \text{0 BCE/CE)} \\ \hline 1070 & \text{CE} \end{array}$$

However, if we allow for a thousand-year “Messianic kingdom,” referenced in the same Book of Jubilees (Jubilees 23:27; see also Revelation 20:4), then we arrive at 70 CE.

A rather simple question then should arise in our minds: if biblical apocalyptic imagery about the end of the world can refer to historical events before the destruction of the Second Temple, could this hadith’s apocalyptic imagery similarly refer to historical events prior to 70 CE? I postulate yes. To show this, let us consider the signs of the end of the world in the hadith in a reverse order.

### **Shepherds of Black Camels Constructing Tall Buildings**

According to the hadith, one of the signs is the boasting of the shepherds of black camels and their competing with others in the construction of

higher buildings. The key to understanding this sign is that the word “shepherds” is symbolic; it is probably safe to say that not many architects of skyscrapers (“higher buildings”) have been shepherds, even less shepherds of camels. Consider the famous psalm “The Lord is my shepherd” (Psalm 23) in which we read, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters” (Psalm 23:2), and later, “Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (23:4). A sentimental interpretation would be that we can think of sheep in green pastures by a little brook with the shepherd holding his shepherd’s crook. Yet later it is said, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over” (23:5). How this fits in with being a symbolic sheep is not exactly clear: eating at a table surrounded by enemies (wolves?) with my cup overflowing and making a mess of my shirt! Yet the last verse clearly states, “And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (23:6), and this is how the Psalm is to be interpreted, for we are not to imagine ourselves as symbolized by sheep in a meadow but as priests in the temple, “the house of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> The priests wore white garments and so were symbolically described as sheep.

A possible “Temple symbolism” interpretation could be that as the earth and grass of day three of creation (Genesis 1:9-12) were symbolized by the table of the “showbread” in the temple (Ginzberg 2003, 48), so too the phrase “pastures green” refers to the main temple sanctuary where there were carved flowers (1 Kings 6:18). The “still

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1. “The word-pictures of Yahweh as the loving Host (v. 5) [i.e. the table spread] and of living with God in his household (v. 6) suggest that the occasion of the psalm’s composition is to be looked for in an experience the psalmist had during a divine service” (Weiser 1962, 227-28). Also, “Several psalms link the temple with the motif of shepherd and sheep ... Elsewhere the temple is designated an ‘abode,’ a term associated with the abode of the shepherd and sheep” (Broyles 2012, 123).

waters” refers to the bronze sea, the huge wash basin in front of Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 7:39). The table is where the “showbread” was kept, which the priests ate, and the enemies are the symbols of evil to be overcome in this ritual.<sup>1</sup> The anointing oil on the head is also mentioned in Psalm 133:2: “It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments.” The overflowing cup refers again to the bronze sea, because “its brim was shaped like the brim of a cup” (1 Kings 7:26). The high priest had the name of “the Lord” on his forehead (Exodus 28:36-38) and so symbolized the Lord; hence, “The Lord is my shepherd.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet here the shepherds keep black animals,<sup>3</sup> not white. This means that these shepherds are “baddies.” And from the viewpoint of the Essenes, the priests of the Second Temple were impure:

The Essenes separated from the rest of the Jewish community in the 2nd century BCE, when Jonathan Maccabeus and, later, Simon Maccabeus, usurped the office of High Priest, which conferred secular as well as religious authority. Simon felt compelled to persecute the Essenes, who opposed the usurpation. Hence, they fled into the wilderness with their leader, the Teacher of Righteousness. Some scholars hold that Essenes established a monastic community at Qumran in the mid-2nd century BCE. (Doniger 1999, 898)

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1. Walking “through the valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:4) could then be the high priest walking down the central part of the temple, because entering and then leaving the temple symbolized dying and being resurrected. Compare “the rebirth/resurrection in the oneness of the holy of holies” (Barker 2003, 221).
  2. The temple setting for a shepherd figure could also be seen in the ten lampstands in Solomon’s temple (2 Chronicles 4:7), which had seven lamps each, thereby making seventy lamps in total. Yet these seventy lamps symbolized the “seventy nations” (Ginzberg 2003, 645). Given that angels are likened to fire (Psalm 104:4), then we can see why each nation had its own angel, or “shepherd,” assigned to it (Barker 2000, 227-28). The Lord is, then, the “Great Shepherd.”
  3. In the hadiths quoted, “camels” are mentioned twice (Sahih Bukhari, #50; Sahih Muslim, #10), goats four times (Sahih Muslim, #8a-d), and no specified animal in the others; see previous footnotes for full hadith references.

Further, one simple piece of symbolism unlocks the meaning of "higher buildings": temples are designed to manifest God's presence and so symbolically reach heaven. Moreover, "In the eighteenth year (20-19 BC) of his reign Herod [the Great] rebuilt the Temple on a more magnificent scale ... As it was unlawful for any but priests to enter the Temple, Herod employed 1,000 of them as masons and carpenters" (*Jewish Encyclopedia* 1906, "Temple of Herod"). So, the shepherds are the priests of the Second Temple who were baddies from the viewpoint of the Essenes. Their construction of higher buildings refers to the enlargement of the Second Temple, which, as it symbolically reached heaven, would be higher than all.

### **The Poor Ruling the Earth**

According to the hadith, another sign of the end of the world is the rule of the barefooted, poor, naked, deaf, and dumb over the earth. The key to understanding the symbolism here lies in the fact that when king David wanted to capture Jerusalem, there were people who were not particularly strong; rather, they were "the blind and the lame" (2 Samuel 5:6). Such people would not usually be considered a threat to an army! Yet the symbolism is revealed in a play on words:

When David tried to capture Jerusalem, the people of the city taunted him by saying, 'The blind and the lame will ward you off' (2 Sam. 5.6), but the blind and the lame conceal the ancient guardians of the city. 'The blind' were 'the watching ones', since the Hebrew verb '*wr*' can mean to be blind or to be awake/aroused, and 'the lame' were the ones who guarded the thresholds of the city, the Hebrew verb *pskh* meaning both 'to pass over' and 'to limp'. What David despised were not 'the blind and the lame' but the guardian angels of the city, the gates and doors who lift up their heads as the LORD enters (Ps. 24.7-9). (Barker 2000, 323)<sup>1</sup>

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1. The Hebrew transcription has been altered slightly. Note that according to Jewish

Using this wordplay methodology, we can decode the identity of these rulers of the earth. While the hadiths are in Arabic, the underlying wordplay would have originated with the Hebrew and Aramaic speaking Essenes. The “naked” are “watchers” (*'eyrom* vs. *'iyrin*) (*Strong's Concordance*, H5903 “*'eyrom*”; H5894 “*'iyrr*”; see also H6174 “*arowm*”), who are angelic priests so to speak. The Hebrew word “deaf” is consonantly the same word for carpenters or craftsmen (*Strong's Concordance*, H2795 “*cheresh*”; H2796 “*charash*”), which would be the builders of the spiritual temple (see also Zechariah 1:20 for angelic craftsmen). The “dumb” are the “gods” (angels or angelic priests; *'illem* vs. *'elohiyim*) (*Strong's Concordance*, H483 “*'illem*”; H410 “*el*” respectively; see also H430 “*'elohiyim*”).

“The barefooted” I take to be those who are Moses’s true successors, for he took off his sandals in God’s presence (Exodus 3:5). The “poor” are the Essenes and early Jewish Christians:

For Hippolytus [an early church father] said ‘Essenes’ (actually he calls them ‘Zealot Essenes’ or ‘Sicarii Essenes’) are prepared to undergo any sort of bodily torture, even death, rather than ‘eat things sacrificed to idols’ or ‘blaspheme the Law-giver’ (meaning Moses). They are also, as the Scrolls make plain, ‘the Ebionites’ or Ebionim (the Poor), in all early Church heresiologies the direct successors of ‘the Essenes’ and virtually indistinguishable from what these same heresiologists are calling Elchasaites, Masbuthaeans, Sampsaeans, or Sabaeans – the last-mentioned, in later Islamic lore, doubtlessly indicating ‘Daily Bathers.’ (Eisenman, 2012, xix)<sup>1</sup>

So, the “the barefooted, poor, naked, deaf, and dumb” could arguably refer to the priests of the early Christian Church. Becoming “rulers of the earth” could have numerous interpretations. Because the temple

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tradition, Jerusalem was guarded by two “monuments of brass,” one was of Isaac because he became blind (Genesis 27:1) and the other was of Jacob because he limped (Genesis 32:31) (Ginzberg 2003, 920-21, note 51)

1. Please note that not all Essenes, and hence Jewish Christians, were Zealots.

symbolized the earth, Christian priests also became rulers of the heavenly temple once the earthly temple had been destroyed in 70 CE. Also, the churches were new temples (i.e., new “earths”) (Barker 2003, 96), which were ruled over by Christian priests. The phrase could also refer to their faith in Jesus, which prevailed over the earth (Quran 3:55; 61:14).

### **The Slave-Girl’s Giving Birth to Her Master**

A further sign of the end of the world, according to the hadith, is the slave-girl’s giving birth to her master. Given the clear link between the Qumran community and the early Christians, and that we are looking for an event that happened before 70 CE, the “slave-girl” can plausibly be one person only—namely, the Virgin Mary whom is referred to in the following verse: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord” (Luke 1:38). The word “handmaid” is actually just the polite word for a female slave, just as the word “slave” was translated to the more polite “servant” elsewhere in the older English translations. This is the Virgin Mary giving birth to the Messiah, her “Master.” As can be seen, this event is far more significant and specific than the two interpretations given above—namely, children treating their mothers as slaves or a child born to a slave rising above her.

### **The Slave-Girl Hadith Link to the “End of the World” and to the Temple Mount**

Muhammad said, “The Last Hour and I have been sent like these two,” and joined his forefinger and middle finger (*Sahih Muslim*, the Book of Prayer—Friday, #867a/55/1885, narrated by Jabir b. ‘Abdullah), indicating the nearness of the end of the world. It could also be that some people had calculated that the end of the world would indeed be very soon. While there are numerous ways to calculate the age of the world based on the Bible due to variant readings and ambiguities, two

numbers can be deduced. First, we have already stated that according to the Masoretic text, Abraham was born in the equivalent of 1955 BCE. Secondly, according to the Greek Septuagint, there were 3414 years between Adam's creation and Abraham's birth (Hasel 1980, 56). Presumably, some Jewish Christians would have been happy using both texts. Given that the total age of the world was reckoned to be 6000 years ("For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year" [Irenaeus, n.d., 5.28.3]),<sup>1</sup> one possible expected date can be calculated as follows:

$$\begin{array}{r} -1955 \text{ CE} \\ -3414 \\ +6000 \\ +1 \quad (\text{there is no} \\ 0 \text{ BCE/CE}) \\ \hline 632 \text{ CE} \end{array}$$

Therefore, the end of the world could have been expected by some people (some Jewish Christians?) to be 632 CE, which is also the same year when Muhammad died. The end of the world did not happen, but it was the end of an era, heralding the Islamic conquest of the Middle East.

There were other reasons why Jews and/or Jewish Christians could expect the end of the world around Muhammad's time. The previous Jewish revolt against the Romans had ended in 135 CE (*Jewish Encyclopedia* 1906, "Bar Kokba and Bar Kokba War") and the Islamic conquest of Roman (Byzantine) Palestine and Jerusalem by the Caliph

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1. Note that the Syriac Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius (written after 644) has the Islamic conquests at the start of "last millennium, which is the seventh" (Alexander 1985, 20, 25, 44), i.e., after 6000 years.

'Umar was seen in the light of this event: "O Commander of the Faithful, five hundred years ago a prophet predicted what you have done today" (Friedmann 1992, 196), which implies the year 635 CE. Yet the Persians had also captured Jerusalem from the Romans in 614 CE (*Jewish Encyclopedia* 1906, "Chosroes (Khosru) II. Parwiz"), which could easily have given rise to apocalyptic expectations, because "the fall of the wicked kingdom (Rome) was taken to be the beginning of the rise of the kingdom of God" (*Jewish Encyclopedia* 1906, "Eschatology"). Perhaps, Jerusalem would be under Jewish rule again?

Significantly, there were apocalyptic writings written around this time predicting what would be the signs of the end of the world. One such book is the *Sefer of Zerubbabel*. It is ascribed to Zerubbabel, who started rebuilding the Second Temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 3:8) and is about "personalities and events associated with the restoration of Israel at the End of Days" (Reeves 2005, 41) and how "the Lord will lower the celestial Temple which had been previously built to earth" (Reeves 2005, 63).<sup>1</sup> It also has apocalyptic imagery, such as stars wandering aimlessly from their paths, a statue giving birth, and a great wave bringing the dead back to life (Reeves 2005, 55, 58-9, 61). However, while it is ascribed to Zerubbabel, most modern scholars locate the work "during the first quarter of the seventh century in Palestine within the context of the fierce struggles of Persia and Rome for control of the Holy Land" (Reeves 2005, 47). There are apparent references to the Sasanian king Kavad II (also known as Šērōy), who died in 628 CE, and to Heraclius expelling the Jews from Jerusalem in 629 CE (Reeves 2005, 58, note 128; 59, note 138). However, "Allusions to Islam or the

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1. See also the full translation by the author at <https://pages.uncc.edu/john-reeves/research-projects/trajectories-in-near-eastern-apocalyptic/sefer-zerubbabel> (accessed June 6, 2019)

coming of the Arab conquest are minimal at best” (Reeves 2005, 47); presumably, a true prophecy would include the far more significant Arab conquest only a few years later.

Curiously, it does try to predict the end of the world—when the dead will rise and a new temple will be built in Jerusalem—to be 990 years after it was destroyed (Reeves 2005, 56, 61, 64). If we consider the destruction of the temple around 70 CE, then this means that the end would come around 1060 CE. However, it has been suggested that the 990 years start from the reconstruction of the temple under Zerubbabel, in which case, using rabbinic calculations for the duration of the Second Temple, the 990 years end in 638 CE (Reeves 2005, 48).

What this does imply is that stories of the end of the world were being created by various people during Muhammad’s time. Yet the *Sefer of Zerubbabel* is an example of *vaticinium ex eventu*—that is, of a prophecy written after the events (e.g., Heraclius expelling the Jews from Jerusalem in 629 CE). It does then try to foretell what might happen soon, although no temple has yet descended from heaven. However, this hadith is different in that it is ascribed to Muhammad, who lived *after* the events the hadith foretells (i.e., the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE).

The question might then arise as to why Muhammad would refer to an event that happened over 500 years before him? The key to understanding this is that the hadith is about the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem while some Jews were looking for the Third Temple to be built soon. Yet a source of concern for those Jews was that the Christians had, arguably, already built it, albeit in a different location in Jerusalem. The prophet Ezekiel described the Third Temple as being 100 cubits by 200 cubits (including its courtyard, Ezekiel 41:13-14), and yet

This is almost exactly the measurements of the Nea, and may explain why the site had to be extended to make room for the correct dimensions. Since the measure known as the 'cubit of the Talmud' was 555.955 mm; it cannot be coincidence that the 57-metre width of the Nea today and its overall length of 115 metres is so nearly 100 x 200 cubits. (Barker 2005, 10)

Additionally, the Roman emperor Justinian "saw himself as a new Solomon, and it may not be coincidence that he authorized the building of the Nea in the fourth year of his reign, just as Solomon had begun the temple in the fourth year of his reign" (Barker 2005, 5, referencing 1 Kings 6:1). It has also been commented that the histories written at the time of its construction suggested that "it was intended to be the true temple restored in the last days" (Barker 2005, 7). Indeed, the seven-branched Menorah lampstand, plundered by the Romans from the Second Temple, taken by the Vandals to Carthage, and then recaptured by the (Christian Byzantine) Romans under Justinian, quite possibly might have been placed in the Nea (Barker 2005, 8-9). When the Persians with the Jews took Jerusalem in 614 CE, this church was severely damaged, hence the Jews despising its symbolism.

So, this hadith, and presumably others like it,<sup>1</sup> could have been a symbolic way of telling those who understood its meaning that the end

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1. According to certain Islamic sources, Jesus will return to earth, kill pigs and the Antichrist, wage war, marry, have children, live for forty years, and then die. Given that the "slave girl" hadith could be about Jesus on earth before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, it does seem likely that this prophecy is also about him. The Book of Revelation also describes Jesus killing an animal and the Antichrist, waging war, and marrying (Revelation 19:20-21; 21:2). The Letter to the Hebrews has Jesus saying, "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me" (Hebrews 2:13). The Bible also says that his body symbolised the temple (John 2:19-21), so the temple being destroyed symbolised his death. Finally, Jesus was last on earth about 40 years before 70 CE (The Islamic references are collated from The Return (Second Coming) of Jesus Christ (n.d.). Curiously, at the bottom of the page, it mentions that the Mahdi will emerge "most likely in year 2019," yet when I looked at the page last year in 2018, I made a note that it mentioned 2018 as being when this would happen!).

of the world would be a symbolic end about the temple in Jerusalem. And it must be considered very significant that the Dome of the Rock was built by the Muslims on the Temple Mount, exactly where the temples had previously stood in Jerusalem. Interestingly, the timing of its construction is of paramount importance: it started in the year 688 CE (Gil 1997, 92), which is the year 999/1000 according to the “Seleucid Era” calendar used by the Jews<sup>1</sup>: the year 1000 presumably being another symbolic end of the world when a calendar turns to a significant multiple of 1000.<sup>2</sup> And, contrary to Jewish expectations that the Third Temple will be built when the Messiah appears, it clearly affirms that Jesus, the son of Mary, is the Messiah (*The Arabic Islamic Inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem*, 72 AH / 692 CE 2005). However, despite some sacrifices performed there in the past (Elad 2008, 178, 183), no separate sacrificial priesthood is ever mentioned, and there is no “Holy of Holies” where only these priests were allowed to go. It is, therefore, not properly a temple in a classical sense of the word, and in fact Jewish Christians rejected sacrifices (Klijn and Reinink 1973, 36, 62, 159; see also the reference on p. 229).

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1. The Seleucid Era began in October 312 BCE, or April 2, 311 (Jewish Encyclopedia 1906, “Chronology”); recall that there is no 0 BCE/CE.

2. It is interesting that Muhammad said, “The lifespan of my nation is between sixty to seventy [years], and the least of them are those who surpass that” (Jami‘ al-Tirmidhi, Chapters on Supplication, #3550/181; see also Sunan Ibn Majah, Zuhd, #4326/4377, and Jami‘ al-Tirmidhi, Chapters On Zuhd, #2331/28—all narrated by Abu Hurayrah and all declared hasan (good) by Darussalam). Yet sixty years from his death in 632CE is 692CE, which is also seventy years from the Hijra in 622 CE, and 692 CE is 1003 of the Seleucid Era. However, sixty lunar years (or 354 days) is about 58 solar years, and seventy lunar years is about 68 solar years. Using these years would bring us to 690 CE, year 1001 of the Seleucid Era. The translation seems to imply that the 60 or 70 years is for a human lifespan, whereas it would actually point to the symbolic end of the world. The Syriac Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius also has 70 years (“ten weeks of years”) for “the Ishmaelites” (Alexander 1985, 18, 39, 44; see also Hoyland 1997, 264 note 17).

## Apocalyptic Imagery and Parables

While this new interpretation of the hadith might be interesting to some, there is another reason to think that this “Temple symbolism” interpretation should actually be considered to be the intended meaning, rather than its literal sense. To understand this, we should remember that Jesus spoke in parables; for example, once he gave a parable about a sower sowing seed, some of which fell on the pathway: some on stony ground, some among weeds, and some on good ground (Mark 4:1-9). The meaning of this parable was not given openly:

[There was a] widely held belief that Jesus gave secret teaching to his disciples; the Gospels record that he sometimes spoke to crowds of people but also gave additional teaching to his disciples in private. The Gospels do not say what this teaching was, but it concerned the true meaning of the parables which most people would not understand. “And when he was alone, those who were about him with the twelve asked him concerning the parables. And he said to them, ‘To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables’ (Mark 4.10-11).” (Barker 2000, 3)

While the gospel does then proceed to explain the parable (that the seed is the teaching [Mark 4:13-20]), yet it is clear that there was an even deeper “secret secret,” which was never written down:

Clement of Alexandria wrote at the end of the second century CE that Jesus taught ‘knowledge of the past, present and future’ (*Misc.* 6.7). He knew of mysteries concealed in the Hebrew scriptures, handed down by oral tradition but revealed by Jesus to his closest disciples (*Misc.* 5.10). He does not reveal how Jesus learned these secrets. ‘The knowledge itself is that which has descended by transmission to a few, having been imparted unwritten by the apostles’ (*Misc.* 6.7) ... The secret things, then, concerned past, present and future and were encoded in the Hebrew Scriptures. (Barker 2000, 3)

It must be very significant, therefore, that this hadith of Muhammad can be interpreted exactly like the “secret secrets” in the Bible and elsewhere. Conceivably therefore, the hadith has an additional purpose—namely, to convince those who did know the “secret secrets” that Muhammad also knew it and so his claim to prophethood should be accepted.

Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, some scholars have decoded the real meaning of the hidden teachings, calling it “temple theology” (see, e.g., Barker 2000, 62-64, 130). So those who did not know the “secret secrets” interpreted the Bible to indicate that the world was to end in 70 CE.<sup>1</sup> Yet the Book of Revelation has been interpreted as being revealed to inform those who knew the secret method of interpretation that the “second coming [of Jesus] would not be an event in the near future” but that the Lord would return “to his people in the Eucharist” (Barker 2000, 372).<sup>2</sup>

## Conclusion

The so-called Islamic State based its revival of sexual slavery on a part of the hadith which states that “the slave-girl will give birth to her master.” However, deeper investigation of the hadith revealed that a symbolic interpretation might be more in line with the original intent of the hadith. This centered on “shepherds of black animals” constructing “higher buildings,” referring to priests building Herod’s Temple. Additionally, the phrase “barefooted, poor, naked, deaf, and dumb” was

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1. “Seventy weeks” in Daniel 9:24 was interpreted to mean 490 years, ending with the coming of the Roman Emperor Titus in 69/70CE (The Jewish Bible with a Modern English Translation and Rashi's Commentary, n.d., commentary of Daniel 9:24)..
  2. Note that even though the Nicene Creed states that we “look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come,” yet the Second Coming is spoken of in the past tense in the Eucharistic service: “Remembering this saving commandment and all those things which have come to pass for us: ... and the Second and glorious Coming” (Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, “Litany of Supplication”; “Anaphora”).

interpreted as containing wordplay, similar to the “blind and lame” being a threat to an army in the Bible (2 Samuel 5:6). As such, the “slave-girl” was then interpreted as referring to Mary, with her “master” being Christ, the Messiah.

These events, all before the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, had a significance to Muhammad’s time, because the end of the world was expected to be near, with the expectation of a Third Temple being built. It was then shown that some could have calculated that the end of the world was the same year as Muhammad’s death (632 CE), and certainly the end of the world could have been expected in the year 1000 of the Seleucid Era, about 688 CE when the construction of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem started.

While it is one thing to say that something should not be interpreted literally, yet it is another to give evidence of the source of the symbolic interpretation. In other words, the symbolic interpretation is based on the fact that stories, like parables, were invented deliberately so as to be not understood by the general population; they were secrets known only by a few.

Those Jews who fought the Romans in 70 CE thought that God would fight for them, but they were instead totally defeated; they did not know the secret interpretation. The so-called Islamic State has now almost suffered the same defeat, and its revival of sexual slavery did not herald the Second Coming of Jesus but only manifested that it also did not know the secret interpretation of the parables contained in the sayings of both the Bible and Muhammad. As adherents of the so-called Islamic State are still pursuing terrorist activities to force the “Last Battle,” it is hoped that the simultaneous embrace of the hadith with its

suggested “Islamic positive” symbolic interpretation will help them to re-evaluate their aims.

### **Appendix: The Dabiq Hadith and the Conquest of Constantinople**

It has been shown that accounts of the end of the world could have been symbolic retellings of events prior to the destruction of Jerusalem’s Second Temple, which symbolized the world. However, there are other stories about the end of the world which mention Constantinople; for example:

Abu Huraira reported Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: The Last Hour would not come until the Romans would land at al-A‘maq or in Dabiq. . . (The Muslims) would be conquerors of Constantinople. . . Certainly, the time of prayer shall come and then Jesus (peace be upon him) son of Mary would descend and would lead them. (*Sahih Muslim*, The Book of Tribulations and Portents of the Last Hour, #2897/44/6924)

This hadith is particularly relevant because the magazine of the so-called Islamic State was entitled “Dabiq” because of this prophecy. However, Constantinople was conquered by the Muslims in 1453 CE, and Jesus has not yet returned. What are we to make of this? We could say that the hadith refers to a “future conquest at the time of the Mehdi and Sayyidna ‘Isa [Jesus] (peace be upon him), rather than the 1453 conquest” (Meah 2017). Or we could say that this hadith is a fabrication: “As noted by a few scholars, part of this literature [apocalyptic hadith] originated during the Umayyad period in order to attract volunteers for the perpetual wars against the unbelievers on the Syrian front,” and apocalyptic hadiths “were prophecies *ex-eventu*, and hence may help to illuminate certain aspects of Muslim-Byzantine relations in the first century” (Bashear 1991, 196, 199); it should be observed that Dabiq was where Caliph Sulayman

(715–717 CE) and his military headquarters were settled (Bashear 1991, 202).

However, saying that this hadith, which is from *Sahih Muslim*, is a fabrication rips the heart of traditional Islam:

All Muslims, be they Sunni or Shia, agree that ḥadīths are essential to understanding Islam ... In order to ensure that ḥadīths were authentic and not fabricated, scholars developed a unique and critical method. This consisted of two components, first scholars scrutinized the people who were narrating the ḥadīth. They ensured that everyone in the chain of transmission met each other and was free from any disqualifying characteristics. These disqualifying characteristics include lying, indulging in major sins, or having a known or obvious motive to fabricate a ḥadīth. (*What are Hadith?* 2018)

If the Dabiq hadith is *ex-eventu*, then its inventor was lying about it being ascribed to Muhammad. However, *Sefer of Zerubbabel* was also falsely ascribed to an earlier writer (Zerubbabel) by its author. In fact, it is strongly suspected that many books were written under the name of a previous prophet, such as the biblical Book of Daniel (its prophesies are taken by modern scholars to be references to the Maccabean revolt of 160s BCE). There is, therefore, a literary genre in which it is acceptable to write under another person's name: in the case of Judaism, writing under the name of a biblical prophet, or in the case of Islam, writing under the name of Muhammad.

The key to understanding why this was acceptable is the simple fact that mainstream Judaism considered that prophecy had ended with the death of Ezra, traditionally dated 313 BCE (Kantor 2006, 122). Therefore, anyone living after that date who considered themselves to be divinely inspired had to write under the name of a prophet who lived prior to that date in order for his work to be accepted. However, even

though writing under the name of another person is technically lying (by ascribing words to someone who did not say them), if the author considered himself worthy of divine guidance, then he probably would have been highly devout and thus considered to be most trustworthy and truthful by those around him. Hence, the Dabiq hadith could have been correctly considered “authentic” (*sahih*) even though some parts of it did not originate with Muhammad (the part about Constantinople could have been added to the part about Jesus). As such, the “science of hadith” can be maintained, but better awareness of the apocalyptic literary genre is needed.

However, I think one curious fact about the Islamic conquest of Constantinople in 1453 does need to be observed. We have seen that some Muslims are looking for another conquest to happen as a sign of the “Hour of Doom.” While clearly the end of the world has not yet happened, there certainly was the end of an era shortly afterwards: in October 1492 Christopher Columbus discovered America, and in March 1493 he returned to Europe with the news. As can be seen, this is a very biblical “forty years” after the fall/conquest of Constantinople. Yet the “Byzantine Calendar,” which dated the creation to 1<sup>st</sup> September 5509 BCE (Court 2008, 102), is first mentioned by Georgios in 638/9 CE (Kuzenkov 2006, 3), curiously when a “certain army” was invading the Byzantine/Roman Empire. This then implies that the date of the discovery of America can be calculated from the start of creation according to the “Byzantine Calendar”: 7000 *anno mundi*.<sup>1</sup>

As such, Constantinople was taken by the Muslims before a symbolic “end of the world.” Perhaps it should also be pointed out that the Conquest of Constantinople could be described as having been

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1. Note that the Greeks were expecting the end of the world on this date after Constantinople was taken (Court 2008, 102)

undertaken by the successors to the Jewish Christians, the Ebionites (meaning “the poor”), yet “a poor man” is also the literal meaning of “*fakir*” or “*dervish*” applied to Sufis (Baldick 2012, 19). Additionally, it has been suggested that the word “Sufi” is derived from the Arabic word *suf* (wool) (Baldick 2012, 3). However, the similar Hebrew word *tsaphah* means watchman (*Strong's Concordance*, H6822 “*tsaphah*”), and we can recall the angels being called “Watchers.”

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