

HANDS OF THE SON

CHRIST VICTORIOUS



MICHAEL E. DOREN



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Christ Victorious
Hands of the Son Series Book 1
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DEDICATION



*This book is dedicated to Jesus the Son, whose hands
created this world, healed the sick, fed the poor,
and were pierced so we might live.
Thank you.*

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My parents come first, since I wouldn't be here without them, and my work ethic required for this project was learned from them. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for your love, support, and example as two tough old birds. I love you both dearly.

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Regarding research, the great minds I have learned from are too many to name, but I'll get a few in here;

On the subject of Islam, the great Robert Spencer has no equal, and David Horowitz is indispensable. Regarding Islamic Eschatology, Joel Richardson and Walid Shoebat have been irreplaceable resources on the Mahdi as the Antichrist.

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This is a short list, but those I have drawn from the most.

This book spent nearly twenty years in hiding before it met an editor. Fortunately, she's a tough cookie and hung in there with a novice author on a very difficult project. To Theodora Bryant I extend my sincere gratitude for taking twenty years worth of work that I thought was ready to publish and making it actually publishable. You had to do some heavy walloping along the way to get things through my thick head, but you're a darn good walloper. Thank you dearly for all your hard work and expertise, this book would not be what it is without you.

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To you the reader, I thank you for choosing this book out of so many out there. Something made you turn a page or two, and I hope you'll enjoy turning a few more.

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PROLOGUE



“And they say, ‘The All-merciful has taken unto himself a son. You have indeed advanced something hideous! The heavens are well-nigh rent of it and the Earth split asunder, and the mountains well-nigh fall down crashing for that they have attributed to the All-merciful a son.’”

— QURAN 19:88-91

“The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in His hands.”

— JOHN 3:35 HOLY BIBLE (NIV)

Israel, A.D. 2093

*T*he dust devil pranced a silent beat above the ancient graveyard.

Its playful whisking betrayed no agenda as it churned a dusty trail over forgotten bones, but the Archangel Uriel knew that the wind,

Vayu, was looking for something. One greater than Uriel directed her search, but what she found would soon be his to claim and keep safe.

The small finger of the wind's existence scratched across the surface of the Earth until it stopped to hover above the resting place of one long dead. The dust devil vanished, and in a moment, Uriel stood over the grave to contemplate what lay beneath.

It was an odd place to leave something of such importance, but that was God's way. He had cleverly directed the storage of many important items since Lucifer's Fall, and now it was time to retrieve them.

Both man and demon had searched for three millennia for the object buried here: A key component of the End of Days.

Uriel spread his hands and exhumed a small mountain of dirt to reveal the remains of a humble peasant. His fresh grave was shallow 3000 years ago, but now the sun could not reach its depths. Uriel jumped in and landed with his feet straddling the previously undisturbed bones of a man who had led a simple life. His flesh was gone, but Uriel recognized him as Abiel, a friend and secret confidant of King Solomon.

Before his death, the king had given Abiel a small pouch and asked him to take it to his grave. Abiel agreed, curious about the strange markings written on the pouch, but obedient to the king's request not to open it.

When Abiel died, his wife told Uriel she had wrapped him in a simple burial cloth and left the small pouch unopened around his neck. She was a good woman, and Uriel believed her, so he had moved on without knowing where Abiel was buried.

It was a clever plan on Solomon's part, since no one plundered the grave of a simple peasant, and the markings on the pouch concealed it from Lucifer's demonic Grave-Crawlers.

Uriel removed the pouch from Abiel's remains, its markings and cord still intact. He could sense no power coming from the pouch. He jumped to the surface, placed the cord around his neck, and with a wave of his hand reburied Abiel. After a moment of reflection on the good and honorable man that Abiel was, Uriel left his bones to rest.

Vayu swept the ground and removed every trace of Abiel and Uriel's presence.

He walked the day into night, contemplating the events ahead. Lucifer's reign on Earth was coming to an end. When the Tribulation began, he would have seven years until the Son returned to set things right, but the Devil would do terrible things before then.

Uriel paused for a moment to take in his surroundings. He stood in the open space north of Jerusalem near Megiddo, in the valley of Jezreel. It would be here that the final battle between Lucifer and the Son would be fought.

He scanned the sweeping bloom of stars in the moonless sky and yearned to fly among them again. His heart longed to be in God's presence and walk the golden streets of the Holy City. Perhaps he would be allowed to do so again, but he'd chosen to disobey God, so his fate was unclear. For now, he had work to do.

He took the little pouch in his hand and opened it a fraction. A jolt of energy went through him, and he bowed his head. The power of the Son radiated from the small item inside, and Uriel cherished this momentary connection to Him. He had chosen to Fall from God's presence long ago, and their meetings since then had been too few and short.

As Creator of all things, the Son had made this article specifically for King Solomon and had had it delivered to him by the Archangel Michael. Solomon had used it during his reign to control and exorcise many demons; he was well known for his power over the Dark. When Solomon died in 927 B.C., this piece, called the Ring of Solomon, or Solomon's Seal, had vanished from the world despite a feverish search for it.

Now that Uriel had reclaimed it, its power would once again be used against the Dark.

He closed the pouch and for a moment felt terribly alone. His sense of loss after his departure from heaven lingered, and kept him ever mindful of his kinship with the Jewish people.

The Israelites had experienced a similar loss after the death of King Solomon. The twelve tribes of the nation of Israel split into two

kingdoms and Lucifer drove the Jews from their homeland. They'd returned 2500 years later, but Lucifer intended now to destroy them entirely.

The Devil hated and persecuted no other group in human history more than the Jews, but when they turned their hearts back to God, He was always there to save a small number of them. They would need Him in the days ahead, for Lucifer's final act against the Jews would be worse than the Holocaust.

Battle was built into Uriel's blood, but even he winced at the thought of what was to come: A mixture of the Devil's final wrath and God's judgment against man. The last days would be a terrible time for any inhabitant on Earth, and Uriel would be there to see it all unfold.

He placed the pouch inside his tunic and looked northeast. Mt. Hermon loomed in the distance, and was a bitter reminder of his failure to protect mankind. It was his duty to watch over Lucifer and his legion after their Fall, and in a short moment of distraction, Lucifer had been free to lead Eve to disobey God.

This had initiated mankind's spiral from God's grace, and after Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden, two hundred of Uriel's angel brothers left heaven and assembled on Mt. Hermon. They'd mutually agreed to defy God, and after descending from Mt. Hermon, they'd taken on the forms of men, and had children with human women. Their offspring were the giants known as the Nephilim. God responded by destroying Earth because of their wickedness, and He began anew with Noah and his family. Lucifer redoubled his efforts to destroy mankind after the Flood, and Uriel could no longer stand by while Lucifer attempted to destroy God's creation yet again. He found other angels of like mind, and the small band, now known as the Seven, chose to Fall and defend humanity.

They were not officially sanctioned by heaven, since the Earth, after Adam and Eve's sin, was Lucifer's to rule. Still, they chose to Fall in order to fight against the Dark and help protect the people of Earth. This left them alone and vulnerable to Lucifer's power, but they were convinced their cause was just.

Uriel clenched his fists in anticipation of Armageddon. As horrible as it was going to be, he looked forward to leading the Seven to defend the last human descendants in the coming apocalypse known as the End of Days.



*“The Jews say, ‘Ezra is the Son of God’; the Christians say,
‘The Messiah is the Son of God.’ That is the utterance of
their mouths, conforming with the unbelievers before them.
God assail them! How they are perverted!”*

— QURAN 9:30

*“Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?
This is the Antichrist, he who denies the Father and the
Son.”*

— 1 JOHN 2:22, HOLY BIBLE

Golgotha, Jerusalem, A.D. 33

*V*ayu respected the peril of the hour and held firm. It was not in her nature to be quiet and still, but the grisly events of the day required it. The stagnant air clung damp and heavy, and the man on the hill understood Vayu’s feigned serenity. He had created

the wind to roam the Earth and keep it fresh and alive, and He assured her that when the sun reached its zenith, she would stir to life again.

Nailed to the cross three hours before, the man silently endured the scorn and derision of those who hated Him and wished Him dead. Many of the haters left when their spiteful mouths ran dry, but some remained to watch him suffer. Scattered among the haters were those who loved Him and wept at His condition.

They did not yet understand the purpose of this day, and could only watch Him die.

Directly beneath Him, Lucifer, Death, and Hades stood quiet and grim. Invisible to the surrounding people, these three, and a multitude of Lucifer's fallen angels and demons, stood ready to finish Jesus if He did not die at the hands of His beloved humans. Lucifer's plan to destroy the Son was nearly complete, and Jesus could feel his eagerness.

Lucifer had tried to kill Jesus once before, at a time prior to Adam and Eve when His creation of the First Earth was in its infancy. Lucifer was called Helel then, when he was God's first and most beloved creation. In those early days, God had given Helel the rule over the entire Earth as king. But Helel had turned against God, and was cast out of heaven.

Jesus was in His glorified form in His first battle with Helel and had, of course, survived the encounter. This time, He had given up His heavenly station and was born a flesh-and-blood man, and it was this weakness that Lucifer hoped to leverage. When his pride corrupted his spirit, Lucifer's wisdom was also corrupted. It was a type of insanity that would not allow him to repent for his sins. He still believed he could destroy God and ascend to heaven and become God.

Jesus had known this would happen long before He created the universe, but He had allowed it because of His law of free will. He intervened when necessary to direct the world as He wished, but He did not compromise His own law. Lucifer, like all of God's created higher beings, had the freedom to obey or disobey God, and had chosen rebellion.

Lucifer had corrupted Death and Hades long ago, and now they stood before Him as an unholy alliance.

Jesus looked on the three standing beneath Him and knew their thoughts: Lucifer eager to see the Trinity broken and weakened by His death so he could begin his attack on heaven; Death the Reaper, eager to take Jesus' soul of life and greedily consume it; Hades the Keeper, come from Sheol to personally escort His spirit to Paradise. Of all the mighty spirits Hades kept there, His spirit would be his greatest trophy.

The three were unaware that the Son of Man was exactly where He chose to be.

He didn't look like a king of any kind now: beaten, tortured, and nailed to a cross, and with the bloody crown of thorns on His head. But a king He was, and from a lineage of kings. His distant human ancestor, King David, had predicted this day in Psalm 22, roughly one thousand years before Jesus was born.

Lucifer should have known this, but he mostly scorned the Scriptures. Lucifer was missing the point of the Son's crucifixion, just like the Sanhedrin Jews he had corrupted and sent to kill Jesus.

He would learn his error.

A criminal had been crucified on each side of Jesus, one who rejected Him, and another who believed in Him. They would soon learn the significance of the Son's death, too.

This day was Passover, a holy remembrance of the Jews' salvation from the final plague in Egypt when God instructed them to slaughter a young lamb or goat and put its blood on the door posts and lintels of their houses before night fell. It was a remembrance of Israel's 430 years of slavery and their deliverance from Pharaoh's captivity by Almighty God.

The temple priests would begin to slaughter the lambs for the evening's feast in three hours. Jesus knew He would die while the Passover lambs were being sacrificed. It was His purpose to be the final Passover lamb, the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

Before His death, however, He would have to endure the wrath of His Father in heaven.

It was now noon, the sixth hour by the Jewish measure of time, and the sky began to darken. Jesus looked on the faces of those who loved Him, and He silently blessed them. It was time to fulfill His purpose on Earth. The first three hours He had endured hate and scorn for doing the will of God. The next three He would suffer for man's sins. Man could not have salvation with God the Father without a perfect sacrifice, and there was only one sacrifice God would accept. As it is written in the Scriptures, "The life of the flesh is in the blood," and the life of Christ was also in His blood. By shedding it He would give eternal life to those who believed in Him.

Vayu came to life as the sky grew darker. The still air began to spin and clouds formed overhead. There was no rain, but it felt like a storm as darkness enveloped the land. The people covered their faces from the swirling dust, and then the Father's presence was over them.

Lucifer and his minions fled in that instant. They were not yet ready to battle with the Father, and He would surely be furious at the death of His Son.

As the day turned to night, God the Father placed all the blame for the sins of the world on the Son and poured out His wrath on Him. Jesus, now forsaken by God, endured His Father's judgment on His spirit until the three hours passed and the darkness lifted.

In utter agony in both body and spirit, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" With this final reference to Psalm 22, He said, "It is finished," and then He died and gave up His spirit.

God the Father lingered for a moment, and then returned to heaven.

As the darkness lifted, Lucifer and his army returned. Death greedily collected Jesus' life soul. As His spirit left His body, Hades escorted Him to the depths of the Earth to Sheol, the place of the dead. And Lucifer reveled in his victory. The mighty Red Dragon spread his massive wings and roared with elation. At last the Son was dead. At last he had won a victory over God.

The two thieves crucified with Jesus were still alive, and being in a hurry to end the crucifixions before the upcoming Sabbath, the Roman soldiers broke the legs of the two men so they would quickly suffocate and die. Seeing that Jesus was already dead, they did not break his legs but instead pierced his side with a spear. Then they removed His body from the cross and laid it on the rocks and dust nearby.

Lucifer stepped forward and craned his massive neck down to sniff at his Creator's mangled body. He'd stood thus long ago, looking down at the body of the Son, impaled with one of his massive talons. Lucifer was King of the Earth then, the mightiest of all creation, but a small trickle of regret had surfaced within him. There was no such trickle now. This time it was, as the Son proclaimed, finished.

With a final glance at the remains of the Son of God, Lucifer took his Fallen and demons and vanished. Soon the two thieves died on their crosses, and Death harvested their life souls and he, too, vanished. As the spirits of the two thieves left their bodies, two heavenly angels escorted them to Sheol.

The angels were solemn as they escorted the spirits to Sheol, for the death of the Son tore at their hearts. He was their Creator, and He called them all Sons of God. They had no idea what the future held without Him, for He had been present ever since He'd created them long ago.

The angels were also solemn because one of the spirits they were escorting was bound for Hell. They left the thief who accepted Jesus at the Paradise side of Sheol, and the one who rejected Jesus was taken to the Hell, or Hades, side.

Hades accepted the spirits of the two men from the angels and placed them accordingly. He had released Jesus and stayed behind when He entered Paradise, as he could enter neither Paradise nor Hell, since they are only for the spirits of Man.

Hades chafed at this limitation of his power, but Lucifer and Death were barred from Paradise and Hell also.

The Son had created the Paradise side of Sheol for those to be redeemed, and the Hell side, also called Hades, for the unredeemable.

The vast chasm referred to as the Pit separated Paradise from Hell and was the place of demons. The Underworld was Hades' full domain, except for Tartarus Prison. The Son had placed it deep in the bowels of the Pit and had given Uriel charge of it long ago. After Uriel fell to save the humans, Helel commandeered Tartarus and gave control of it to one of his Corrupted. It was finally under Helel's control, and Hades resented it being given to another. The entire Underworld should be his to rule; that was the deal he had struck with Helel.

While only the torment side of Sheol was named after him, it was Hades' task to guard Sheol and ensure that the spirits went to their proper places and did not escape. Some had left in the past at God's command, but none had ever escaped. Hades was more powerful now than at his creation, and he believed he could keep Jesus imprisoned here.



There was great turmoil among the good folk who dwelt there when Jesus entered Paradise. He'd never come to them this way before, as a passive spirit fresh from a dead, human body. They assumed the worst until He reassured them.

"Do not be afraid, for I am here by the will of the Father. I have come to fulfill the Scriptures, that you may have peace and eternal life with God."

The spirits rejoiced, for they were the faithful ones who'd passed on long ago, from Adam and Eve to the spirit of the thief who had just arrived with Jesus. Many of the spirits knew Him from old as the Angel of Yahweh, the physical and visible essence of God. And now He was here to tell them that He was the Messiah, and by fulfilling the scriptures He had given them eternal life. He was the final sacrifice, their Passover Lamb, and He spent Passover with them and there was great joy in Paradise.

When it was time for Him to complete His journey, Jesus told the spirits in Paradise that they must wait a little while before joining

Him. Then He left them, and at the entrance of Paradise, Hades barred his way.

“Stand aside, Hades, for my time has come to return to the living.”

“You no longer command me, Son of Man, you are only a human spirit in this place, and have no power here. You shall remain in Sheol, and no longer interfere with our plans.”

“Lucifer’s corruption has withered your judgment, Hades. Have you forgotten that it was I, as God, who created you? Have you forgotten that it was I who commanded you to release the spirits of Samuel and Lazarus? Are you truly so corrupted as to oppose the Son of God and think that the Father and Holy Spirit are not with me?”

Hades relented for a moment, but with a curse he brought all his power to bear and engaged in a fight with Jesus. He quickly discovered that his power to lay hold of departed spirits was useless against Jesus. Hades attacked Him viciously but could not touch Jesus. Lucifer had promised Hades that once dead, the spirit of the human Jesus would be like all others, but this was clearly a lie. Hades couldn’t capture Jesus any more than he could hold moonlight, and fear crept in as he realized he had no control over the Son of Man. His eyes bulged in terror when Jesus grabbed him firmly by the throat and slammed him to ground.

“You serve my purpose for now, Hades, but know the day will come that I will see to your utter destruction. For now, you shall continue the task for which you were appointed, or my wrath shall be on you.”

Jesus then went deep into the Pit to Tartarus Prison to speak to the Fallen angels imprisoned there.

The two hundred mighty angels who had defied God, chained in darkness since the days of Noah, groaned in agony at the presence of the Lord.

Lucifer had coerced them long before the Flood to leave their heavenly stations and take the forms of men to corrupt the human bloodline so that the One who would destroy Lucifer could not be born. They had children with human women and created the Nephilim, who were an abomination to God. They also led other men

and women to great wickedness until God cleansed the entire Earth of them.

God destroyed the Earth with a flood, but He'd saved a remnant with Noah and his family. Jesus was born from the lineage of Noah's son, Shem. And now He stood before the 200 Fallen, to declare His victory over them and Satan.

"Know that I take no pleasure in your demise, for I remember well the day I created you and entrusted you with all that I hold dear. My love for you is no less, but I cannot forgive the evil you've done. Your master bruised my heel with my crucifixion and death, but I declare you will join him when I crush his head in utter ruin."

The two hundred angels cursed him in their hearts and declared their loyalty to Satan. Not one repented of his sins, and not one regretted his rebellion against God. They'd asked Enoch to petition God for mercy when their sins were fresh, but God refused them, and Satan's prolonged influence over them had instilled a bitter hatred of God.

Jesus' heart grieved for the choices they'd made, and the punishment they must endure. Once among the highest of creation, they were now as the lowest of demons. They suffered in their imprisonment here, but their true suffering was still to come. Jesus departed Tartarus, leaving the angels in their chains of darkness to await their final judgment.

When Jesus' spirit entered the sealed tomb where His body lay, He found it wrapped in linen and resting on a slab of stone. For a moment He remembered the pain and suffering He'd endured in that body, and the human weakness He had embraced for those He created and loved so dearly. It was because of His great love for mankind that He'd offered up His life to save them, and now victory was close at hand.

His task wasn't finished, though, for those He loved hadn't been redeemed. With a focused resolve, He summoned the creature known as Death. When the inky blackness of Death assembled itself, Jesus addressed the Reaper of Souls.

"You will return my soul of life and show your obedience to God."

“What I’ve taken is mine to keep, and the dead can demand nothing from me. You’ve escaped Hades, but you shall not escape Death. I care not that your spirit roams free like the demons without a body, but you shall not return to the living. You chose to embrace Death, and with Death you shall remain.”

“It is not for you to hold me, or to keep what you’ve taken. The day will come when everything you’ve taken will return to the Father, and you shall meet your end. You are joined with Satan, and you will share in his demise.”

The tomb was intensely quiet as Death and Jesus stood their ground. Death wouldn’t relent without a fight, for his corruption ran deep in his loyalty to Satan, and Jesus had to defeat Death to live again.

A distant cry from heaven shattered the quiet of the tomb. “Who is worthy to open the book, and to break its seals?”

“They call for you, Son of Man,” Death said. “But you’re not worthy to open the scroll. Only one who’s died and then defeated Death is worthy. According to His own law, even the Father cannot open the scroll. And since none are worthy, the scroll will not be opened, and the End of Days shall not come. There will be no heavenly resurrection for those who love you, and no Lake of Fire for those who oppose you. As long as life exists, Death will feast, and I intend to feast for a very long time.”

Death was a loathsome creature, but he spoke true. Until Jesus defeated Death, He couldn’t open the scroll’s seals. As a result, Satan’s dominion over Earth would never end, and Christ’s people would never be redeemed. Defeating Death was only part of His task, however, since Death was given his power by Satan himself. It was Satan Jesus ultimately had to defeat, so He took Death by the throat and shook him viciously until Satan arrived.

“It was not enough for you to die, Little Lamb? You also wish that I give you another beating? Is that not gluttony, this desire you have for pain and torture?”

The Devil’s barbs found no purchase on Jesus, and His reply was clear. “This is the day of your defeat, Helel, for Death will no longer

have power over those who come to me. I gave you chance on chance in our battle long ago to repent your sins, but you chose rebellion. My heart grieved for you then, but no more. I am Yahweh, the Lord of Hosts and King of Kings. I fought with you in the same way I wrestled with my beloved Jacob: for your own edification as a loving Creator desiring your prosperity. But you chose exile, and it's time you learned your place."

Jesus cast Death aside and summoned his strength. Lucifer met Him halfway as they closed on each other in the small tomb to engage in a battle over the future of the world.

The Earth shook outside the tomb from the fury of their contest. The darkness of the cave was suddenly lit by a flash of light as the stone blocking its entrance rolled away. The early light of dawn forced back the dusty gloom to reveal that Helel, also known as Satan, the Devil, and Lucifer, lay defeated beneath Jesus' feet.

Unable to further resist the strength of the Son, the Devil commanded Death to give up the soul of life he had taken from Jesus.

Jesus saw His soul of life return to His body, and then He joined His spirit with it and His resurrection was complete. He left his burial cloth behind and exited the small tomb. He breathed fresh air into His resurrected body and climbed a small hill to witness the breaking of a new dawn and His return as the Morning Star.

A short time later He met Mary Magdalene, weeping because she could not find His body. When she saw Him, she was overjoyed and came near to embrace Him, but He told her she could not touch Him until He ascended to the Father.

He presented Himself as a lamb fresh from the slaughter, His wounds still bloody and unhealed when he stood before the throne of God. Reverently, He approached the Father and waited to be accepted as the First Fruits sacrifice of Men. The Father nodded silently in acceptance, and then Jesus stepped forward and took from His hand the scroll with the seven seals.

All who stood before Jesus knelt and worshipped Him as He opened the first seal that released the Holy Spirit, symbolized by a

rider on a white horse, to spread the Gospel everywhere on Earth. Together they would go forth to conquer evil and save mankind.

He opened the second seal, symbolized by a rider on a red horse for the machine of war, for Satan would fight against the Holy Spirit and any spread of the Gospel.

He opened the third seal, symbolized by a rider on a black horse, for famine, which would follow in the wake of war.

He opened the fourth seal, symbolized by a rider on a pale horse for pestilence and death, for Death and Hades would feast in the ravages of war.



God waited two millennia while the four horsemen raced across the face of the Earth. When the appointed hour arrived to bring in the End of Days, Jesus opened the fifth seal, and the martyred saints beneath the altar of Heaven cried out for justice. He told them justice would come, but they had to wait a while longer.

Jesus then sent the Archangel Gabriel to tell Satan that it was time to retrieve the first demon to possess the Antichrist. The seven-year Tribulation would soon begin, and Satan would make his last attempt to take over heaven and reign as God.



“And no wonder, for even Satan masquerades as an angel of light.”

— 2 CORINTHIANS 11:14

Mount Hermon, Lebanon, A.D. 2093

The giant red dragon perched high on Mt. Hermon and surveyed his domain. The sun drifted up in the east and bathed the terrain below in bright orange splendor. Long had he labored to possess the land which ran south and west from Mt. Hermon, for it belonged to God and He had given it to His people thousands of years past. It was known as the Promised Land, and His chosen people, the Jews, had once inhabited it entirely.

Lucifer eventually drove the Jews out of the Promised Land, but they'd returned thousands of years later to create the State of Israel. Since then they'd remained strong, but their time of rule was coming to an end. Soon the Holy Land would fall from God's Grace, and the red dragon would rule Israel once again. As god of this age and ruler of this world as it pertained to unbelievers, he strove

constantly to increase the breadth of his influence on Earth. Israel would soon be in his grasp, and then the remainder of the world would fall.

His reign here was not yet supreme, however. The End Days had arrived, and it was nearly time to begin the Tribulation, the final seven years before the return of the Son. If the words of the simpering apostle John were to be taken as truth, Satan would lose the battle at Armageddon and be imprisoned for a thousand years.

The Red Dragon had other plans. The mightiest of all creation, and God's nemesis, he would not be sent to the Pit in chains so easily. His alliance with Death and Hades had grown after their defeat at Golgotha, and together they'd tirelessly planned the final defeat of the Son.

Lucifer also had a holy army of Men to join the battle at Armageddon, and a countless host of demons at his command. His greatest hope, however, was placed on the third of the angels in heaven who'd sworn allegiance to him long ago. They all waited in secret until the time came for Lucifer to ascend to heaven and make war with God. Then they would turn on their brothers and destroy them.

The red dragon sensed a presence behind him, and a familiar voice invaded his musings.

"Gloat to the full, brother, but your days of freedom are now truly numbered."

Lucifer did not bother to turn, but simply said, "So, God's little courier bears a missive for the great Satan. Deliver it and be gone."

Gabriel half smiled at the arrogant quip. "The Son has opened the Fifth Seal, and it's time to collect your demon. He'll be released at the shores near Pergamum, by the Mother of the Seas, on the day of the Dark Moon."

Lucifer nodded. So, it was indeed time. Finally, billions of years after his first discontent with God, they would have their final battle. It would happen in the land below, in the valley of Megiddo, some seven years from this day.

He turned his head in Gabriel's direction, and said, "So be it. Tell

your master that when He rides Zakiah down from heaven, I will be here to destroy them both.”

Even now the coldness of his brother’s words surprised Gabriel. His hate for the Son was no surprise, but to extend it to His beloved white steed, Zakiah, was strikingly malicious. Gabriel resisted the urge to berate Lucifer, and said, “I suppose you will again present yourself as God’s little courier when you have your demon in hand?”

Lucifer turned fully to look at Gabriel. “Yes, your trusted and over glorified name will be of use to me once more. A second man named Muhammad will fall victim to it just as the first. Be proud, brother, that my finest deception on mankind was first promoted in your name. The world’s mightiest holy army began with an Angel of Light named Gabriel in a cave near Medina.”

The reference to Islam’s creation did not engender the least bit of pride in Gabriel. To have his name used in such a way had grieved him dearly, and to have it occur again was almost too much to bear. In every case where Gabriel or another angel had been sent to someone, the angel had always comforted them and told them not to be afraid. Even God, when he spoke to Abraham, told him to have no fear.

The man who would be called the Prophet Muhammad, however, had had a different experience when he’d encountered an Angel of Light in the Cave of Hira. He was thrown to the ground and choked three times in succession by the “Angel Gabriel” until he spoke the words he was ordered to speak. Terrified after the experience, he’d run home to his wife, Khadijah, and told her to cover him with blankets. He was convinced for a year that he’d been possessed by a demon and tried several times to kill himself. Each time, however, the “Angel Gabriel” called him back to serve Allah, until Muhammad finally surrendered to his fate.

No other man or woman called to the service of the true God Yahweh was ever treated in this manner, but Muhammad eventually convinced his followers that he had been chosen by the god named Allah to be his prophet.

Most of Muhammad and Allah’s followers have no idea to this day that Lucifer was the angel who tutored Muhammad. The Devil had

created the most bloodthirsty army the world had ever seen, and now they'd have a new leader. The long-awaited savior of the Islamic people, the Mahdi, would soon make his appearance and lead them through the seven-year Tribulation as the Antichrist. He would attempt his ultimate goal of destroying the Jews and Christians, and converting the world's entire population to Islam.

Gabriel beheld the prideful Lucifer with disgust. Once the leader of the angels and the High Priest of Heaven, he was now the enemy of all Creation. Gabriel resisted the familiar urge to destroy his brother before he could implement his plans for the world. As much as he wished to intervene, the Son had foreseen all of this before He began Creation, and Gabriel would have to watch it unfold like the other angels in Heaven.

His thoughts turned to the Seven, and for a moment, he envied them. They had risked a great deal but took the actions that so many of the heavenly angels desired to take. Nevertheless, Uriel and the others had disobeyed God, something Gabriel would never do. He felt a distant call from heaven, and with a final scowl of disapproval at Lucifer, he vanished from the windswept mountain.

Alone once again, Lucifer scanned the land of Israel with a ravenous glare. This area had been his domain long ago, when he was first known as Helel, and King of the First Earth. His reign over the Earth and its Pre-Adamic humans ended with his Fall from Heaven, but this time he would succeed in defeating God.

There was much to do before then, and eager to begin, he, too, vanished from Mt. Hermon.



Wind Cave, Wyoming, A.D. 2093

Staff Sergeant John Bennett halted his men. The smoke grenades from the rebels compromised visibility in the dark cave, so his team relied heavily on thermal imaging and sonar mapping supplied by their surveillance drones. All three of the tiny advance drones warned of a thermal presence ahead.

“We have contact around the next corner, Sarge,” Corporal Blair said. In addition to hearing the pings in his own headset, Blair also had a small monitor which showed him the layout of the cave and the location of the person lying in wait.

Bennett gave the monitor a quick glance and nodded to Blair. Bennett was surprised that anyone was still alive after the last drone attack.

After losing too many good men in an attempt to clean out the vast cave network, Bennett’s commanding officer, Major Carl Ashley, had ordered all his men to exit the cave. He’d then ordered the release of a squadron of Hunter Killer drones, and for the next two hours the caves had echoed with the sounds of small-arms fire, high explosive detonations, and the screams of dying men. Ashley then withdrew the

remainder of the drone squadron, and sent Bennett and his team in to mop up.

Bennett didn't like caves, and entering one after it had been riddled with high explosive rounds was even less appealing. He didn't relish the thought of being buried alive if a section of the cave crumbled down on him and his team. But he had a job to do, and putting an end to this group of extremists would send a strong message to the rest of those who wished to do the country harm.

In decades past, Islamic loyalists had joined ranks with the remaining Mexican drug cartels and formed a series of well-defended separatist camps within America. They'd recently been energized by the fact that most of the world was now under Shari'a law, and they reasoned it was only a matter of time before Allah liberated them from their Western oppressors. They believed the Mahdi would be revealed soon, and they'd join their worldwide Muslim brothers in allegiance to the Awaited Savior.

The Council for Allah's Rightful Empire, or CARE as they referred to themselves, had for the most part remained within their compounds, but lately they'd begun to follow the example of the Prophet Muhammed and raid the surrounding cities and towns for food, women, and anything else they needed. They were well armed and beyond the ability of local law enforcement to control, and in a change of U.S. policy, President Judah Levin ordered the military to round them up.

The seizure and control of the compound nestled in the Grand Tetons had been a short and efficient campaign, but when most of the hardened fighters retreated into Wind Cave, the fighting got bloody and intense.

It was quickly obvious that luring the Army into the heavily booby-trapped and fortified cave complex had been planned well in advance. If CARE could claim a victory against the United States Army Special Forces here, it would seriously damage the people's opinion of the President and his ongoing battle against Shari'a. Nearly half the population wanted the U.S. to surrender to the Swords of Allah, or SOA, the Muslim Brotherhood organization running the

Islamic caliphate that controlled all Islamic-controlled countries. Failure to stop the SOA would ultimately mean the end of the United States and its subsequent Islamic control under Shari'a law.

There were powerful factions within the new Peace Movement that supported Shari'a in hopes of being favored when the SOA claimed America and what was left of the free world.

The other half of the country were fiercely set against it. They knew what was at stake if America fell to Islamic control: The end of the free world, and those who refused to convert and live under Shari'a law would be executed; only Muslims would be allowed to live in the final world Allah and his Prophet envisioned. Orthodox Jews in particular, like President Levin, would be killed immediately. There would be no place for a *kafir* to hide, or live, in a world ruled by Shari'a jihadis, except as slaves or *dhimmis*.

The Peace Movement, with its media and celebrity mouthpieces, praised Islam's "peaceful" ways and effectively numbed the masses' minds. They ignored the ongoing acts of jihad against innocent civilians and pointed to the many Muslims who lived in peace and caused no trouble. They discounted the fact that the "radicalized" Muslims were actually following what the Quran and the Sunna said they should do.

Peaceful Muslims had veered away from Islam and its call for constant jihad against the infidel. In the few remaining countries which were still free, thousands of these peaceful Muslims had converted to another religion or given up religion altogether. These former Muslims now stood with the leaders of the remaining free countries in their alliance with President Levin in his fight against Shari'a and Islamic oppression.

These former Muslims knew what true oppression was, and had no desire to live under it ever again; they served in every capacity required to ensure the safety and freedom of the countries they called home.

Unfortunately, there were few places left that former Muslims could call home. Israel, under the leadership of Prime Minister Aaron Windsor, remained free, though isolated from its allies. Russian

President Dakota Sokolov, Chinese President Yong Ling, and Japanese Prime Minister Riku Saxe held a close alliance on the Asian continent. Australian Prime Minister Mina Turner held a strong yet remote defense of her continent, and Canadian Prime Minister Hazel Lambert joined forces with Mexican President Carlos Moran in a Triumvirate with President Levin. These eight nations were the last strongholds of freedom on the Earth, but within these nations, even in America, freedom held only a slight edge.

Those faithful to the Quran and the Sunna and Shari'a existed in the millions in America and posed a significant threat. Their ongoing campaigns of fear and intimidation were highly effective, and those who were willing to engage them in combat were few.

As the battle for America and the rest of the free world raged on, despite, or perhaps because of, the Peace Movement's promise of peace, the United States military found it increasingly difficult to recruit fighters.

The latest polling showed the majority of the country felt that a draft had to be implemented to deploy a force to save the free world. The President had expressed his reluctance to initiate a draft, but unless circumstances changed it would be inevitable.

Until then, Bennett and his small group of specialized men would continue doing what they were born to do.

Most, if not all of the remaining CARE rebels were dead, and Bennett considered using a grenade to finish off the survivor around the corner. He quickly dismissed the idea. Somehow, he had survived the HK drones, and Bennett wanted to know how.

"Send the drones in and give him a good buzz and see what happens. Maybe they can get a visual of him through all this smoke."

Corporal Blair maneuvered the controls attached to the monitor. The infrared feeds from the drones showed them approach and hover closely over a human body. As the video feeds came in, they could faintly see he was a Caucasian male, mid-thirties, dressed in military fatigues and was actually or pretending to be unconscious. Blair sent the drones in closer, but there was still no response from the man. They could detect he was breathing and clearly alive.

“Keep an eye on him,” Bennett said, and slowly picked his way through the rock-strewn cave toward the unconscious man.

He cleared the corner tactically as he came around it and the unconscious man came into view. Bennett’s night vision goggles revealed a short length of cave that eventually turned another corner into darkness. He remained behind cover and kept his rifle trained on the man lying on the floor. The three small drones still hovered directly above the prostrate man, sensitive to any movement he might make.

Bennett waited a long minute, and then spoke into his mouthpiece, “Send a drone to the next corner.”

A few seconds later one of the drones peeled away and disappeared around the distant corner.

“It’s all clear, Sarge. I’ll leave the drone posted there,” Blair said.

“Good, bring the rest of the team.” When his men were assembled, Bennett motioned his robotics’ tech forward. “He’s on his belly, RC. We need to flip him over.”

RC nodded and removed his pack, withdrew a medium-sized robotic vehicle and powered it up. He chose a saucer-sized open clamp from a variety of attachments, and clipped a rope into its ring. He used a small remote to send the vehicle toward the unconscious man. When he was within range, he clipped the clamp around the man’s upper right arm and locked it in place. There was no visible response from the fellow on the floor. RC brought the small rover back, leaving the rope connected to the clamp.

Blair recalled one of the drones so they wouldn’t lose both of them if there was an explosion.

RC picked up the rope attached to the man’s arm, and Bennett helped him pull on it and turn him over. The video feed from the drone showed there was nothing underneath the body but a mass of bloody dirt. They could see him move and they heard him mutter something.

The drone posted at the end of the cave still showed an all clear.

Bennett motioned his medic forward. “Check him out, Stitch; if anything looks off, you get back here ASAP.”

Stitch nodded and moved forward with his rifle trained on the unconscious man. When he reached him, it was apparent he'd almost bled out. The source of blood loss was from his left arm, which had been pinned beneath him. His sleeve had mostly been torn off, and the biceps and triceps muscles had been stripped from the bone. The man was close to death, but still whispering something.

Stitch leaned in close, and the man said, "Dra . . . gun." Then he was dead.

Stitch patted him down, and finding no explosives or other threats, he signaled the all clear for the team to move forward.

Bennett crouched down next to him as the other three men stood guard.

"Never seen a wound like that, Sarge," Stitch said quietly. "Before he died he said something about some kind of a gun. That ain't no gun wound; looks more like a bite to me. That type of injury, he must have been in agony, and wouldn't have traveled far. Thing is, the battle drones left here an hour ago, but this wound is fresh. Looks like he knew enough to compress the artery, but once he fell, it was all over. Whatever happened to him happened less than twenty minutes ago."

A piercing shriek suddenly echoed from the darkness ahead of them, sending a crawling chill through every man there. Battle-hardened from some of the worst conflicts in recent times, they had heard every shriek of pain and terror that a human could make. They knew to a man that whatever creature had made that sound wasn't human.

Bennett and Stitch came to their feet as the shriek sounded again, closer this time. Bennett motioned for his men to fan out and take defensive positions. Bennett pointed at Blair and to the end of the cave.

The corporal nodded and sent the two drones hovering above him down to join the third, and together they began surveying the next section of cave. The deeper the drones went, the thicker the smoke was and the poorer the visibility. Video feeds were useless and Blair switched to thermal scanning combined with sonar mapping.

Bennett watched their progress on Blair's monitor, and then

turned to his comm tech. “Smack, update the major, tell him I vote we move forward, shrieks in the dark or no.”

Smack contacted the command post on his low-frequency through-the-Earth wireless device and updated Major Ashley. He listened for a moment and after a quiet, “Yes, sir,” hung up, and gave Bennett a short nod.

Ten minutes passed with no more shrieks or sounds of any kind. The drones had advanced a fair distance down the next section of cave and their feeds showed no signs of any life.

Before moving on, Bennett signaled his men to take a rest; everyone needed to be fresh for the next stage.

His men adjusted their positions for comfort and to recharge and prepare to move forward.

Bennett made a final check to verify the area was secure before he found a clear spot on the cave floor for himself. He sat, breathing deeply of the stale-smelling, smoky air. Blair was monitoring the drones, and the rest of his men were alert. There was no way anything was going to sneak up on them, and with that bit of temporary safety, his wife Jenny sneaked into his thoughts.

They were going to have a baby soon, and he found it increasingly difficult to concentrate on his work. He’d mastered the art of suppressing his emotions long ago, but being married with a baby on the way had altered that dynamic. It just wasn’t as simple as it used to be. His days-long stretches of being totally focused on his work were over. He was also more cautious. Some of that was age and experience, but a big part of it was making sure he returned to his family, which is where he realized he wanted to be.

Two years of marriage and his desire to be gone from home had waned. His work often took him out of the country, and their time together was sporadic at best. Bennett loved his job, but he was beginning to realize he was going to have to make a choice soon. His love for his wife surpassed everything else in his life, and yet she got the least amount of his attention. And now a child would be competing for space in his life, too, and he couldn’t see how to give all three the time they deserved.

Bennett did things right or not at all, but he knew he was taking his marriage for granted; it was unacceptable.

Jenny got it, and supported the demands of his career, but she was having a difficult time with being alone so much. And now that their baby was on the way, she needed him near her more than ever.

He'd be going home soon, but for how long? How much time would he have to spend with her before he left again? Not knowing the answer to that question had been eating at him lately, breaking his concentration and stealing his sleep. Perhaps it was time to do something different.

Bennett decided the break was over, and quietly signaling his team, he led them forward into the smoky darkness.