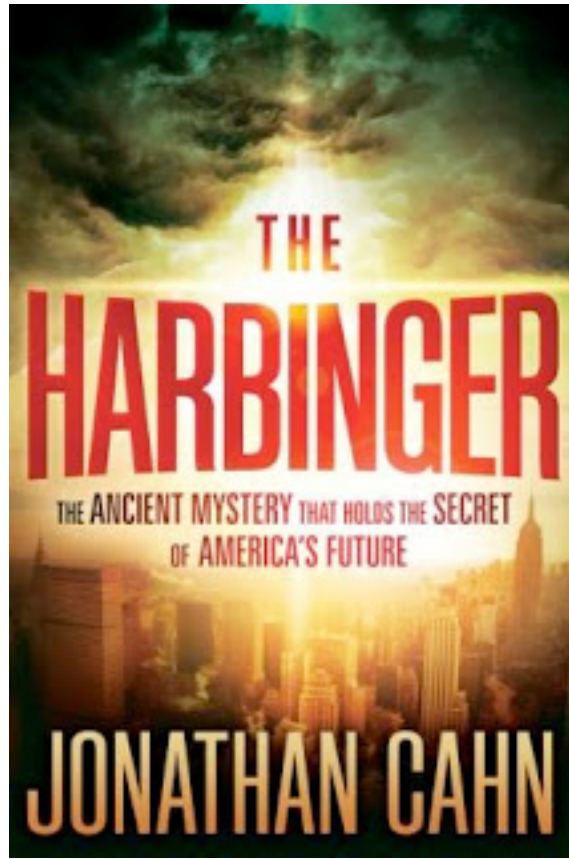


## A Commentary on The Harbinger

Posted by Christine Pack, Apologist

*(Update 9/5/13: After learning that Jonathan Cahn claims he is not a gnostic, I have edited this post to better reflect what I'm saying.)*



A book called *The Harbinger* is fast becoming a lightning rod issue among evangelical Christians, with many Christians saying it is exactly what America needs right now to "wake up" and repent, and come back to biblical truth, but other Christians having concerns over how Cahn interprets certain passages meant only for Israel as if they have application for America today. The cover of Cahn's book (*right*) states that **The Harbinger** is an "*Ancient Mystery that Holds the Secret of America's Future.*"

Could this be true? Could it be that there are hidden truths that need to be decoded and unveiled to Christians today? And if so, for what purpose? Cahn seems to think so, and has written a book which proclaims that. *The Harbinger* is a fiction book, and features a character known as The Prophet who is slowly giving seals to one of the main characters. These seals contain

messages (nine in all) which are meant to be put together as clues in a mystery, so that a final, distinct message will emerge and be revealed. This message, once decoded, is intimated to hold the secret to bringing America back to its moral center and becoming once again a Godly nation.

After hearing Jonathan Cahn speak a few times, and after reading the book, I will say that Cahn does give a clear gospel message in *The Harbinger*, but at the same time, I do have some concerns about this book which I will address here.

## Gnosticism

There is an exchange between two of the characters in *The Harbinger* who are discussing a secret message from a mysterious character ("The Prophet") in the book:

"It's the appointed time, but not for an ancient nation. It's time for the word to be given.....for the mystery to be revealed.....for the message to go forth. It's the appointed time—but not for an ancient nation." (*The Harbinger*, p 13)

Friends, anytime you see language like this, and like the language below (also from *The Harbinger*).....

- "ancient mystery hidden for thousands of years.....but now revealed"
- a "mystery" that holds a "secret" to our future
- "clues" needed to "unlock" a mystery
- "messages" that need to be "unveiled"

.....what you are dealing with is an ancient heresy called Gnosticism.

Gnosticism is a very old heresy that teaches that the truth has to be decoded, uncovered, unlocked, unveiled, discovered.

### Secret Knowledge = Gnosticism

Gnosticism is a heresy because, according to God, we are given all that we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3) in God's word. We don't need to decode secret mysteries, unravel sealed up messages, decipher clues, or pull back the veil on hidden things. All that we need, all that God wants us to know, is contained in the Bible. Now, I will grant that in the New Testament, Paul *does* talk about the **mystery** of Gentiles and Jews being united together in a common church and common faith (something that could have scarcely been imagined in Old Testament times). There is also the **mystery** of Jesus Christ, who was dimly glimpsed through types and shadows in the Old Testament, but Who was gloriously revealed in his

fullness as our Savior in the New Testament. But these are mysteries which are laid open for all to see and know and understand and respond to, and *not* clues on a Mysterious Journey to Somewhere (which is really the more western understanding of the word "mystery").

***"I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob's descendants, 'Seek me in vain.' I, the LORD, speak the truth; I declare what is right." (Isaiah 45:19)***

As a former Gnostic, I found great comfort as a born again Christian in understanding that all that God truly wants me to know He has plainly revealed in his Word. I spent more than a decade of my life as a New Ager/Gnostic going from teaching to teaching to teaching. I lost track of how many conferences I went to, books I purchased, teachers and gurus that I sought out, all in an effort to find truth. My quest for truth was sincere, but truth proved to be surprisingly elusive to attain. By the time God saved me, I was weary. I was worn out. I didn't have it in me to go after One More Thing. All I could think of at the end was that I wanted rest, just a little bit of rest, from all my fruitless searching. The Lord, in his infinite mercy, gave me rest by rescuing me out of the mire of man-made wisdom and giving me the elegant simplicity of his Word. There is such a lovely purity and clarity in knowing that I can rest securely in the knowledge that all that God wants me to know I can find in the Bible.

***"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)***

Now please understand that I'm not saying that Jonathan Cahn is a heretic or a gnostic. My concern, however, is in the way that Cahn seems to interpret at least portions of the Bible as if looking through the lens of gnosticism. And for myself personally, that hermeneutic of viewing the Bible as sort of this big pile of clues to be decoded is just not wise, and not a good interpretative model. If you are unfamiliar with the teaching of Gnosticism, please listen to Phil Johnson's in-depth discussion of Gnosticism. (Sound file below).

### **Fiction? or Fiction Masquerading Itself as Fact?**

Much like William P. Young's troublesome book *The Shack, The Harbinger* also has a fictional character who is teaching things that are contrary to Scripture, but which the author wants to claim as truth. Of course, when pressed on the biblical problems with the teachings, both Young and Cahn have resorted to saying, But it's only a fictional character! The problem with this is that Young and Cahn both personally believe what they have written, and are seeking to teach a wide audience of readers what they believe to be

true, while hiding behind the label "Fiction."

### **The Truth About America's Future**

The truth about America's future (and the future of all nations, for that matter), is that God holds the future in His hands. Yes, we should pray, we are commanded and exhorted to pray, but ultimately, we know that our sovereign Lord will work all things together for the good of those who love him and for HIS own purposes (Romans 8:28). And sometimes, in God's sovereign wisdom, this means that He will allow countries to fall, and nations to topple. Even, that is, nations that He has used in a mighty way to proclaim his truth to the world. I certainly do not desire to see America fall, and I pray for the leaders of this country, but at the same time, we know from the Bible that God has often used times of distress and difficulty as a means of chastening and disciplining his people.

***"The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will." (Proverbs 21:1)***

When I was a fairly new Christian, I came across a resource called [James Ussher's Chronological Chart of History](#) that helped steady my thinking in this regard. James Ussher was a 17th century Anglican bishop who painstakingly charted out the bloodline from Adam and Eve to Jesus. His chart features the Biblical timeline going across the top and the corresponding world history underneath it. It's so amazing to look at this chart, and see God's hand sovereignly guiding all of human history. Below the scarlet thread of Jesus's bloodline, you see nations and kings rise and fall, rise and fall, but above it all, God's bloodline marches steadily onward toward the fulfillment of his purposes.

As Americans, we tend to think that we are so mighty, the greatest nation on earth. Well, when you look at Ussher's timeline, you realize that ALL these kingdoms once had their day in the sun, but where are they now? Egypt was once the mightiest nation in the world, known for the architectural magnificence of their awe-inspiring pyramids, and for taming the Nile River. Babylon, known for their acclaimed Hanging Gardens, and brilliant military campaigns led by Nebuchadnezzar. Rome, their amazing Roman roads and contributions to education and government. Where are they now? Some of them are still around, but do they rule the world? Looking at this chart is truly humbling, and it brings the deeper realization that all that is here will one day be burned up and destroyed, when God himself creates a new

heavens and a new earth. *No* government that exists here on earth - not even America - will be reigning in that Kingdom to come. But this is not bad news, this is glorious, good news, that should gladden the heart of all who truly love God and bend the knee to his sovereign will and purposes.

As far as America goes, all people everywhere are commanded to repent and believe on Christ for the forgiveness of sins, but that is not the basic message of this book. This book teaches that there is a secret message encoded in the Bible that needs to be decoded to be understood, and if we will only buy this book and decode this message, then we can bring America back. But as I wrote above, this is the heresy of Gnosticism. Our country does not need a "special" Gnostic teaching to tell us more than we already know about repentance, salvation and the forgiveness of sins. In fact, I tend to agree with John MacArthur ([When God Abandons A Nation](#)), that when we look around us, we don't need to wonder, will we be judged? because we are **already under judgment**. First came the sexual revolution of the 60s/70s/80s ([Romans 1:24](#)), then came the homosexual revolution ([Romans 1:26-27](#)), and next comes the debased mind ([Romans 1:28](#)). We are following the trajectory laid out in Romans 1, and where we are indicates not a country that is basically good and can come back to its moral center, but a country that has been given over to its depravity. So we can churn out book after book about "taking back America" and "reclaiming America" (including Jonathan Cahn's *The Harbinger*), but in my opinion, America is past the tipping point. True Bible-believing Christians are in the minority in this country, and a minority is never going to reclaim a culture. We need to proclaim the gospel and snatch the few that we can from the flames.

**Jonathan Cahn Goes on Glenn Beck's Show To Discuss How To "Save A Nation" (Keep in mind: Glenn Beck is a Mormon, which is a cult.)**

Harbinger author Jonathan Cahn joined Mormon Glenn Beck for two segments of Beck's June 26/June 27 programs, and said the following things about *The Harbinger*:

"The Harbinger is a two and a half thousand year **mystery** that lies behind everything."

"The message of The Harbinger is not to condemn, it's to wake up and it's to call back. This is I believe coming out now for a reason, it's to save a nation, and to turn back."

"We can't maintain our blessings without God.....America is blessed as much as America follows God. If America does not follow God, you cannot expect the smiles of heaven."

Once again, a Gnostic teaching about a "mystery" that has to be decoded, and a call for America to turn back to God. But, why is Jonathan Cahn, who is a Christian pastor, linking with a Mormon (Glenn Beck) in order to proclaim his message? Christians and Mormons do not worship the same God, and for Cahn to appear with Mormon Glenn Beck and for the two to discuss God and America turning back to God can only serve to send a very confusing message to the world about who "God" is.

### **Conclusion**

Does *The Harbinger* hold clues to helping America find her way back God? In my view, Jonathan Cahn's book is "hooking" those Christians in America who are burdened over the rising tide of immorality in our country, and who desire for America to repent and come back to the Lord. This is not a wrong or wicked desire.....it's just that, it might not play out that way, in God's sovereign plan. And this desire can become problematic, especially when Christians begin linking with non-Christians (as Jonathan Cahn did with Mormon Glenn Beck) in an effort to force those desires to come to fruition.

***"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14)***