

BOOK THREE OF THE LAODICEA CHRONICLES

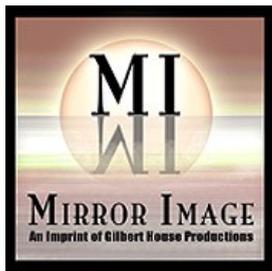
doctrines  
*of*  
DEMONS

AS A TEMPLE RISES ON EDEN'S HILLTOP,  
AN ANCIENT EVIL AWAKENS

SHARON K.  
GILBERT

# doctrines *of* DEMONS

Book Three of  
THE LAODICEA CHRONICLES



**Doctrines of Demons**  
Book Three of the Laodicea Chronicles

By Sharon K. Gilbert

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## AUTHOR'S FOREWARD

**W**riting a series of novels is a daunting task. When I began work on *The Laodicea Chronicles* in November 2002, I had the audacity to believe I could complete the entire series of four books within a year at the most. Little did I imagine the long and winding road publication would take, nor did I foresee the project in the hands of not one, but two publishing houses—nor that both would eventually abandon the series after publishing only the first book.

The Lord guides our footsteps according to His timing and His plans—no matter how much we might resist His tutelage. Thus, with halting gait, I've slowly learned to leave scheduling to Him.

As the years have passed since commencing with *Winds of Evil*, geopolitics and scientific breakthroughs have certainly influenced plot points, and I've done my best to keep one step ahead of current events. Also, the merging of the fictional realm of *Armageddon Strain* (originally written to serve as book one of the now defunct

*Countdown Series*) with *The Laodicea Chronicles* into one entity has altered my original, four-book plan.

As I move forward, all future novels that center around the current day spiritual battle will fall under the umbrella of *The Laodicea Chronicles*, and this book inaugurates this new path by incorporating main characters from *Armageddon Strain* into the mix. As such, I'd advise any reader who wishes to fully appreciate the events of this book to first read *Armageddon Strain* in addition to *Winds of Evil* and *Signs & Wonders*.

Thank you to all who have prayed for me as I've struggled to finish *Doctrines of Demons*. Some days I have approached the project with dread, while others I've felt inexplicable joy while watching my fingers produce scenes upon an electronic 'page'. By purchasing this or any of our books, you join with Derek and me in the calling to serve the Lord with our hearts, souls, and minds.

If you find errors in the content, feel free to let me know. Self-editing is foolish at best, but with our tiny budget, it's a necessary and expedient foolishness. I pray this book entertains but also educates and edifies. Most of all, I pray the Lord might use it for His perfect plans.

In Christ,  
*Sharon K. Gilbert*  
May 2011

*Ascendit a Terra in Coelum,  
iterumque descendit in Terram,  
et recipit Vim superiorum et inferiorum.*



It rises from Earth to Heaven, and then it descends again to the Earth, and receives Power from Above and from Below.

—The Emerald Tablet

“My dear children, you who stand here tonight shall bear witness to a new thing. Like the wizard of the great land of Oz, who reigned from an Emerald City, so too shall you soon reign as princes and princesses of a New Earth from our temple city, the Temple of the Seven Thunders. As I, the new Lazarus, was raised up to the heavens, so I have also descended to lead you who follow me into everlasting glory.”

—Jared Buchanan

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...

—I Timothy, 4:1

*For my beautiful mother, Ida Smith Ferguson, who left this world two years ago to join my father at the feet of our Savior in Heaven. Mom taught me to laugh, to appreciate literature and music, and the fine art of living life out loud.*



## PROLOGUE

*Ohio River Valley—Late Fall—540 A.D.*

**K**etowa's soft leather moccasins slipped on wet poplar leaves as he neared the edge of a massive shale cliff that overlooked the great, gray river dividing his tribe's land. His impossibly blue eyes scanned the wide, moss-covered footpath for signs of his pursuers—nothing—*yet*.

Pausing for a moment, the tall warrior bent forward and grabbed both knees; he gratefully sucked in cool night air to fill his burning lungs. The brave had been running for nearly an hour. To his right, he could hear a group of gray squirrels fighting for control of a skeletal, oak tree. To his left, a pair of iridescent yellow eyes blinked. *Grandfather Owl*, Ketowa thought. *He watches me.*

Winter's hoar-coat hung like a glittering shroud in the air, and every animal knew he must claim his territory

and his food now, or he would not live to see the warm sun return with spring rains—if it returned at all.

Ketowa prayed that he would live to see the spring. As he gathered his strength, his mind fought against the memories of the past year: terrifying truths that had driven most of the Mandan Tribe to follow the gray river to better lands in the west. Whether these deserters were cowards or prophets, Ketowa did not know.

The Evil Times had begun when a massive, flaming stone had fallen from the sky. Far to their south, toward the big sea, the land had burned for weeks, and a dense cloud of angry, blue smoke had covered nearly all the Mandan lands. Soon after, *They* had emerged from beneath the burning waters: The Tall Whites, followed six months later by the Giants with iron teeth. No one could stop their passage as the ravenous Monsters ate their way north, toward Mandan lands. Brave after brave had tried to end the creatures' unflagging march to the north—but each found only death—or worse.

Panting in the evening air, Ketowa thought of his grandfather—blind and toothless. Of his mother, Lahoma, and of his wife, Nehema. Who would look after them if he, too, failed in this quest?

Summoning all his courage, the Mandan warrior turned back toward the caves beneath the high cliff. Beneath its lofty precipice, ancient tunnels led to a bottomless pit from which the ravenous giants had emerged into Mandan lands—had it been but two moons ago? The ground below the cliff formed a garden of bones, picked over by birds and worse, the Flying Shadows.

Two moons ago, almost to the day—two moons since the Arrival. Now, gnawing hunger haunted the tribe's

night fires. The fox, deer, and rabbit had all but vanished from the woods. Desperate for food, Ketowa's father and the few remaining elders had crossed the cracked, dry floor of the wide riverbed into the haunted ground that would one day be named Kentucky.

Travelers had once called it a land of plenty with wild fruit and enough game to feed thousands, but all that the half-starved hunters found were three small baskets of blackberries, one basket of wild turnips, and a brace of rabbits. The magnificent burial mounds that dotted the forested land had been ransacked, and the treasures scattered among ancestral bones. Gnarled thorns grew among rotting stacks of corpses, half-eaten—their twisted faces forever questioning an indifferent sky. Among the grisly city of bones, the elders discovered a crazed old woman who told them tales of the giant man-eaters who had come up from beneath the ground.

Only she had survived the massacre, she told them. Only she remained of over three hundred men, women, and children, whose only mistake was to sojourn too long in haunted territory where aging, earth mountains climbed to heaven.

“They ate our bravest first,” she whispered to the women of Ketowa's tribe in the moonlight. “Then they ate the beating hearts of the helpless—the sick, feeble, and the youngest children. They laughed as they did so, for they said such young hearts would make them stronger, while their innocent blood filled their bellies with sweet screams! Finally, they took the maidens with pretty faces and lay with them. This they did to leave their seed, for the Tall Whites are men only; they have no women kind. When the children were born, they grew to be

giants within weeks—with sharp teeth in their pale mouths, and they bit their mothers as they suckled. This they did until old enough to chew meat—which happened in but two moons, for they grew as quickly as the bitter vines—it was then *they ate their own mothers!*”

“How did you escape, Grandmother?” a terrified listener had asked, offering up respect in the title given to wise women. “How?”

The old woman had laughed for a long time at this simple question. It was later said by some that she eyed the youngster, licked her lips hungrily, and vanished! Others claimed she became a puff of black smoke that whirled over their heads in the night before cutting a swathe through the treetops; others that she attacked and ate a dog—raw; yet others said the old woman had never even existed, that she was nothing more than a moon-shadow.

No matter, for the old woman had surely vanished by the following morning, and fear had taken root in the hearts of once fearless men.

One turn of the moon later, the first Flying Shadows emerged from the caves beneath the cliffs. The Shadows—like monstrous, light-eating birds—flew against the pale moon’s face, their smoky wings wide and terrifying, and their cries awakening all who dared sleep.

Close behind the Shadows, came the Tall Whites: fantastic, pale-skinned warriors with golden hair and ruby eyes. Some wore metal garments while others wore nothing at all. They towered over Ketowa’s people: an amazing feat, for many braves in Ketowa’s unusual tribe stood well over six feet tall themselves, having inherited

the height, light complexions, and pale eyes of distant ancestors from beyond the rising sun.

Behind the Tall Whites came their hybrid children—the Giants with Iron Teeth.

Soon, the valley sprouted fields of blood, and bleached bones littered the shoreline of the great river. Monstrous children had burst from raped maiden's bellies, devouring maternal flesh with milky white teeth.

Now, only Ketowa remained of the braves, and only his mother and wife remained of the women. Nehema, though beautiful, had kept her bed, miraculously untouched by the demonic Tall Whites. As directed by the Great God, Ketowa had hidden both her and his mother in the rocks near the top of the hill where God spoke. *You must fight, Ketowa, the Great Father had told him. I will keep Nehema and your unborn child safe, but you must fight.*

This strengthened the lonely warrior. He would face the Tall Whites. He would face the Giants with Iron Teeth. He would invade their territory and claim their dark lands. Tonight, either they must yield or he must die.

Ketowa's brown hand closed around the hilt of a glittering bone-handled knife—a gift from his dead father. "For my mother! For my grandfather and my father!" he cried, running toward the black mouth of the mammoth cavern's entrance. His deer-skin moccasins beat rhythmically upon the decaying leaves as he neared the glimmering, ruby eyes that awaited him in the dark. The Tall Whites. The Giants with bloody, Iron Teeth. The Shadows that stole children from their beds.

"For my wife and my unborn son!" he cried, the flint

and bone knife glinting in the late evening's orange sun. His feet pounded the stones at the cave's entrance, but soon stopped.

Hot scarlet gushed upon the cold, brown leaves.

Teeth gnashed, and a ghostly wail split the cool air.

From the safety of God's hill, Nehema heard and the child stirred within her womb.

The fragile warrior's wife closed her dark eyes.

"I am a widow," she wept, leaning upon her mother-in-law's breast. "Only the Great God can save us now."

=====

*October 24th – a farm outside Eden, Indiana*

**"T**wo more levels and I'm king of the underworld!"

Jacob Lancer typed the message (actually spelled, 2 mr lvls & Im kng ndrwrld) and hit 'send'. He picked up the game controller. The eerie glow of the hand-me-down television screen cast long, slender shadows all around the darkened, attic bedroom, but rather than frighten the twelve-year-old, the macabre play of light and shadow enhanced the video game experience.

Jake had bid his parents goodnight more than two hours before, promising to shut off the game by ten—to-night was after all a school night—but he'd managed to finish off the Iron Troll in the final room of Level 5, giving him the master key he needed to unlock Levels 6 and 7—how could he quit now? Grownups simply didn't understand the importance of finishing an impossibly hard

labyrinth first. Besides, Lancer had a hard-won reputation to uphold: Greatest gamer at Eden Elementary.

His iPhone beeped—another message from Kris West, number two gamer and Jake’s BFF—best friend forever.

*@ cavern on lvl 6*, West’s message stated.

*lvl 6 rocks. 4 trolls near lake*, Jake sent in return.

Lancer’s limber right wrist flew up, down, and in circles as he slashed at a River Zombie near the base of Indigo Waterfalls. He had a mini-boss to fight once he reached the hidden room behind the falls, so he decided to find a nearby town to fill up on life and magic.

*Tkg a brk*, he messaged to Kris. *Food. More later.*

Jake slid the phone into his back pocket and set the Wii game on pause. His parents had long ago shifted into sleep mode. His mom Vivian Lancer, a legal assistant who worked for Mayor Sturgill, had most certainly taken her nightly cocktail of multicolored capsules; nuclear war wouldn’t wake her before six. And his father’s ears were most likely stuffed with cotton to keep out the never-ending, nightly symphony of government helicopters patrolling Ben Miller’s farm.

Living so close to the Miller place had its drawbacks and its perks. Twice after school, Jake had sneaked across his dad’s soybean field to snap phone pix of the crop circles, and he’d even photographed several government men in black suits as well as a scientist in full Hazmat gear. Jake had uploaded the blurry photos to eBay with a reserve of \$100 each. Within days, a mysterious, online buyer bid full price for the digital images, which boosted his secret Paypal account enough to buy the Wii console and three new games.

Jake's parents only mildly questioned the source of their son's newfound wealth. He'd managed to convince them he was simply thrifty with his allowance. Slipping his rotten younger sister a ten now and then kept her loose lips buttoned tightly.

Downstairs, Jake's bare feet slapped and echoed on the aging oak floorboards of the empty kitchen. As always, his mother had left a nightlight burning over the stove. The 40-watt glow allowed Jake to navigate without switching on any new lights.

He opened the side-by-side fridge and rummaged through plastic tubs of leftovers. Nothing looked particularly good to his twelve-year-old palate, so he shut the doors and turned his attention toward the pantry, where BBQ chips and brownies begged to be consumed. Never one to turn down junk food lures, the boy grabbed an unopened bag of chips and two packages of brownies along with a super-sized box of imitation orange drink.

The iPhone dinged as he turned toward the back staircase (a remnant of the farm's glory days when the original owners had a live-in maid), but both of the boy's hands were busy carrying the goodies. *I'll get to you in a minute*, he thought, his brain now fixed on salt and sugar.

Back inside the bedroom, the game console hummed, and the frozen, CGI image of the waterfall battleground flickered rhythmically upon the steep angles of the room's light blue, plastered walls.

Outside, a full moon emerged from its hiding place behind a bank of long, low clouds.

Silhouetted against the perfect harvest panorama, Jake could see the outline of a black helicopter.

Ding!

Anderson set down the snack food and reached for the iPhone.

*Choppers by U*, Kris wrote.

*Like evry nt*, Jake returned with lightning speed.

*UFO seen*.

*New?* Jake asked.

*Yep. By U. BIG. Mother ship BIG.*

Jake's thumbs started typing a reply, but the room suddenly blacked out—no power anywhere in the isolated farmhouse—even the generator failed to kick on.

*Power outage again*, the boy thought gloomily. “Dang it all! My game!” he shouted aloud, oblivious to the possibility that his parents might hear.

Ding!

“Dang it, Kris! Not now!” Jake cried out as he racked his brain trying to remember whether or not he'd saved the game at the last town.

Jake's eyes slowly accommodated to the semi-darkness. The moon's silvery light spread out over mature, soybean fields below his window. A barn owl hooted from the eaves above, but an odd, flapping sound sent the owl scurrying from its perch.

Jacob's eyes followed the owl as it soared into the sky toward Miller's fields—then he saw IT—hovering impossibly, just outside the window. Like something out of a horror movie.

Jake could make out massive leathery wings, beating slowly against a humanoid body.

Glowing, ruby eyes.

*It looks like that Mothman thing*, Jake thought for a crazy second.

The creature stared at the boy, unblinking, as it hovered just outside the window.

Jake reached for his cell phone and deftly turned on the camera. The strange creature's head tilted to one side, as if studying the boy's actions.

"Take this, Mothman!" Jake shouted, clicking the camera several times.

Behind him, the television screen suddenly returned to life, and the video game's soundtrack—which had been muted—blasted the small bedroom with sounds of rushing water, swords clashing, and computerized music.

Jake turned toward the sounds, panicked. "No!" he cried out, terrified that his parents would wake up and find him playing the Wii on a school night.

He needn't have worried. When morning came, Jake would be long gone. And within days, his face would be plastered all over Eden, Indiana as the latest in a long line of missing persons.