

Study Series 16 Lesson 1: Revelation – Dating, Introduction, and Rev. 1:1 – 4:11

DATING OF REVELATION

There are a significant number of traditions and opinions from the patristic writers, which have been used on both sides of this debate about the date of the book of Revelation. But very little of that **uninspired** patristic testimony carries any weight, simply because most of it cannot be confirmed **at the mouth of two or more reliable first century eyewitnesses**. Most of it is merely external *hearsay* evidence and opinion, and some of it even tends to *contradict* scripture. Over 130 authors, most of whom are futurists, have advocated a pre-AD 70 date for the book of Revelation. And almost all of them place it during the reign of Nero (AD 54-68). But even with such a long list of writers it is still not the argument a student of the Word should use for the early date. Truth is never to be determined by a majority vote or a popularity contest. It does not matter how many names we can stack up on either side of this debate.

What does matter, however, are the reasons that these writers give to support the early date, and especially the evidence **inside** the book of Revelation which points **most clearly and forcefully to a pre-70 date**. The only kind of evidence that can decide this issue is biblical evidence, and especially that evidence which comes from inside the book of Revelation itself. So, in our Study Series we will be focusing a lot of our attention on the internal evidence for a pre-70 date of the book of Revelation.

As we all know, the interpretation of most Biblical books is not significantly affected by differences of opinion about its date of composition. But the book of Revelation is a clear exception to that. Its meaning and application is radically affected by its date of writing.

And since Dr. Kenneth Gentry has already done such a marvelous job of the internal and external evidence proving that the book of Revelation was written Before Jerusalem Fell, we will not spend many words here to cover that ground (See his scholarly work, “**Before Jerusalem Fell: the Dating of Revelation**” for a modern most scholarly work which is re-changing the landscape and opinions in seminaries today. I believe it leaves no doubt on the dating of Revelation to be pre-AD 70. A must read for every serious student of the Bible).

Let's go to the book of Revelation for a brief look at some of the contextual information, combined with some historical facts.

At the beginning and end of the Apocalypse there are several statements which claim the radical nearness of the events mentioned here. And throughout the book there are numerous allusions to historical conditions and situations that were unique to a pre-70 timeframe, which cannot apply after AD 70.

We will deal with each of these following passages in depth throughout Study Series 16, but for now let's just read all of these to get the sense of imminence throughout the Revelation:

Rev. 1:1-3 "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the **things which must soon take place**; and He sent and communicated *it* by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, *even* to all that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for **the time is near.**"

This theme of **urgency** permeates the rest of the book. Notice just some of the many references to the ***imminence of fulfillment***:

Rev. 2:5 "Therefore remember from where **you** have fallen, and repent and do the deeds **you** did at first; **or else I am coming to you** and will *remove* your lampstand out of its place—**unless you repent.**"

Rev. 2:16 "Therefore **repent; or else I am coming to you quickly**, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth."

Rev. 3:10-11 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the **hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world**, to test those who dwell on the earth. **'I am coming quickly**; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

Rev. 10:6 "and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there **will be delay no longer,**"

Rev. 11:14 "The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is **coming quickly.**"

Rev. 12:2 "and she was with child; and she cried out, **being in labor and in pain to give birth.**"

Rev. 14:7 "and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment **has come**; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."

Rev. 22:6-7 And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants **the things which must soon take place**. "And behold, **I am coming quickly**. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."

Rev. 22:10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for **the time is near**."

Rev. 22:12 "Behold, **I am coming quickly**, and My reward *is* with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."

Rev. 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "**Yes, I am coming quickly**." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

- These TIME statements are too many and too varied to dismiss. If soon did not mean "soon" to them, how can it mean soon to us? Indeed, how can it ever be fulfilled if it was not fulfilled within the "soon" timeframe that John stated here?

- Daniel was told to seal up his book "**until** the time of the end" (Dan 12:4). But John is told NOT to seal up his book "because the time **is at hand**" (Rev 22:10). Furthermore, Daniel was told that more information about the End of Days (the Last Days) would be given at the time of the end, and the book of Revelation appears to be that very revelation that was promised!

- The book of Revelation deals with four major events:

1. The Soon Coming of Christ
2. The death of one of the horns of the Beast
3. The downfall of the Great City Babylon (the Harlot)
4. The end to a very threatening great tribulation

And as we have seen, the Apocalypse repeatedly affirms the radical nearness of Christ's return and these other end-time events. At the beginning and the end of the book it says that "these things must take place soon" because "the time" for their fulfillment was "at hand." And here is the point that our futurist brothers need to carefully consider:

If the book was written in AD 95 (like futurists think) then they will have to find some major event which happened shortly after AD 95 which was significant enough to call it "the Second Coming", the death of one of the horns of the Beast, the destruction of the Great City Babylon, and the end of a very threatening great tribulation which would see a great multitude of martyrs killed from every nation! How did all four of those things occur shortly after AD 95?

The city of Rome didn't fall for another 400 years! The Roman persecution didn't end in AD 95, and didn't end until two and a half centuries later! ***Nothing significant to both Jews and Christians happened shortly after AD 95! That alone shows that AD 95 has to be the wrong date***, and that AD 70 has to be the right one! Revelation must be discussing AD 70, an event **so important that the Bible couldn't ignore it** and deal instead with lesser-important events (like the death of Domitian).

And from the Jewish viewpoint, it would be unthinkable that God would have wiped out His chosen people without at least one book of prophecy dealing with it! Even the lesser-important Babylonian destruction of 586 BC had numerous prophetic books written about it (before, during and afterwards), and the language describing that destruction is extremely similar to the language in Revelation. Before God disciplined His people He **always** raised up prophets to warn the people to repent, especially if there was going to be a massive destruction (like AD 70)! And He always gave them written books of prophecy in connection with those destructions. It just doesn't seem likely that God would devote a whole book of prophecy to the death of some pagan ruler like Domitian in AD 96, and not give an even more detailed book of prophecy about apostate Israel's massive destruction! Revelation **must** be that book!

What "Great City" important to Christians and Jews fell "shortly" after AD 95? What great persecution which was a real threat to the church ended "shortly" after AD 95? None did! But according to Jesus in Matthew 24, it was the *destruction of Jerusalem* which would see a *coming of Christ in connection with it*. And there was certainly a fulfillment of the downfall of the Great City and an end to the great tribulation in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

1. GENERAL EVIDENCE FOR A PRE-70 DATE:

There are several passages inside Revelation which point clearly to a date before AD 70. Let's look at some of them:

Many commentaries note that the theme of the book is found in Rev 1:7 (again, we will look at each of these following passages in more detail as to their full richness in meaning once we start our chapter by chapter study later):

"Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, **even those who pierced Him**; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen." [Rev. 1:7]

Notice that the eyes which would see Him coming with the clouds would include at least some of “those who pierced him.” Think about that. Are any of those folks who pierced Jesus still alive today? And this theme verse sets the stage for four other places in the book where Jesus repeatedly affirms the nearness of His coming at the time when the book was written:

Rev. 3:11 ‘I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

Rev. 22:7 “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”

Rev. 22:12 “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

Rev. 22:20 “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

And as a matter of historical fact, Josephus documented the very “day and hour” of His appearance in the sky with His angelic armies [Josephus *Wars* 6.298-300 (6.5.3) “...before sunset, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. Moreover at that feast which we call **Pentecost**, as the priests were going by **night** into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence."][See **Study Series 7 Lesson 3a2 Matthew 24 Fulfillments** for a more detailed look into the writings of Josephus]. The futurists have nothing like this to show that Christ came shortly after AD 95.

Rev. 11:1-2 – The temple was still standing at the time of writing Revelation, and Jerusalem had not yet been trampled underfoot for 42 months (3 ½ years). The temple was still in existence and continuing to function at the time of writing. This demands a pre-70 date. Note especially what verse 2 says: "they will [future tense] tread underfoot the holy city for forty-two months." Notice the future tense here. This is a very clear reference to a future (but imminent) destruction of Jerusalem which would occur over a 42-month period. And John was told to measure the temple, thereby implying “it was still there,” but its doom and destruction was imminent.

Rev. 11:8 – Indicates that “The Great City” was Jerusalem (“where also their Lord was crucified”). Jerusalem was also quite often compared “mystically” to Sodom and Egypt, by the Old Testament Prophets, by Jesus, and by John as well (we will study into this more later). And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, **where also their Lord was crucified** [Rev. 11:8]. There is only one city on earth which fits that description (Jerusalem).

Rev. 18:24 – It would be hard to find a clearer identification of the Great City than this verse: *“And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.”* – This Great City (Babylon the Harlot) was the city which killed all the prophets, saints, and martyrs. Jerusalem was the only city which can ever fit this description (cf. Rev. 17:6 *“drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs”*).

When this is compared with Jesus’ statements in **Luke 13:33-35** and **Matthew 23:29-39**, one can see that the “Great City” mentioned in the book of Revelation is Jerusalem, not Rome! Jesus says that Jerusalem is the city that “kills the prophets,” and that the “guilt for all the righteous blood shed on earth” would fall upon Jerusalem in that generation (Matt. 23:34-37). Upon comparing these statements of Jesus with Revelation 18:24, the conclusion is inescapable: Jerusalem is the “Great City”! And, if the book of Revelation is dealing with the downfall of Jerusalem, it must have been written before AD 70 in order to predict it.

Notice what Jesus said about first century Jerusalem:

- Luke 13:33-34 – ***“it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem ... the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her!”***
- Matt 23:31-38 - ***“So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!”***

I believe we have seen from the internal evidence alone, that it is very easy to establish a pre-AD 70 date for the Apocalypse.

2. EVIDENCE FOR A PRE-66 DATE

The book of Revelation needed to be written before John's death during the Neronian persecution (AD 64-66). Papias (the late first and early second century patristic writer) said that John was "killed by the Jews" [Which confirms the promise of Christ that "**both**" James and John would die a **martyrs death** in Matt. 20:22-23; Mark 10:38-39]. This would have needed to occur at a time when the Jews had Roman permission to do so. They had that power to kill Christians during the Neronian persecution. But after the war broke out in Judea, that great tribulation was cut short, and the Jews had to turn their attention to the war effort and their own survival. Most of the Christians were killed in the Neronian persecution when the Jews had Nero's permission to kill them. This was most likely when apostle John was "killed by the Jews" – sometime between the summer of 64 and the Spring of 66. So, the book of Revelation would have needed to be in circulation before his death in the Neronian persecution, and before the outbreak of the war cut short that persecution in 66.

The Apocalypse would have been written before the beginning of the Zealot Rebellion in the Spring of 66. We know this because all of the imagery mentioned in the book of Revelation (such as the trumpets, seals, and bowls of wrath) are depicting the precursor warning signs and Zealot activity just before and during the War with Rome. It is pretty clear that the whole war is predicted there, and that the Apocalypse was written before that war broke out in AD 66. All of the signs that Josephus mentions as occurring in AD 65 [See **Study Series 7 Lesson 3b2 Matthew 24 Fulfillments**], a year before the war, seem to be predicted in Revelation as well, thus implying that Revelation was written even before AD 65.

- **Rev 18:4** ("Come out of her my people") – According to Eusebius, the saints were warned "before the war" to leave Jerusalem and Judea:

3Euseb. 5:3 But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there **before the war**, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come thither from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and His apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men.

3. EVIDENCE FOR A PRE-64 DATE

Since the Apocalypse predicts the Great Tribulation, which was the Neronic persecution, it must have been written **before** the Neronic persecution began in the summer of AD 64. John tells us that “*a great multitude of saints from every nation*” (Rev 7:9, 14) were killed in this great tribulation. The words “*from every nation*” implies an empire-wide persecution involving a large number of Christians. This was far beyond the scope of the Jewish persecutions described in the book of Acts. The Neronic persecution lasted for about two years until it was cut short by the outbreak of the Jewish war in the Spring of 66.

Therefore, in order to predict the Neronic persecution, the Apocalypse had to be written before it began in 64. But not only that – it needed to be written and circulated among the churches far enough in advance of the Neronic persecution so that the churches all over the empire could hear that warning and get out of Judea before the persecution struck. That implies at least a year or more of time before the summer of 64, in order for the book to get into circulation and give the saints time to flee to other places where they could wait out the storm of persecution and “live and remain” until the Parousia.

- **Rev. 1:9** – John says that they were in some kind of tribulation (persecution) at the time he wrote, but then says that the great tribulation was still yet to come. That “great tribulation” would be the Neronic persecution (AD 64) in which “a great multitude from every nation” was killed (Rev. 7:9-17).
- **Rev. 2, 3, 6, 11** – The Jewish persecution was still very much a big factor in their overall tribulation. This could not have been the case after Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. Nor could they have written this kind of book and put it in circulation after the Neronic persecution broke out in AD 64. They would have been running for their lives, and not leaving any paper trail behind. So, it was written during a time of Jewish persecution, but before the Neronic persecution began.
- **Rev. 2-3** – The letters to the seven Churches shows they were still in a fairly stable condition, at a time before those churches were devastated by the Neronic persecution.
- **Rev. 2-3** – The letters to the seven churches indicate that the Judaizers were still very active in Asia Minor at the time of writing. That Judaizing activity among Gentile churches came to a halt at the time of the Neronic persecution and afterwards. After the Neronic persecution began, all churches in Asia were wiped out. There were no Gentile churches left around for the Judaizers to bother. And all Christians, including both Gentiles and Judaizers, were subject

to the Neronic persecution. So, this situation of Judaizers troubling the Gentile churches of Asia very definitely implies a pre-64 date, because after the Neronic persecution broke out, the Judaizers were no longer in a position to trouble the Gentile churches like that. They were just as busy as the Gentile Christians running for their lives to escape martyrdom. And again, these letters would need to have been written and put into circulation among all the churches well in advance of the outbreak of the Neronic persecution.

- **Rev 18:4** (“*come out of her my people*”) and **Heb. 13:13-14** (“*let us go out to Him outside the camp*”). If these two warnings were written after the Neronic persecution began, it would have been too late to help those saints. So the warning must have been written and put in circulation many months before the Neronic persecution began in the summer of 64. Notice that Heb 13:13 reflects the same exhortation of Rev 18:4, which was for those saints to leave the earthly city in preparation for entering into the heavenly city which was about to come. This again not only points to a time of writing “before the war” when it was still possible to flee from Jerusalem and Judea (i.e., at least before AD 66), but also to a time before the Neronic persecution struck in 64. God would have given them this warning to flee from the soon coming great tribulation well in advance of the Neronic persecution.

4. EVIDENCE FOR A PRE-63 DATE

- Both Hebrews 12 and 2 Peter 3 allude to the same cosmological and apocalyptic imagery that John writes about in the Apocalypse, implying that both Paul (who wrote Hebrews) and Peter had already seen the book of Revelation before they wrote. Their allusions to its contents in their epistles tells us that they had seen the Apocalypse and were familiar with, and in agreement with, its contents. Since the book of Hebrews was composed in late 62 or very early 63, while Paul was still under house-arrest in Rome, it means that Revelation had to have been written and in circulation by late 62 when Paul wrote.

- **Heb. 13:13-14** exhorts the Jewish Christians to leave the earthly Jerusalem in anticipation of entering into the heavenly Jerusalem that was about to come. This echoes the exhortation in Rev 18:4 to “*come out of her my people*” (that is, to get out of the physical city of Jerusalem), and once again implies that Paul had seen the book of Revelation before he finished Hebrews.

- **1 Peter 5:13** – “*She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.*” Peter said that he was writing from the city called “Babylon.” And this city, which was code-named “Babylon”, was evidently inside Judea, since the first verse of this epistle says that Peter was writing to “those who reside as **aliens**, *scattered* throughout

Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” That is a reference to saints who were living in the Diaspora communities in Turkey. And it indicates that Peter was writing from inside Palestine. There was only one city inside Palestine which Christians would have codenamed “Babylon”, and that city is Jerusalem. And Peter’s use of this name to denote where he was writing from, tells us that both he and his readers were familiar with it. It means that Peter and the saints in Turkey had already seen the book of Revelation and knew that its mention of the Great City Babylon (the Harlot) was referring to Jerusalem. We know that the book of Revelation had to be in circulation many months in advance of the Neronic persecution in order to warn the saints to get out of harm’s way before it struck. So, when Peter used the word “Babylon” in reference to Jerusalem, he was writing at a time before the Neronic persecution had begun, and his epistle would need some time to get in circulation and still give those churches in Turkey time to react to his warnings. This pushes the date of writing for the Apocalypse and its circulation further back to at least mid-63 or before.

- Since Paul was in prison and was unable to visit his churches, it appears that James, Peter, and John all wrote epistles to those churches trying to stabilize them. When they read the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, it evidently prompted Paul and Peter to write to those churches again. This letter writing activity of Paul and Peter in 62 and 63 further suggests that they had read the warnings to the seven churches and were doubling their efforts to stabilize those churches before the great tribulation struck.

- Hebrews was written just before Paul was released from his first imprisonment (mid-to-late 62 or very early 63), and First Peter was most likely written about the same time, or not long afterwards (Spring of 63). So, if we assume that Paul and Peter had seen the Apocalypse before they wrote, which seems very probable, then it pushes the date of composition back before December 62.

- This gives us a pretty firm upper end-point to the date range for the composition and circulation of the Apocalypse. It means that the book of Revelation had to be in circulation no later than December of 62 when Paul was putting his finishing touches on the book of Hebrews.

5. EVIDENCE FOR A MID-TO-LATE 62 DATE

Here in this section, we are trying to discover when John might have been exiled to Patmos. This will give us the date before which the Apocalypse could not have been written. We have worked our way down from 70 to 63. We have the upper limit established now at the beginning of 63. So if we can find out when John was exiled to Patmos, we will have the lower limit of the range of dates when the Apocalypse could have been written.

- **Apr 62 – John was most likely exiled to Patmos** as a result of Ananus II's arrest of “James and some of his companions” [*Antiq.* 20:200 (20.9.1)]. Josephus tells us that James the brother of Jesus, along with some of his companions, was arrested at Passover (April) in AD 62. John was one of the apostles who was still in Jerusalem at the time, and was most likely one of those “companions” (fellow apostles or relatives of Jesus) who was arrested at that time and exiled to Patmos.

- It was not a very long boat ride to Patmos from Judea (two or three weeks at most). He would have been there by the beginning of summer (June) AD 62, and could have written the Apocalypse shortly after arriving (summer AD 62).

- Then it would have been put in circulation immediately afterwards to easily reach Paul in Rome and Peter in Jerusalem by the early Fall of AD 62, just as Paul was putting the finishing touches on his letter to the Hebrews. He tacked on that discussion about the New Jerusalem to the end of his otherwise finished Hebrews epistle, just before his epilogue (closing comments) in chapter 13. That section about the New Jerusalem in Hebrews 12 is powerful evidence that Paul had read the Revelation before he finished Hebrews and put it in circulation (early AD 63).

CONCLUSION:

- This now gives us a fairly solid date range for the writing of the book of Revelation from late-May or early June of AD 62 to the Fall of AD 62 (seven months at the most). All of the historical documentation and detailed reasoning for this April AD 62 date of John’s exile to Patmos can be found in Ed Stevens historical book, *Final Decade Before the End*.

Recommended Books and Resources

No careful study of the date of Revelation should fail to consider the excellent work of Dr. Kenneth Gentry (*Before Jerusalem Fell*), David Chilton (*Days of Vengeance*), Foy Wallace (*The Book of Revelation*), and Arthur Ogden (*The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets*). These four authors have done a marvelous job of laying out the overwhelming evidence for the early pre-AD 70 date of the book of Revelation. Jessie Mills has done some good historical work on this as well: Mills, Jessie. *Revelation – Survey and Research*. Mills, Jessie. *Daniel – Fulfilled Prophecy*.

REVELATION INTRODUCTION

The Revelation (or Apocalypse) of Jesus Christ identifies the contents of the book. The word **revelation** comes from the Greek word *apokalupsis* and means "an uncovering or unveiling." God was **unveiling** events **shortly** to come to pass. The **revelation**, therefore, predates the history of the events it unveiled.

Which God gave unto Him indicates the supremacy of God as originator and author of the things revealed. John pictured Jesus receiving this revelation in chapter 5 (v. 7) when He as the slain Lamb made His appearance in the midst of the throne following His ascension to heaven. Up to this time only the Father knew the time of the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:36). But, when Jesus received the sealed scroll from the right hand of God, He showed His servants, "things which must shortly take place."

Only seven churches in Asia are mentioned though we know others existed there. There were churches at Colosse and Hierapolis (Col. 1:2, 4:13), both of which were located near Laodicea. Troas is also listed within the Province of Asia (Acts 20:4-5) (I.S.B.E, *Asia*, Vol. 1, page 272). The question may be raised as to why only seven churches are mentioned in the Revelation. The obvious reason is to employ the symbolic use of **seven**. **Seven** is the symbol of perfection and completeness (Ibid., *Troas*, Vol. V, page 3023). In the Revelation it is used 54 times in this fashion. There are seven spirits, candlesticks, stars, seals, horns, eyes, thunders, angels and vials of wrath. In each, seven indicates the completeness, or fullness, of the thing described and stands for the totality of it. The reference to the "seven churches of Asia," therefore, stands for the totality of the church throughout Asia.

Seven is also the number of covenant. The Hebrew word for seven, sheba', is the root of the word nishba' which means to take an oath, to swear or to covenant. To swear or covenant means literally to seven oneself (F. Brown, S.R. Driver and C.A. Briggs, ed., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1907), p. 989-990). The number seven figures prominently in Israel's covenant ceremonies. The golden lampstand with its seven arms is, as Alfred Edersheim affirms, "indicative of the brightness of God's Covenant Presence" (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*

(Peabody, Mas.: Hendrickson, n.d.; reprint of 1886 ed.). After the initial covenant ceremony recorded in Exodus, Moses waits until the seventh day before entering the presence of God on the mountain (Exod. 24:16-18). Various of the feasts associated with Israelite covenant worship lasted seven days (Exod. 12:15; Lev. 23:39). The feast of trumpets occurs in the seventh month (Lev. 29:1). First fruits of cattle were given to the Lord when they were seven days old (Exod. 22:30). Cleansing ceremonies lasted seven days and often required that blood or oil be sprinkled seven times before the Lord (Exod. 29:35, 37; Lev. 4:6, 17; 14:7,27). The deliberate and frequent use of the number seven in the Revelation is a key to the meaning of the book.

John's writings are intensely theological. Given John's theological precision, the reader knows that when he encounters the number seven in Revelation he is confronting covenant imagery. Indeed, all of the Revelation is constructed around the number seven. John also constructs his Gospel on the basis of seven. Jesus performs seven signs or miracles, each of which says something significant about the person of Christ who is set forth in the prologue to the book.

The Revelation obviously deals with the subject of the covenant. On the one hand, John makes it clear that the churches of Asia Minor are members of the covenant. There are seven of them; they are symbolized by lampstands; Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, walks among them and holds their "angels" in His hand. By contrast, as will become apparent later in this study, the nation of Israel has violated that covenant, and will suffer the consequences.

John's vision of the voice of God coming from the midst of seven flaming lampstands in Revelation 1 also looks back to the voice of God which came to Moses out of the burning bush (Exod. 3:4) and which came again in the flames of Mount Sinai when the Lord descended to meet with His people and establish a covenant with them (Exod. 19:18-20). Fire appears to be symbolic of the presence of God in Scripture (see Deut. 4:24; Ps. 18:12-14; Ps. 97:3-5; Ezek. 1:4; Mal. 3:2, 11; 2 Thess. 1:8). In Revelation we have Jesus Christ, covenant Mediator, speaking out of the midst of the seven lampstands, which burn with the fire of His presence. But this time the mountain is Zion, which is a metaphor for His church (Heb. 12:22-23). The presence of the Lord, then, is in the midst of His New Covenant people, the church, as it was in Israel under the Old Covenant.

His voice is "like the sound of many waters" (Rev. 1:15). This same phrase is used in Ezek. 43:2 and again in Rev. 19:6. In the latter instance "the sound of many waters" is the voice of the bond-servants of God as they praise Him together saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns." The voice of Jesus Christ, it follows, is the voice of praise and worship coming from His people, from the midst of the golden lampstands which represent His church.

Another very reasonable question is worthy of thoughtful consideration, "If the Revelation is about the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem, why was it addressed to the seven churches of Asia?" The answer is very simple.

First, you will recall that God revealed a message concerning Jerusalem's previous destruction (586 BC) to a prophet and a people far removed from the place where the events were to occur. The people were the captive Israelites in Babylon; the prophet was Ezekiel, and the design of the message was to convince those captives that the destruction of Jerusalem was from God. Daniel was also given a vision in the same manner while he was away in captivity in Babylon about the then future to him destruction of his people and holy city (Daniel 9). This is the message of the Revelation.

Second, the period of tribulation preceding the destruction of Jerusalem was expected to affect the Jews throughout the world. Jews lived in literally every city of the known world (Greek: *Oikoumene* = Roman Empire). Furthermore, many of the Jews in Asia were Christians. The Revelation warned them of the trying times that were coming upon the "land" (Greek: *Ge*) (Rev. 3:10), prepared them to endure, and gave them incentives necessary for victory. Also, not to be overlooked is the fact that the **seven** churches represented the churches everywhere; hence, the message was intended not for Christians in Asia alone, but for Christians all over the Roman Empire.

Another important point to look at is that John said he was a companion in "**the tribulation and Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ...**" (Rev. 1:9 NKJV). Persons who think the Kingdom of Christ has not yet been established should consider how John could be in the Kingdom and have companionship with others in it, **if it did not exist yet!** The following points should be weighed carefully.

(1) Both John the Baptist and Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt.3:2; 4:17).

(2) Jesus taught His disciples that the Kingdom would come in their lifetime (Mark 9:1).

(3) Jesus said to them, "And I bestow unto you a Kingdom ... that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom" (Luke 22:29-30; cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-21; 11:17-34).

(4) Jesus then died, arose, and 40 days thereafter ascended to God's right hand to sit on David's throne as Lord, Christ and Prince (Acts 2:29-36; 5:31).

(5) Since Christ's enthronement many have been called into His Kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:11-12), and, being delivered from the power of darkness, have been "conveyed us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love" in whom they have found "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:12-14). No wonder the victorious heavenly host cried with a loud voice, "Now salvation and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come" (Rev. 12:10). They had received a Kingdom which could not be moved (Heb.12:28) and had reason for rejoicing, as do we, for **that** Kingdom was and is **the seen realm of the eternal Kingdom (both seen and unseen realms)** which God promised **would never be destroyed** (Dan. 2:44). John was a companion in that Kingdom with all to whom this book was addressed.

John's companionship with those he addressed were said to be **in The Kingdom**, and were also said to be in **the tribulation**. He spoke in present tense to them and said they were "already" **in the Kingdom**. They were in the **visible realm of the Kingdom** – which is the **spiritual body of Christ – which is the church** (cf. Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:15; 12:12,18-20,27; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Jesus said entrance into the Kingdom is gained by doing the will of the Father (Matt. 7:21), being converted (Matt. 18:3), and being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:3-5), all of which are equal to the same thing. Birth and citizenship are coequals. If the new birth is preached, the Kingdom is preached; and if one is born into the family of God, he is born into the Kingdom of God. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27). So, as John relates, being in the Kingdom is synonymous with being in Jesus.

John was also their companion in the **patience** that is in Jesus. Patience is the ability to endure. The only place for endurance is **in Jesus**. Christians are always faced with the necessity of exercising patience (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:4; Heb. 10:36; James 1:3). However, John's mention of patience here is in view of their present trying times. **A tribulation** was upon them and shortly to get worse during the **Great Tribulation** of the Neronic persecution, and **patience** was necessary if they were to endure. Jesus had warned His disciples of the need for patience to endure the tribulations to precede the destruction of Jerusalem. He said, "By your patience possess your souls" (Luke 21:19). Moments earlier He said, "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matt.24:13). How truly timely for John to remind these suffering Christians of the need of patience to endure this continuing period of affliction! As a faithful **brother and companion in the tribulation and in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ**, John felt an obligation to remind them of the need of patience.

REVELATION MAJOR FEATURE

Undeniably, one of the most important elements in the book of Revelation is about the fall of the great city Babylon. The importance of properly identifying Babylon of Revelation cannot be overemphasized. To wrongly identify Babylon of Revelation is to have a wrong eschatology. (Please refer to **Study Series 16 Lesson 3 Chapters 10 thru 11 Sub Study into Determining Who is Babylon** for an in-depth study into this)

Speculation about Babylon runs rampant. Some premillennial writers believe Babylon refers to literal restored Babylon. Others say it is "the great apostate religious system." i.e., "The union of the three major branches of the church that exist in the world today" (Greek Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant). Among amillennialists and postmillennialists, "The harlot city is Rome," (See for instance Jim McGuiggan, *Commentary on the book of Revelation*, (Lubbock, Montex Publishing, 1978) 239). or the Roman Catholic Church, although there are many among these two camps who believe Babylon must be identified as Jerusalem.

I believe the Bible clearly reveals that Babylon was Jerusalem of the first century, and Revelation predicted the end of the Old Covenant world of Judaism. It was not Rome, and is not the literal city in Iraq, destined to be rebuilt. Babylon is not the Roman Catholic Church, or any other modern entity. Babylon was first century, Old Covenant Jerusalem, and that means that Babylon is fallen. If this is true, it means the eschatology (i.e., doctrine of the "last things") of Revelation is the culmination of "Redemptive Eschatology," and not "Historical Eschatology," since it deals, not with the end of time, but with the end of the Old Heavens and Earth and its epitome in the Old Covenant world. This is true because the resurrection, judgment and *Parousia* (coming, presence, Strong's #3952) of Christ are associated with the judgment on Babylon.

BABYLON AND MATTHEW 24

Very few deny that Matthew 24 predicts the fall of Jerusalem. However, many have failed to realize that Revelation recreates the Olivet Discourse in form and outline. R. H. Charles was one of the first to recognize that the seals of Revelation 6 follow exactly the pattern predicted by Jesus in Matthew 24 (R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh, T and T Clark, 1920) 158)

The pattern of judgment in Matthew 24 – as well as Mark 13 and Luke 21 is:

- 1.) War (Matt. 24:6; compare Rev. 6:1-2).
- 2.) International strife (Matt. 24:7a; Rev. 6:3-4).
- 3.) Famine (Matt. 24:7b; Rev. 6:5-6).
- 4.) Earthquakes (Matt. 24:7c; Rev. 6:12, 16:18).
- 5.) Persecutions (Matt. 24:9-13; Rev. 6:9-11).
- 6.) De-creation (Matt. 24:15-31; Rev. 6:12-17).

Chilton says, "While all readily admit that the *Little Apocalypse* is a prophecy against Israel, few seem to make the obvious connection: The *Big Apocalypse* is a prophecy against Israel as well." (emphasis his) (David Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, (Ft. Worth, Dominions Press, 1987) 182-183.)

In addition to above, there are other parallels between Revelation and the Olivet Discourse.

- 1.) Both speak of the judgment of a sinful city following the completion of the world mission (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 14:6-8).
- 2.) Both speak of the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 14).
- 3.) Both speak of the Abomination of Desolation (Matt. 24:15; Rev. 13).
- 4.) Both urge the faithful to flee from the city (Matt. 24:15-20; Rev. 18:4).
- 5.) Both speak of false prophets and the workers of false miracles (Matt. 24:24; Rev. 13:12-15).
- 6.) Both speak of the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds (Matt. 24:30; Rev. 14:14-16).
- 7.) Both speak of the sounding of the Trumpet at the time of the end (Matt. 24:31; Rev. 11:15-19)
- 8.) Both speak of the salvation of the elect (Matt. 24:31; Rev. 14:15-16).
- 9.) Both speak of the gathering of the birds of the air to feast on the carcass of the dead (Matt. 24:28; Rev. 19:17-21). Compare this with Deuteronomy 28:25-26; Psalms 79; Jeremiah 34, etc... This is a common theme associated with punishment on Israel.
- 10.) Both predictions were to be fulfilled soon (Matt. 24:34; Rev. 1: 1-3, 22:6, 10, 12, 20).

These, and other similarities, show that the Olivet Discourse and Revelation are parallel. The significant thing about these parallels, for the amillennialist and postmillennialist, is that *every one of them is taken from the section of Matthew 24 that is almost universally agreed to be speaking about the fall of Jerusalem.*

If Revelation is parallel to Matthew 24, and Matthew 24 speaks of the impending judgment on Jerusalem, then Revelation must speak of the fall of Jerusalem.

In Revelation, judgment is against Babylon. The judgments on Babylon are the judgments Jesus proclaimed against Jerusalem. Unless one can show that Revelation and the Olivet Discourse speak of **two identical judgments**, to come on **two different cities**, then Babylon must be Jerusalem.

REVELATION 1:1-3

THESE THINGS MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS

One of the most significant, yet, overlooked keys to understanding Revelation and the identity of Babylon is that John is emphatic about when the book was to be fulfilled. John was told by the Father, through Christ, that "the time is at hand," and, "these things must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1-3). It would seem *prima facie* evident therefore, that any proper exegesis of Revelation, any attempt to properly identify Babylon, would demand that the student look to John's day for that identity.

John was told that the fulfillment of his vision "must shortly come to pass" (v. 1). The Greek term is *en taxei*, and is used only seven times in the N.T. (See the section under Rev. 22:6 in **Study Series 16 Lesson 10** for a more in-depth study into the Greek word *en taxei*). The term never indicates rapidity of action, to the exclusion of when an event was to occur. This Greek term means that the predicted events were in fact to come to fulfillment very soon. Gregory Beale notes that John is deliberately deriving his statement from Daniel 2:28-29 and the prophecy of the last days. However, whereas Daniel's prediction was for the last days, John's use of *en taxei*, instead of using Daniel's wording, "connotes neither the speedy manner in which the prophecy of Daniel was to be fulfilled nor the mere possibility that it could be fulfilled at any time, but the definite, imminent time of fulfillment, which likely has already begun in the present...John's substitution of *en taxei* implies his expectation that the final tribulation, defeat of evil, and establishment of the Kingdom, which Daniel expected to occur distantly 'in the latter days,' would begin in his own generation, and, indeed, that it had already begun to happen." (Gregory Beale, *The New International Greek Text Commentary (NIGTC), The Book of Revelation*, (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1999)181+.)

John was also told, "the time is near." It is important to note that the word time is *kairos*. As Beagley says, "In the New Testament *kairos* normally refers to one, critical and divinely ordained moment in the line of history." (Stephen Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, (Downers Grove, Ill., InterVarsity Press, 2005) 31). In other words, *kairos* is the appointed, designated time. What does this mean? It means that the appointed time for the fulfillment of the Apocalypse had come.

Commenting on the words of Jesus, "the time (*kairos*), is fulfilled," F. F. Bruce noted, "These words express, among other things, the assurance that an ardently desired new order, long since foretold and awaited, was now on the point of realization" (F. F. Bruce, *The Time is Fulfilled*, (Paternoster, 1978)1.). He continues, "The general implication of the announcement was plain: the time had come when the God of heaven was to inaugurate the indestructible Kingdom" (*Time*, 20). What Bruce is pointing out is that the appointed time (*kairos*) for the Kingdom, i.e. the fulfillment of all eschatological prophecies, had arrived. The same is true in Revelation 1:1-3. What had been foretold long ago, what was once *not near*, was now present. The time designated by the prophets had arrived. Compare 1 Pet. 1:10-12.

The combination of all of these words of imminence would, seemingly, compel the student of Revelation to seek for the identity of Babylon within the temporal confines of John's world, of his generation, for, at hand, quickly, shortly, and the other words utilized by the Spirit in Revelation assuredly convey the urgency of the soon coming consummation.

Suffice it to say that any proposed identity of Babylon that violates the express, unambiguous, repeated statements of the Revelation, "These things must shortly come to pass ... the time is at hand," cannot be a proper approach to, or explanation of, the Revelation. Any city identified as Babylon must fall within that divinely restricted framework, and only Old Covenant Jerusalem fits.

REVELATION 1:7: EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM: EVEN THOSE WHO PIERCED HIM

"Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen."

It is fascinating, yet lamentable, that a key to setting the proper foundation for understanding the Apocalypse is virtually ignored by many commentators. The text says that those who pierced Jesus would see Him coming on the clouds. Yet, this definite temporal limitation is virtually ignored.

There are several things that militate against such moralizing of the text. When we pay close attention to the wording and the context, it is apparent that John has *the impending judgment of Israel* in mind.

Many have the understanding that Revelation 1:7 is composed of a two O.T. citations, and those verses are Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10. While I agree with Zechariah 12:10, I see Daniel 7:13 clearly referring to the time of the “Acts 1:9 ascension” when Jesus went to the Father to receive His Kingdom and commenced His millennial reign. I then see Daniel 7:22, 27 referring to His *Parousia*/return with His Kingdom at the end of His millennial reign (which is what we see in His “coming on the clouds” in Matthew 24:30). What is so significant about all of these passages (Daniel 7:13, 22, 27 and Zech. 12:10) is that they are all temporally defined.

While the passage, Daniel 7:13, is a vision of ascension of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven to receive the Kingdom from His Father, there is something else present in Daniel 7 that is the theme of Revelation, and that is the theme of vindication. In Daniel 7:25, the "little horn" arises out from among the fourth beast, and, "shall persecute the saints of the Most High." However, at the coming of the Son of Man in Daniel 7:22, 27, the judgment is set (compare Dan. 7:10 with Rev. 20:10-15), and the saints are vindicated, by the reception of the everlasting Kingdom. There are several things to note.

First, Daniel's vision does not extend beyond the days of the Roman Empire. The vision of Daniel 7 envisioned four beasts, representative of four world empires, and like Daniel 2, begins with the Babylonian empire. Thus, one thing is certain, the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds, of Revelation 1:7, cannot be extended beyond the days of the Roman Empire.

Second, the motif of vindication is critical to understand in order to form a correct interpretation, for it is not only one of the keys to Christ's message, but the theme of the Apocalypse as well. Both in His parabolic and conventional teaching, Jesus constantly spoke of the time, coming in His generation, in which the martyrs of God would be vindicated at the coming of the Master. See for instance the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Matt. 21), the parable of the Wedding (Matt. 22), the parable of the Importunate Widow (Luke 18), etc. As we will show extensively below, Matthew 23 serves as the normative text for the discussion of the vindication of the martyrs. In no uncertain terms, Jesus said that all of the martyrs of God would be vindicated in His generation, in the judgment of Jerusalem.

Simply stated the argument is this: Daniel 7:22, 27 predicted the coming of the Son of Man (on the clouds of heaven as seen in Matt. 24:30) in vindication of His suffering and the suffering of His servants. Revelation 1:7, citing Daniel 7, predicted the coming of the Son of Man in vindication of His suffering, and the suffering of His servants. Jesus said that the vindication of His suffering, and the suffering of His martyrs, would be in the judgment of Israel in His generation (Matt. 23). Therefore, the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven in Rev. 1:7, in vindication of His suffering and the suffering of His servants, would occur in the judgment of Israel in Jesus' generation. This means that Revelation 1:7 sets the stage for understanding Revelation as a prediction of the impending catastrophe of AD 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed.

This application of Revelation 1:7, with its citation of Daniel, is verified in Jesus' use of Daniel 7 on other occasions as well. When Jesus stood before Caiaphas (Matt. 26:64) He told that scoundrel, "You will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven." As France says, "His judges may accuse and condemn Him, but they will soon see that the one they condemn has become their Lord and King ... those sitting in judgment of Jesus will in fact witness the 'coming,' i.e. that it will occur within their lifetime. Jesus is not referring to an event in the indefinite future, but to a situation which is to obtain immediately" (R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*,

(Grand Rapids, Baker, 1982)141.).

This being true, notice the exact correlation between what Jesus said in Matthew 26:64 (parallel Mark 14:62) and Revelation 1:7. In both passages Daniel 7 is cited. In both passages the promise is made that those responsible for killing Jesus were to be judged at His coming. It is difficult to see how it is possible to accept Jesus' application of Daniel in Matthew, and then so radically alter its meaning and application in Revelation 1:7.

The second OT prophecy cited in Revelation 1:7 is Zechariah 12:10, and like Daniel, the context is vindication of the Suffering Servant, "Then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn." As in Daniel, the vindication of the Suffering Servant is paramount. The One that had been pierced would now be mourned. When would this be?

When one traces the "in that day" references throughout Zechariah 12-14, there can be no doubt. It would be when, "It shall come to pass in all the land, says the Lord, that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one third shall be left in it" (Zech. 13:8). And as chapter 14 shows, "The Day of the Lord is coming, for I will gather all nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled and the women ravished" (Zech. 14:1-2). The time of mourning for the One whom they had pierced would be the time of judgment on Jerusalem.

In fact, Zechariah 12-14 posits a panoramic vista that is then played out in the 1st century.

Notice the constituent elements foretold in Zechariah:

- 1.) They would look on him whom they had pierced (12:10).
- 2.) God would pour out the spirit of grace on the house of Israel (12:10). He would open a fountain for the cleansing of sin and uncleanness (13:1).
- 3.) Israel would mourn. There seems to be two "mournings" in the text. There seems to be the mourning due to looking on the pierced One, and then there seems to be a mourning throughout the land of Israel (12:10-11).
- 4.) At the time of the great mourning, Yahweh causes two thirds of the people to perish from the land, while a remnant is saved (13:8-9).
- 5.) It would be the time of the destruction of Jerusalem (14:1-2).
- 6.) It would also be the time of the deliverance of Jerusalem (14:8-11).

Notice now the New Testament's application of Zechariah:

John 19:37 quotes Zechariah 12:10 and applies it to Jesus' crucifixion. There can be no doubt about this. John applied Zechariah to the crucifixion of Jesus.

In Acts 2, those who had looked on the pierced Lord are convicted of their sin, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). What was their response, "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

It is important to realize that according to the Old Law, there was no appeal for these people. The Law of Blood Atonement (Num. 35), demanded blood for blood, with no possibility of escape. So, what could they do? In their mourning for what they had done, they could only appeal for mercy, for grace and for cleansing from the One whom they had killed. That is precisely what they did, and God graciously extended forgiveness, "Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sin" (Acts 2:38). Here, God was marvelously extending His grace and His mercy, by opening the fountain of the blood of Jesus to the house of Israel, just as Zechariah had foretold. Zechariah 12 was being fulfilled.

Zechariah not only foretold the mourning of repentance, fulfilled on Pentecost, he also foretold a mourning throughout the entire land of Israel, and this mourning is associated with the time when 2/3 of the people would perish in the destruction of Jerusalem (13:8-14:1). "All the tribes of the earth [*ge*=land]" would now mourn, and they did. (The word translated "tribes" is *phule*. It appears 31 times in scripture, and in the great majority of times refers to the tribes of Israel. The force of Revelation 1:7 is that at the *Parousia* of Jesus against those who pierced him, all the tribes of the earth (*ge*, or land), did mourn as Zechariah predicted.)

But what of the "deliverance of Jerusalem?" We will defer that discussion to later in **Study Series 16 Lesson 9** when we look at Revelation 21. For now, suffice it to say that both in the OT and the New, there is the doctrine of two Jerusalem's. The old earthly Jerusalem would be destroyed, but the new Jerusalem, of which the old was a mere shadow, would triumph. That is what we find in Zechariah.

The panoramic view of Zechariah 12-14, played out in the New Testament, is a wonderment of harmony and unity. John said that Zechariah 12:10 was fulfilled at the Cross. God did pour out on the house of Israel the spirit of grace, and He did open the fountain for cleansing to the house of David. Furthermore, there was great lamentation throughout the land when Jerusalem was destroyed, and those who had looked on Him at the Cross saw Him coming in judgment, just as Revelation 1:7 predicted. There is no justification to apply Revelation 1:7 to any other time and event than those in scripture. Those were the first century events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus and His coming in vindication of His deity and judgment on His persecutors.

So, what we have is this, John chose two major OT passages to set the tone and theme for his Apocalypse, and both of those OT passages had as their key theme the vindication of the Suffering Servant at the judgment of His oppressor, and in Zechariah that persecutor is none other than Jerusalem. Christ undeniably identified the time of His vindication as the judgment of Israel in the first century. Thus, at the very outset, Revelation 1:7 informs us that the book is the Coming of Christ in judgment upon Israel.

REVELATION 2:1-2

"You have tried those who say they are apostles, and have found them to be liars"

It is often argued that the book of Revelation could not have been written before the fall of Jerusalem, and applicable to that event, due to the circumstances of the seven churches. It is argued that the church at Ephesus had left her first love, and this demands a span of decades at the very least, and that therefore, this demands a later date. However, the churches in Galatia, as early as AD 50, were already apostatizing (Gal. 1:6-9, 3:1-3, 4:9-11), and that hardly took even a full decade. The situation in the church at Ephesus, however, points to an early date for the book of Revelation, because the church had tested men who *were claiming to be apostles of Jesus Christ*.

The qualifications for being an apostle of Jesus were that they had to have been chosen as a disciple, to have been with Him since the baptism of John, and to have been witness to His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). There were only a select few who met those qualifications.

If Revelation was written in AD 95, this means that, according to most late date advocate traditions, *all of the apostles, save John, were already dead*. Now, if John was the only remaining apostle, how hard would it have been to try those who claimed to be apostles? Also, if it was known that John was the last remaining apostle, how foolish would it have been to have claimed to be an apostle? The claim to be an apostle, to have any chance of being believed and accepted, would have to be made at a time when the apostolic office was fully functional.

Consider Paul's ministry at Corinth for example. The false apostles were living and "ministering" at a time when claiming to be an apostle (during the late 50s) was a fully credible claim. In writing to that congregation Paul spoke of "false apostles" just as John does to Ephesus (2 Cor. 11:12-13). The geographical proximity between Corinth and Ephesus, coupled with the fact that these false apostles often followed Paul in his missionary journeys lends itself to an early date very well. Remember that Paul went from Athens to Corinth to Ephesus (Acts 17-19). What precludes the idea that the false apostles that troubled Corinth then followed Paul to Ephesus?

REVELATION 2:9 SMYRNA: DID IT EXIST AT AN EARLY DATE?

One of the seemingly strongest objections to an early date of Revelation is the claim that the church at Smyrna did not even exist during Paul's ministry, i.e. during the early 60's. However, what does the Bible have to say?

Acts 19 recounts Paul's ministry in Corinth, where he ministered for 2 years. Luke says, "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). There are two things to consider here.

First, it is well known that Paul always emphasized evangelism in the major metropolitan centers. His philosophy seemed to be that if the gospel was planted in these major centers, that it would naturally spread to the outlying regions. It should go without saying that Smyrna was a major city in Asia, and would have been the focus of this kind of directed, if not personal, evangelism.

Second, the emphatic declaration that "all of Asia" had heard the gospel cannot be discounted, nor can one argue from silence, saying that since Smyrna is not mentioned that it is not included. One could exclude all of the cities in Asia based on that logic. Given Paul's *modus operandi*, and the comprehensive nature of the language, it is far preferable to accept the testimony of Scripture.

We cannot leave this section without noting that just like in Philadelphia, the problem for the saints in Smyrna was "the synagogue of Satan." It was those, "who say they are Jews, but are a synagogue of Satan." As we shall see below, this indicates an early period in which the debate over the identity of "the Sons of God" was raging at its hottest, and that fits the pre-70 dating of Revelation scenario the best. The problem is not Roman persecution. It is a conflict between the old synagogue and the new synagogue of the Messiah. The old synagogue refused to be gathered into Messiah (Matt. 23:37), and consequently faced imminent judgment. This historical situation fits the pre-70 world far better than the post.

As Vanderwaal says, "Revelation, like the rest of the New Testament, contains a running polemic against the Jews and their rejection of Christ. It shares this theme with many of the early Christian passion homilies, which were testimonies against the Jews. The thesis that Revelation is directed against Rome is indefensible on scholarly grounds." (Cornelius Vanderwaal, *Hal Lindsey and Biblical Prophecy*, (Ontario, Paideia Press, 1981)122.)

REVELATION 3:9-10

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SONS OF GOD

"Indeed I will make (those) of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie – indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you."

The most hotly debated theological question of the first century was the question of the identity of the Sons of God. This was not a question of Christians versus pagans so much as it was an issue between Jews and Christians. Steve Gregg correctly states that prior to AD 70, "The principal systematic persecution of Christians came from the Sanhedrin and synagogues of the Jews." (Steve Gregg, *Revelation: Four Views, A Parallel Commentary*, Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997)76.) Why were the Jews so adamantly opposed to Christianity? It was because for every distinctive feature historically related to Israel, this nascent group of "heretics" claimed that Christ was its fulfillment and spiritual counterpart.

Israel claimed to be a distinctive people belonging to God (Exod. 19:6). They were the seed of Abraham, the recipients of the Covenant promises (Rom. 9:3-5). They zealously practiced the Covenant seal of circumcision. The Law, written on tablets of stone, had been delivered to Moses by Yahweh Himself. God had blessed them with the holy city, Jerusalem, where His temple sat as a reminder of His abiding presence among them. The Jews were proud to "rest in the Law, and make your boast toward God" (Rom. 2:17).

In response, Christians claimed that the Abrahamic promises were being received by both Jew and Gentile alike – in Christ by faith – not just those of the physical lineage of Abraham. They declared that God was fulfilling His promise of a New Covenant by the power of the blood of Christ (Heb. 7:22, 8, 10:9-12). He had already made obsolete, and was in the process of removing the old imperfect Covenant (2 Cor. 3; Heb. 8:13).

Christians declared that while the Jews were circumcised in the flesh, they, in fulfillment of prophesy, had been circumcised in the heart (Col. 2:11-12). The Jews boasted of their temple in Jerusalem. The Christians said God no longer dwelt in temples made with hands, but in the church of the Lord (Acts 7:48-50; Eph. 2:19-22; 2 Cor. 6:16). This was the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man (Heb. 8:1-3). While the Jews boasted in Sinai, the Christians had come to Zion, the focus of prophetic anticipation (Heb. 12:18-23). The Jews had "always" been the Sons of God. The Christians claimed, "The Sons of the Kingdom will be cast out," and, "The Kingdom will be given to another nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 8:11-12; 21:43). The battle was joined. The Jews had history, tradition and (ostensibly) scripture on their side, the Christians had a risen Lord. The battle raged in synagogue after synagogue, in home after home. The Christians said Jesus had predicted a final sign that would vindicate their claims to being the true Sons of God. Jesus said He was coming in judgment, and Jerusalem would be totally desecrated (Matt. 23:37-38, 24:2).

The sense of urgency and impending judgment permeates the epistles. Jesus' disciples went into all the world proclaiming, "Babylon the Great is fallen, the hour of her judgment has come."

To those in Rome, experiencing, "the sufferings of this present time," Paul wrote of, "the glory about to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18, NRSV), and promised, "The God of Peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20). He said, "The night is far spent, the Day is at hand" (Rom. 13:11-12).

Paul told the Corinthians, "The time has been shortened" (1 Cor. 7:29-31), the end [consummation] of the age had come upon them, (1 Cor. 10:11), not all of them would die before they would be changed into the unseen realm into their immortal spiritual bodies to be with Christ forevermore and enter into heaven (1 Cor. 15:38, 50-51; 2 Cor. 5:1-4).

Paul wrote to those being pressured (*thlipsis*; Strong's #2347), and promised relief (*anesis*, Strong's #425) from that persecution, as well as vindication, at the *Parousia* of the Lord (2 Thess. 1:4-12).

James warned the rich, who were blaspheming the name of Christ and oppressing the disciples, that they had foolishly assumed that the goods they had hoarded "in the last days" would benefit them. He assured the oppressed that, "the *Parousia* has drawn near" (James 5:8), and, "the judge is standing right at the door" (James 5:9).

Peter wrote to those, in the same geographic area as those to whom John wrote, who were being persecuted. He promised them relief at the *Parousia*, "after you have suffered a little while" (1 Pet. 1:5-7). Compare Revelation 6:9-11. He also said, "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet. 4:7). The scoffers claimed, "all things continue as they were from the foundation of the world" (2 Pet. 3:3-4). The scoffers denied what Peter affirmed. Now, if Peter was affirming the end of time, then the passing of two thousand years has confirmed the scoffers were right, and proven Peter to be a false prophet. If, however, Peter was proclaiming the imminent demise of the old world of Israel in the fall of Jerusalem, these texts harmonize beautifully. The fall of Jerusalem would identify Christians as the Sons of God, and the scoffers as false Sons.

The idea of vindication is very much present in these passages. The persecutors would become the persecuted. The tables would be turned, Jerusalem would become a waste, and the Jews who had denied the Christian's claims would now discover that those claims were true.

In Revelation 3, Jesus promised the church at Philadelphia, "the hour of trial that is about to come (*mellousees*, about to, *from mello*, Strong's #3195, *erchesthai*, come, from Strong's #2064), on the whole earth," would not come on them. However, the judgment would have the effect of causing the Jews who were persecuting the church at Philadelphia to know that the Christians were now the "true Jews."

This judgment on the "whole world" is the judgment against *Babylon* in Revelation 14, when the harvest of the earth would come. It is the same judgment proclaimed on the earth in chapter 16. The book of Revelation does not posit several different judgments upon "the whole world." Thus, to identify the imminent judgment of chapter 3 is to identify that of the later chapters.

The question is, "what hour of trial" was coming on the face of "the whole earth?" that could possibly result in the Jews acknowledging the supremacy of Christ? It was the time leading up to and consummating in the fall of Jerusalem. Jesus said that during the awful time leading up to and consummating in the fall of Jerusalem, there would be, "distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, (*oikoumene*) for the powers of the heaven will be shaken" (Luke 21:25-26).

The view that the fall of Jerusalem was a strictly "local" event with little significance is shown to be folly by these words. Further, history records that the period of AD 66-70 was a time of "universal" distress. One has but to read of the awful pogroms against the Jews in Alexandria and other locations throughout the Roman empire to know that the judgment came on "the whole world (*oikoumene*)."

Jesus said the distress on the elect (the church) just prior to the time leading up to the actual destruction of Jerusalem would result in, "great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21). Matthew 24:29 then says "immediately after the tribulation of those days," speaking of the AD 66-70 "outpouring of God's wrath" on Old Covenant Israel (1 Thess. 2:14-16; Matt. 23:35-38). Thus, the judgment on Israel "fits the bill" in regard to: 1.) The controversy of "Sonship," 2.) It was "about to come," 3.) It was to come on the "whole world" (*Oikoumene* = Roman Empire). In fact, the fall of Jerusalem was the only *imminent, world wide trial* that had anything to do with the question of *Sonship*.

For futurists, how would the fall of Rome settle the issue of Sonship? (The fall of Rome was not "about to happen" when John wrote either). Was it Rome that claimed to be "Jews"? Were the Romans "the *synagogue* of Satan?" By the way, note how the promises to Pergamos (Pergamum in NASB) and Philadelphia match the promise of Revelation 1:7. As we saw at the outset, the Apocalypse is about the vindication of Christ and His suffering saints. In both of these situations, *the Jews were the persecutors of Christ's body*. Yet, in both texts, He promised to come quickly and vindicate His saints (Rev. 2:16, 3:9-11). So, the vindication of Christ's saints, suffering at the hands of the Jews, is carried out in the letters to the Seven Churches. This identifies the persecutor of Revelation as Israel, and the coming of Christ in judgment as the time of the judgment of Israel in AD 70.

In light of our topic of the manifestation of the Sons of God: would the judgment of Roman Catholicism solve that question? Hardly. How would a yet future judgment on "apostate Christianity," or the World Council of Churches, settle the issue between, "those who say they are Jews, and are not"? To divorce the question of the identity of Babylon from the issue of Sonship is to do a great disservice to the historical context in which the book was written.

In light of the ongoing contest about the identity of the true Sons of God, the fall of Jerusalem was a definitive issue. The Christians proclaimed it as a sign of Jesus' deity and of their identity.

In Revelation, the time of judgment would come on all the earth [*ge* = land]. Jesus said the fall of Jerusalem would vindicate His claim to being the Son of God, and His followers as the true Sons of God. In Revelation, the fall of Babylon would vindicate the Son as "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." The "hour of trial" that was coming would cause "the synagogue of Satan" to confess that the church now comprised the true Synagogue, the true temple. This was not true of any other event or any other city than first century Jerusalem. Camp says, "God had one final argument in answer to those false teachers (the Jews, RPS). When Jerusalem fell, that was God's way of saying 'I will show you once and for all who the sons of God are'" (Franklin

Camp, *The Work of the Holy Spirit in Redemption*, (Birmingham, Roberts and Sons Publications, 1974)56.). **Babylon was Jerusalem.**

REVELATION 3:10

The Fiery Trial That is About to Come "I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world [*oikoumene* = Roman Empire]." Jesus promises the church at Philadelphia that if they remain faithful, "I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world [*oikoumene* = Roman Empire]." The word that is translated *shall come* is *mello*, and as Gentry notes, "When used with the aorist infinitive – as in Revelation 1:19 – the word's preponderate usage and preferred meaning is: 'to be on the point of, to be about to.' The same is true when the word is used with the present infinitive, as in Revelation 3:10." (Kenneth Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, (Tyler, Tx., Institute for Christian Economics, 1989)141 + .). The Greek Grammar of Blass and Debrunner concurs saying, "mellein with the infinitive expresses imminence (like the future)." (Blass-Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1961) 181). Thus, while the saints in Philadelphia, and all the churches of Asia, were already experiencing persecution, Jesus warned that things were about to get worse. One can hardly keep from being reminded of Peter's first epistle (1 Pet. 4:5-5:10).

Like John, Peter wrote to the churches in Asia (1 Pet. 1:1). John wrote **about Babylon**, Peter wrote **from Babylon** (1 Pet. 5:13). John wrote amidst suffering (Rev. 1:9), promising more suffering (*trial*, Rev. 3:10, from *peirasmos*, Strong's #3986). Peter wrote to those already embroiled in suffering (1 Pet. 4:12) – "do not think it strange concerning the fiery *trial* (*peirasmos*) that is among you," and more suffering was to follow (1 Pet. 1:5-7, 5:10). John wrote saying that the fiery trial was **about to come**, Peter said the fiery trial was **present**. Peter told his audience that they were partakers of the suffering of Christ (1 Pet. 4:13), an allusion to filling the measure of suffering (Matt. 23:29-36; 1 Thess. 2:14-16). In Revelation, the saints had to suffer to fill the measure of suffering (Rev. 6:11). John said his vision, "**must shortly come** to pass." Peter said, "the time **has come** for the judgment to begin" (1 Pet. 4:17).

Peter told his readers, "Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial that is among you" (1 Pet. 4:12). Why did he say this? The most logical answer is that they had been informed that they would suffer for their faith. Could it be because they had read John's prediction of the fiery trial that was about to come? John and Peter *wrote to the same audience*. Peter was saying that John's prediction was being fulfilled at that time.

It might be rejoined that the prediction of suffering was common. Jesus and Paul had predicted trials before the end (1 Thess. 3:1-4). But to say that Peter (1 Pet. 1:5-7, 4:12-16) and John's (Rev. 3:10) discussion of tribulation is in harmony with Jesus' prediction is to demand that Revelation was written before the fall of Jerusalem.

Jesus promised His disciples that *before the fall of Jerusalem*, "They will deliver you to the councils (*sanhedrins*, indicative of Jewish persecution, RPS), you will be beaten in the *synagogues*" (Mark 13:9). Is it mere *coincidence* that Jesus, in Revelation 3:10-12 blames the "*synagogue of Satan*" as the source of the persecution? We suggest then, that in harmony with Jesus and Paul, Peter and John were writing about and enduring the suffering that Jesus said would occur prior to AD 70.

It is widely agreed that 1 Peter was written around AD 63-65. If John said the fiery trial was **coming**, and Peter said it was **present**, does this not demand that John wrote **before** Peter? When two writers write about *the identical subject*, in the context of the *same city* (Babylon), and give the *identical time indicators*, what is the hermeneutical principle for saying that Peter wrote of one persecution while John wrote of another one removed in time and circumstance? John said the trial was **about to come**, Peter said the trial **was present**. John said *the appointed time for The Judgment/Parousia (kairos, Rev. 1:1-3, 22:10) was at hand*; Peter said *the appointed time (kairos, 1 Pet. 4:17), had come* for "The Judgment." Peter wrote before the fall of Jerusalem. Are we to believe that John wrote a quarter of a century *after* Peter? To sustain such a view one would have to prove with strong evidence – not simply assertion or presupposition – that although Peter and John wrote to the same audience about the identical subject, and gave the identical time parameters for fulfillment, they were in fact writing of totally *different* circumstances.

REVELATION 4:1-11

Who these elders are in verse 4 is the first question to consider. It is immediately evident that they are God's ministers, because they are wearing the priestly garments which symbolize the righteousness of the saints. The thrones upon which they are seated and the crowns on their heads indicate that they are reigning; it can be assumed that they have suffered for the sake of the gospel (2 Tim. 2:12). And the number of them, twenty-four, suggests that they represent two groups of twelve: namely, the apostles and prophets (or patriarchs) upon whom God's dwelling is founded (Eph. 2:19-22; Rev. 21:12, 14).

That the patriarchs are considered to be prophets in the Scripture is clear. First of all, Abraham, founder of the holy people, is designated a prophet. After Abimelech, king of Gerar, takes Abraham's wife Sarah into his harem and God threatens judgment, the Lord says to the king, "Now therefore restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you, and you will live" (Gen. 20:7).

Second, Moses refers to himself as a prophet as he addresses the children of Israel just prior to his death: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you" (Deut.18:15). Again we read: "Since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. 34:10).

Third, Peter calls David a prophet in his Pentecost sermon: "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon the throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ" (Acts 2:29-31).

These two groups, the apostles and prophets, also have their names inscribed upon the twelve gates and the twelve foundation stones of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12, 14). In other words, the dwelling of God is made up of Old Testament saints and of New Testament believers. Together they form one temple/city (Eph. 2:14, 19-22), God's spiritual house, the new Jerusalem which is created for rejoicing (Isa. 65:18).

"And before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal; and in the center and before the throne, four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind" (Rev. 4:6). Ezekiel also saw an expanse like crystal (1:22), but in his vision it extended over the heads of four living beings which were full of eyes. A throne was above the expanse, and the One who sat on it matches the description of the One who sits on the throne in John's Revelation. Obviously, the visions are related.

The first mention of this shining surface, however, is in Exod. 24:10. The living creatures are absent but the elders are present, as they are in Revelation. Just what these living creatures are is a matter for some speculation. That they are guardians of the throne of God seems evident, especially since two of them are found atop the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant (Exod. 25:17-20) and two more overshadowed it in the sanctuary of Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 3:10-13; 4:7-8), making a total of four. The ark, or tabernacle, as it was sometimes called, was God's dwelling in Israel, the place from which He governed; in effect, it was His throne (Exod. 25:22; Num. 7:89; 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; Isa. 37:16; Psa. 80:1; 99:1). So, in Revelation 4, the living creatures stand in the center of the sea of glass and before the throne, apparently guarding it, as their counterparts do the ark of the covenant.

The picture in Revelation 4, then, is of the elders of the Israel of God worshiping the Lord as representatives of the saints of all ages, the redeemed. The song they sing (Rev. 4:11) is one of praise to the Creator. Creation and redemption are often linked in the Scripture as the mighty acts of God. Redemption is effected through creation. God by His word initiates the creation of the world; so also, He initiates the creation of a people, as an act of redemption, both under the Old Covenant and the New. The Creator and Redeemer are one and the same. Isaiah writes, "For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the Lord of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth" (Isa. 54:5).

Paul tells the Ephesians that "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2:10). Isaiah quotes the Lord as saying, "The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise" (Isa. 43:21), and "I create Jerusalem for rejoicing, and her people for gladness" (Isa. 65:18). In his letter to the Galatians Paul writes that in Christ "neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision but a new creation (Gal. 6:15)."

The awareness of creation should bring an awareness of the Creator, according to Paul in Romans 1. In other words, a proper view of creation leads to redemption; a recognition by the creature that the Creator is sovereign produces submission to His will. Therefore, when God appears in redemptive action He is often praised as the Creator. Examples of this linkage occur in (read) Isa. 51:9-11, Psa. 102:18-28, and Psa. 148.