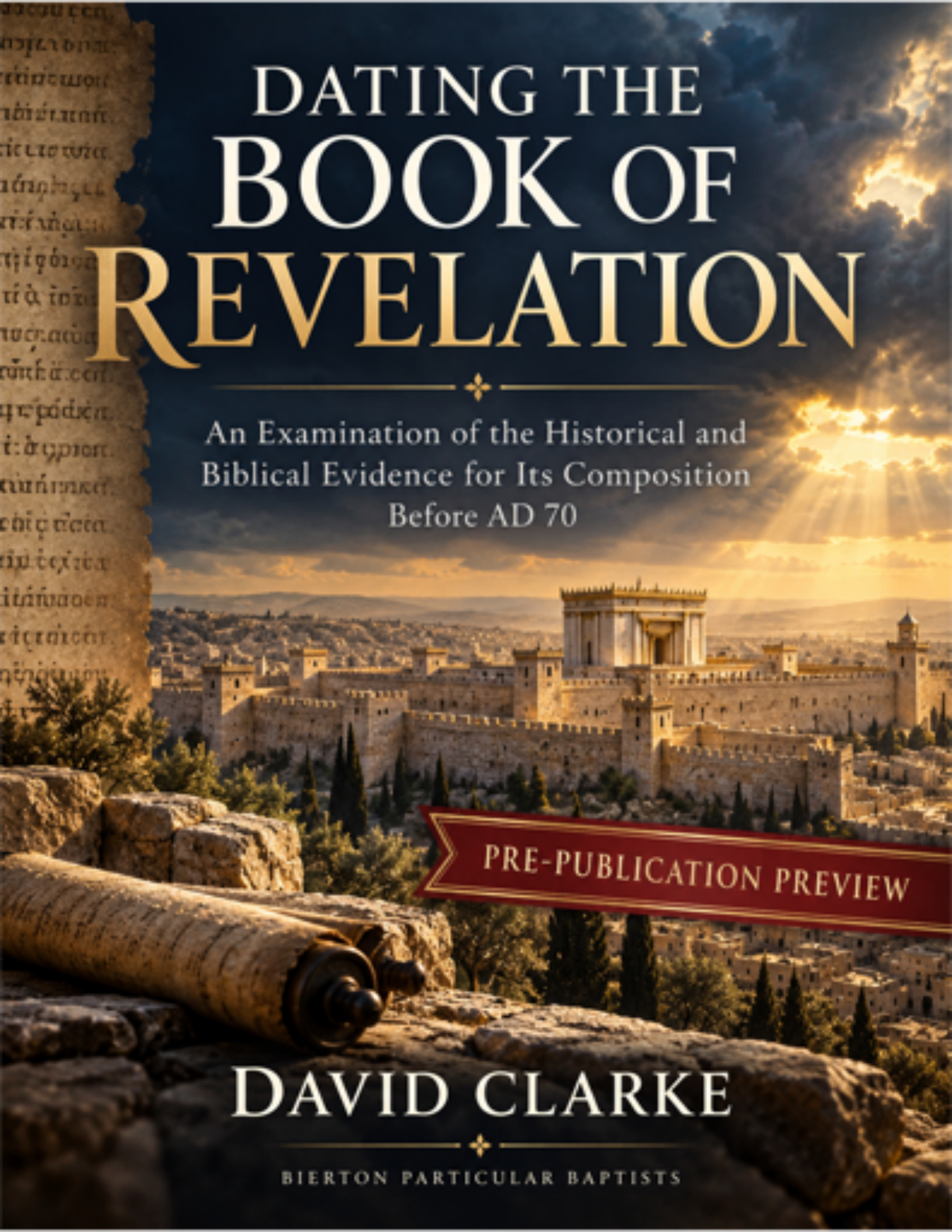

DATING THE
BOOK OF
REVELATION
An Examination of the Historical and Biblical Evidence for Its Composition Before AD 70
PRE-PUBLICATION PREVIEW
DAVID CLARKE
BIERTON PARTICULAR BAPTISTS

DATING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

An Examination of the Historical and Biblical Evidence for Its Composition Before AD 70

A Response to a Request for the Biblical and Historical Case for the Early Date

David Clarke

Bierton Particular Baptists

2026

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Dating the Book of Revelation
An Examination of the Historical and Biblical Evidence for Its Composition Before AD 70

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Dedication

To the saints meeting at The Bugle Hotel in Titchfield



It is my prayer that this study will help us understand more clearly the prophetic words of our Lord Jesus Christ concerning his second coming in judgment upon Jerusalem, and the deliverance of his people.

May we recognise the faithfulness of our Lord in fulfilling his promises to that generation, and rejoice in the victory and redemption accomplished through him.

> *"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*
>
> *And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."*
>
> Luke 21:27–28 — KJV

David Clarke
October 2026

Why I Have Published This Book

I have been asked by a group of Christians who hold a futurist understanding of biblical prophecy to justify my conviction that the Book of Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This book is my response to that request. I have not written it to question their sincerity or their commitment to the authority of Scripture, but to set out the reasons for my conclusion and to invite those who disagree with me to examine the evidence.

Since my conversion to Christ in 1970, I have held firmly to the doctrines of sovereign grace. My Christian experience and study of the Scriptures led me into fellowship with the Particular Baptists, and I remain substantially in agreement with their understanding of salvation as expressed typically in the First London Baptist Confession of faith 2nd Edition 1644/46. Over the years, however, my interpretation of biblical prophecy has developed. I was initially familiar with the view that the great tribulation, much of the Olivet Discourse, and most of the Book of Revelation referred to events still awaiting fulfilment. I later became persuaded that greater attention must be given to the people first addressed by these prophecies and to the time in which they lived.

The words of the Lord Jesus Christ were particularly important in that reconsideration:

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." — Matthew 24:34, KJV

When Jesus spoke of the Temple, Jerusalem and the coming judgement, I believed it necessary to ask whether he was warning the generation then living of events that would shortly take place. The destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in AD 70 gives that question considerable historical importance. The event did not accomplish the redemption which Christ had already secured by his death and resurrection, but it brought the Temple's sacrificial service to an end.

The opening of Revelation presents a similar question of time:

> *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass."*
>
> — Revelation 1:1, KJV

John also writes, "for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3, KJV). I have become convinced that such expressions deserve their ordinary force unless the context gives sound reason to understand them differently. That makes the date of the book a necessary question. If Revelation was written before AD 70, its references to the Temple, the holy city, persecution and approaching judgement may be examined in the light of events then approaching. If it was written near the end of Domitian's reign, around AD 95–96, those passages must be understood in another historical setting.

I do not suppose that agreement with the doctrines of sovereign grace requires agreement about the date of Revelation. Futurism, dispensationalism, Calvinism and Arminianism address different theological questions, and they should not be confused with one another. The question of whether Christ's coming, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment were fulfilled in AD 70 is a separate theological matter requiring careful examination. The following chapters therefore consider both the external testimony of the early Christian writers and the internal evidence of the book. I have sought to give proper attention to Irenaeus and the later dating tradition, while examining the Temple in Revelation 11, the seven kings in Revelation 17, the number of the beast, the repeated statements of nearness, and the connections with the prophecies of Daniel and our Lord Jesus Christ.

My purpose is not to claim that every difficulty has been resolved, nor to dismiss the historical testimony supporting a later date. Nevertheless, having examined the biblical and historical evidence, I am persuaded that the Book of Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. I believe this conclusion provides the most coherent understanding of its historical setting, its prophetic warnings, and its repeated declarations that the appointed time was near. It is this conviction that I seek to explain and defend in the following chapters.

I commend this study to every reader who desires to understand the Revelation of Jesus Christ in the light of its original audience, its historical circumstances and the whole counsel of God. My desire is that whatever can be established as true should be received, and whatever proves mistaken should be corrected by the Word of God.

David Clarke

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Chapter 1 — Dating the Book of Revelation

An Examination of the Historical and Biblical Evidence for Its Composition Before AD 70

The question of when the Book of Revelation was written is of considerable importance. Establishing its date helps us identify the historical circumstances in which its prophecies were given and understand their meaning for those who first received them.

If Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, its warnings of approaching judgment may relate directly to the events that overtook Jerusalem and the Jewish nation during the first century. If, however, it was written towards the end of Domitian's reign, around AD 95–96, those same prophecies must be examined within a different historical setting.

The difference is important because Revelation was originally addressed to seven Christian churches in Asia. These were real congregations whose members lived under Roman rule and faced particular difficulties, warnings and promises.

The book opens with these words:

> *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass."*
>
> — Revelation 1:1, KJV

It also declares:

> *"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."*
>
> — Revelation 1:3, KJV

These statements raise an important question. What would the original readers have understood by the expressions "shortly come to pass" and "the time is at hand"?

The date of Revelation does not automatically settle the interpretation of every prophecy. Nevertheless, it provides an essential historical framework for examining the warnings and promises contained in the book.

The traditional late date rests substantially upon early Christian testimony, particularly a statement made by Irenaeus towards the close of the second century. That testimony deserves serious consideration. Yet we must also determine whether it establishes the date with sufficient certainty to outweigh other evidence.

Revelation itself contains several historical indications. It speaks of a Temple, a holy city exposed to the Gentiles, a succession of kings, persecution, and events described as near at hand. These matters invite careful comparison with the historical circumstances surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem.

Our purpose is therefore to examine both the external historical witnesses and the internal testimony of Scripture.

We shall consider the evidence supporting the traditional late date, the arguments advanced for an earlier date, and the objections to both positions.

The central question is whether the composition of Revelation before AD 70 provides the more convincing explanation of the combined biblical and historical evidence.

Chapter 2 — The Testimony of Irenaeus

Does the Earliest Historical Witness Establish a Late Date for the Book of Revelation?

Introduction

One of the most important questions concerning the date of the Book of Revelation is whether the apostle John received his visions before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 or towards the end of the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian, around AD 95–96.

Those who favour the later date frequently appeal to the testimony of Irenaeus, a Christian writer who lived during the second century. His statement is particularly important because he lived much closer to the apostolic period than most of the historians who subsequently wrote about the life of John.

If Irenaeus clearly stated that John received the Revelation during Domitian's reign, his testimony would provide important historical evidence against an early date.

But the question must be asked: Did Irenaeus actually say that the Book of Revelation was written during the reign of Domitian, or has more been inferred from his statement than his words necessarily establish?

This chapter will examine what Irenaeus wrote, the purpose of his statement, its wording in the original Greek, and the reliability of the tradition upon which the late date has been established.

Our purpose is not to dismiss the testimony of an early Christian writer simply because it appears to conflict with a preferred interpretation of Scripture. Rather, we must determine what that testimony proves and whether it is sufficiently certain to settle the date of Revelation.

1. Who Was Irenaeus?

Irenaeus of Lyons was an influential Christian teacher and bishop who lived approximately from AD 130 to AD 200.

He is particularly remembered for his work Against Heresies, written towards the end of the second century. In this work, he defended the Christian faith against teachings that he believed were contrary to the doctrine handed down by the apostles.

Irenaeus is especially important because of his connection with Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna.

Polycarp belonged to an earlier generation of Christians and was traditionally associated with the apostle John. Irenaeus stated that he had heard Polycarp speak when he himself was young.

This gives Irenaeus a potentially valuable connection with the apostolic period.

Nevertheless, we must distinguish between what Irenaeus personally witnessed, what he learned from others, and what he concluded from the information available to him.

These are not necessarily the same thing. Irenaeus was not an eyewitness to the writing of Revelation. His statement concerning its date was made many decades after the reign of Domitian.

Even if his testimony ultimately came from reliable witnesses, we still need to establish precisely what information was being transmitted.

It would therefore be mistaken either to dismiss Irenaeus as unimportant or to regard every historical statement he made as beyond question.

2. What Did Irenaeus Actually Write?

The statement upon which the traditional late date depends appears in Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter 30, Section 3.

Irenaeus was discussing the number of the beast in Revelation 13:18:

> *"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."*
>
> — Revelation 13:18, KJV

Irenaeus was reluctant to identify the person represented by this mysterious number.

He reasoned that if Christians needed to know the name with certainty, the person who received Revelation could have made it known.

He then made the statement that has become central to the dating controversy.

In a standard English translation, the concluding portion reads:

> *"For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign."*
>
> — Against Heresies, V.30.3.

The traditional understanding is that Irenaeus was referring to the apocalyptic vision itself.

According to this interpretation, John received the vision towards the end of Domitian's reign.

Domitian ruled from AD 81 to AD 96. Consequently, Revelation is commonly dated around AD 95–96.

However, the statement does not explicitly say that John wrote the book in AD 95, nor does it directly describe the circumstances under which the book was composed.

It speaks of something, or someone, being seen. The question is whether that subject can be determined with certainty.

3. Examining the Original Greek

The statement of Irenaeus concerning Domitian's reign was originally written in Greek. Although much of his work Against Heresies survives in a Latin translation, the important Greek passage has been preserved by Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History, Book III, Chapter 18, Section 3.

The words that have occasioned considerable discussion are:

Greek Text — Key Phrase

οὐδὲ γὰρ πρὸ πολλοῦ χρόνου ἑωράθη

Transliteration: oude gar pro pollou chronou heōrathē

A close English translation is:

"For it was not seen a long time ago."

The important word is ἑωράθη (heōrathē), which means "was seen."

It is a Greek verb in the aorist passive, third-person singular. In ordinary English, we would expect the subject to be identified. We might say that John was seen, or that the vision was seen.

Greek, however, can leave the subject unstated when it is understood from the surrounding context.

Consequently, the verb itself does not tell us whether Irenaeus was referring to John or to the vision he received. We must examine the surrounding words to determine which interpretation is more likely.

The Traditional Interpretation: The Vision Was Seen

Those who favour the late date maintain that Irenaeus was referring to the apocalyptic vision received by John.

According to this interpretation, he meant that Revelation was seen towards the end of Domitian's reign, approximately AD 95–96.

This understanding has considerable support from the surrounding context.

Irenaeus was discussing the identity of the beast whose number is given as 666 in Revelation 13:18. He argued that if Christians needed to know the identity of the person represented by that number, the information could have been disclosed by the one who received the vision.

The Apocalypse is therefore already under discussion immediately before the disputed statement.

Those who favour the traditional interpretation understand Irenaeus to be explaining why John could have made the identity known: the vision had been received comparatively recently.

This is also how Eusebius understood the passage when he associated John's exile and the Revelation with the reign of Domitian.

We must therefore acknowledge that the traditional interpretation is a serious and contextually strong reading of the Greek. It cannot be dismissed simply because the verb leaves its subject unstated.

The Alternative Interpretation: John Was Seen

Some advocates of the early date have understood Irenaeus's words differently.

They argue that Irenaeus was speaking about John himself rather than the vision he received.

His immediate argument concerned the person who could have disclosed the identity of the beast. John, as the recipient of Revelation, was the person capable of providing that information.

On this understanding, Irenaeus was saying that John himself had been seen towards the end of Domitian's reign.

This interpretation has been discussed by defenders of the early date, including Milton S. Terry, who questioned whether the grammatical construction necessarily required the vision rather than John to be understood as the subject.

If John was the intended subject, Irenaeus's statement would not establish when Revelation was received or written.

However, there is an important consequence that must not be overlooked.

If Irenaeus meant that John himself was seen towards the end of Domitian's reign, his statement would provide historical testimony that John was still alive at that time.

That would be significant when considering the alternative possibility, examined later in this chapter, that John either suffered martyrdom before AD 70 or remained until the first-century Parousia and was gathered to Christ with the living saints.

We should therefore avoid adopting the alternative interpretation merely because it appears to remove an objection to the early date of Revelation.

The question must be determined by the evidence, not by which interpretation best suits a preferred conclusion.

Furthermore, although the Greek construction permits the possibility that John was the subject, grammatical possibility does not establish contextual probability.

What Can We Conclude from the Greek?

The important distinction is between what the Greek grammar permits and what the surrounding context makes most probable.

The verb ἑωράθη does not, by itself, identify whether John or the vision was seen.

Nevertheless, the reference to the Apocalypse in the preceding sentence, together with the interpretation adopted by Eusebius, provides substantial support for the traditional understanding that Irenaeus was referring to the vision.

It would therefore be too strong to claim that Irenaeus plainly meant John rather than the Revelation.

Equally, we should not claim that the grammatical form of the verb makes the alternative interpretation impossible.

The most reasonable conclusion is that the traditional interpretation has stronger contextual support, although the wording allows the question to be discussed.

But this brings us to another matter of considerable importance.

Understanding what Irenaeus probably meant is not the same as establishing that his historical information was correct.

Even if he intended to say that the vision was received towards the end of Domitian's reign, we must still ask how he obtained that information.

Was it communicated to him by someone who personally knew when John received Revelation? Did it come from Polycarp? Or was it part of a tradition whose original source can no longer be identified?

These are historical questions that cannot be settled by Greek grammar alone.

The case for an early date should therefore not depend upon insisting that Irenaeus meant John was seen rather than the vision.

Instead, we must examine the historical reliability of his statement, the evidence concerning its transmission, and the testimony contained within Revelation itself.

Only by weighing these matters together can we determine whether the statement of Irenaeus is sufficient to establish **a date towards the end of Domitian's reign**.

This leads us to the importance of examining the wider context in which his statement was made.

4. The Importance of the Context

A historical statement must be understood in the light of the argument in which it appears.

Irenaeus was not writing a history of the apostle John or attempting to establish the date of Revelation. He was discussing the identity of the beast and the meaning of the number 666.

His concern was that Christians should not speculate recklessly concerning the identity of the person represented by that number.

He reasoned that if it were necessary for the name to be openly declared, it could have been revealed through John.

This is important because his reference to Domitian occurs incidentally within a theological argument, rather than as part of a deliberate chronological investigation.

Nevertheless, an incidental historical statement can still provide reliable evidence. We cannot dismiss it merely because chronology was not Irenaeus's principal subject.

The question is whether his statement originated in accurate historical knowledge or in a tradition whose details cannot now be independently established.

We must therefore examine how later Christian historians understood and transmitted his testimony.

5. Eusebius and the Establishment of the Late-Date Tradition

Eusebius of Caesarea lived approximately from AD 260 to AD 340 and became one of the most influential historians of the early Christian Church.

In his Ecclesiastical History, Book III, Chapter 18, he associated John's banishment to Patmos with the reign of Domitian.

He then quoted the statement from Irenaeus which we have already examined.

Eusebius understood Irenaeus to support the belief that John received Revelation during Domitian's reign.

This is historically important. It demonstrates that the traditional interpretation was not invented by modern commentators. It was already accepted by a major Christian historian in the early fourth century.

However, another distinction must be made. When Eusebius quotes Irenaeus, we do not thereby obtain two independent witnesses to the same event.

For that particular statement, Eusebius is transmitting the testimony of Irenaeus.

Where Eusebius adds other information, we must determine whether it came from an independent historical source or from his interpretation of earlier traditions.

For example, Eusebius records the persecution of Christians under Domitian and mentions the exile of Flavia Domitilla.

These historical circumstances may help explain why a tradition arose connecting John's banishment with Domitian.

But evidence that Christians suffered under Domitian is not, by itself, proof that John received Revelation at that time.

Both propositions require examination. The distinction is straightforward: One historical writer may supply an assertion. Ten later historians may repeat it. Their agreement would establish that the assertion became widely accepted, but it would not necessarily provide ten independent sources confirming the original event.

This does not prove that the tradition is false. It means that its historical strength depends partly upon the quality and independence of its earliest witnesses.

Consequently, when assessing the late date, we must avoid treating repeated quotations of Irenaeus as though they were entirely separate testimonies.

6. Was Irenaeus Always Historically Accurate?

Our examination of Irenaeus would be incomplete without considering his reliability when making other historical statements.

A particularly interesting example appears in Against Heresies, Book II, Chapter 22.

There Irenaeus argued against teachers who claimed that Christ's public ministry lasted only one year.

In attempting to refute them, he presented an unusual explanation concerning the age of Jesus Christ.

He reasoned from the statement made by the Jews in John 8:57:

> *"Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?"*
>
> — John 8:57, KJV

Irenaeus understood this statement to suggest that Jesus had reached an age approaching fifty.

He also appealed to people who, he claimed, had received information from John and other apostles.

This raises an important historical question. The generally accepted chronology of Christ's earthly ministry does not support the extended age proposed by Irenaeus.

Moreover, the words of John 8:57 do not require Christ to have been nearly fifty. They can simply express the astonishment of his hearers that someone younger than fifty claimed knowledge of Abraham.

Irenaeus appears to have drawn a chronological conclusion from words that did not necessarily justify it.

This is particularly significant because he appealed to an earlier tradition in support of his understanding.

We therefore have a case where Irenaeus's confidence in a historical conclusion appears greater than the evidence warrants.

What does this prove? It does not prove that Irenaeus was mistaken about Revelation. Nor does it establish that every tradition associated with Polycarp or John was unreliable.

It demonstrates something more limited but important: Irenaeus could be mistaken in matters of historical chronology, even when he believed his information was supported by apostolic tradition.

His statements must therefore be examined rather than accepted without question.

If this principle applies to his account of Christ's age, it should also apply when he is used to establish the date of Revelation.

The issue is not whether we respect Irenaeus as an early Christian

witness. We should.

The issue is whether his testimony possesses the certainty necessary to override other evidence.

7. Irenaeus and the Ancient Copies of Revelation

There is another statement in Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter 30, that deserves attention.

When discussing the number of the beast, Irenaeus appealed to the textual evidence available to him.

He stated that the number 666 appeared in the approved and ancient copies of Revelation.

He also referred to the testimony of people who had seen John personally.

Some defenders of the early date have argued that the description of these manuscripts as ancient suggests that Revelation had been written considerably earlier than AD 95.

This argument has some initial appeal. If Revelation was written shortly before AD 70, the book would have existed for more than a century by the time Irenaeus wrote.

If it was written around AD 95, it would have existed for approximately eighty to ninety years.

However, we must exercise care. A manuscript copied several decades earlier could reasonably be described as ancient in comparison with more recent copies.

Consequently, the expression does not establish that Revelation was written before AD 70.

What it does establish is that Irenaeus regarded the textual evidence for 666 as well supported by manuscripts older than those containing the alternative reading.

This is interesting because Irenaeus was already aware of textual variation in Revelation.

He mentioned copies that gave the number as 616 rather than 666.

That variation will become particularly important when we examine the identification of Nero Caesar in a later chapter.

For our present purpose, the reference to ancient copies may be considered compatible with an early date, but it cannot be treated as proof of that date.

8. Did Irenaeus Receive His Information from Polycarp?

Advocates of the late date frequently stress the relationship between Irenaeus and Polycarp.

The reasoning is understandable. Polycarp was associated with the apostolic generation, and Irenaeus personally remembered hearing him speak.

If Polycarp had told Irenaeus that John received Revelation during Domitian's reign, this would give considerable weight to the tradition.

But this is precisely the point requiring examination. In the passage under consideration, Irenaeus does not expressly say:

Polycarp told me that John received Revelation during Domitian's reign.

Nor does he identify another particular witness as the source of the chronological statement.

His known association with Polycarp gives us a reason to take his testimony seriously, but it does not establish the exact chain by which this information reached him.

We must therefore distinguish three propositions. First, Irenaeus knew Polycarp. Second, Polycarp was associated with the apostolic generation. Third, Irenaeus received his information about the date of Revelation directly from Polycarp.

The first two propositions have historical support. The third remains an inference. It may be correct, but it is not explicitly established by the statement in Against Heresies V.30.3.

This distinction is especially important when the passage is presented as though it constituted direct testimony from the apostle John himself.

It does not. It is the testimony of a second-century Christian writer whose precise source for this particular chronological statement is not identified.

9. Irenaeus, Polycarp and the Claim of Apostolic Authority

The Difference Between Apostolic Authority and Later Tradition

One reason Irenaeus's testimony is considered important is his claimed connection with the apostolic generation. He knew Polycarp, a Christian leader at Smyrna, who was said to have known the apostle John.

This association has sometimes been treated as though Irenaeus possessed knowledge of John's life that could be traced directly to the apostle himself.

But several questions must be answered before we accept that conclusion.

Did Polycarp personally know John? If they met, when did those meetings take place? Did Polycarp tell Irenaeus when Revelation was written? And can we establish that Irenaeus accurately understood and transmitted what he heard?

These are questions of historical evidence, not questions concerning Irenaeus's Christian faith.

The apostles possessed authority given directly by Jesus Christ. That authority was not automatically inherited by those who knew them, nor by later church leaders who claimed to preserve their teaching.

Paul wrote:

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;"

(Ephesians 2:20, KJV)

The apostolic foundation of the Church was established through Christ and the revelation given to his apostles. Its authority remains in the Scriptures.

A later Christian teacher might possess genuine faith in Christ while being mistaken about an event in apostolic history. His understanding of prophecy was not made infallible by his position in the Church or by his acquaintance with an earlier Christian leader.

What Did Polycarp Actually Say?

Polycarp's surviving letter to the Philippians teaches the Christian faith and refers to the apostle Paul. However, it contains no explicit statement that Polycarp personally knew John.

It also does not tell us when Polycarp became a Christian or when he first received instruction in the gospel.

The principal testimony concerning his association with John comes from Irenaeus.

Irenaeus recalled hearing Polycarp speak during his own youth. In a letter to Florinus, preserved by the historian Eusebius, he described Polycarp's appearance and teaching. He also reported that Polycarp spoke about his association with John and others who had seen the Lord.

This is important evidence and should not be dismissed without consideration.

Nevertheless, Irenaeus does not establish when Polycarp's meetings with John occurred. Nor does he expressly state that Polycarp told him Revelation was written during Domitian's reign.

The crucial chronological connection is therefore missing.

Even if Polycarp personally knew John, this would not automatically establish the date of Revelation. We would still need evidence that Polycarp knew when the vision was received and that he communicated this information to Irenaeus.

The difference between these claims is considerable.

One establishes a possible personal connection with the apostolic generation. The other would establish a particular historical fact concerning the date of a New Testament book.

The first does not necessarily prove the second.

10. Did John Live Beyond the Destruction of Jerusalem?

Irenaeus maintained that John remained until the reign of Trajan, which began in AD 98.

If this statement is correct, John survived the destruction of Jerusalem by nearly thirty years.

But this is precisely the historical claim that requires examination.

No surviving writing by John states that he lived into Trajan's reign. Nor do we possess an independently dated eyewitness account describing his activities during that period.

The Possibility of John's Martyrdom

Edward E. Stevens, in Final Decade Before the End, challenges the traditional chronology of John's later life.

He considers an account attributed to Papias that John was killed by the Jews and suggests that the apostle may have suffered martyrdom during the Neronian persecution, around AD 64.

Stevens also appeals to the words of Jesus concerning James and John.

In Mark 10:39 (KJV), Jesus said:

"Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:"

James subsequently suffered martyrdom, as recorded in Acts 12:2.

Stevens believes that John's sharing in Christ's cup likewise indicates that he would suffer martyrdom.

However, the words of Jesus do not expressly state when John would die, and the surviving testimony attributed to Papias has its own difficulties.

John's martyrdom before AD 70 is therefore a possibility requiring examination, rather than an established historical fact.

The Possibility That John Remained Until the Parousia

There is another possibility.

In John 21:22–23,

> *Jesus spoke of John remaining until his coming. The passage carefully explains that Jesus did not promise John would never die.*

Nevertheless, it leaves open the question of whether John might have remained alive until the promised coming of Christ.

If the Parousia and the gathering of the living saints occurred in the first century, as proposed in this investigation, John could have been among those gathered to Christ.

Paul wrote:

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

(1 Thessalonians 4:17, KJV)

Under this interpretation, John would not have remained on earth to instruct later generations after the Parousia.

Thus, whether John suffered martyrdom before that event or remained alive until the gathering of the saints, neither possibility requires his continued presence on earth during the reign of Domitian or Trajan.

The matter cannot be settled by assuming that either reconstruction has already been proved. The chronology must be examined in the light of Scripture and the surviving historical evidence.

Papias and the Two Johns

Another difficulty arises from the writings of Papias, an early Christian teacher whose works are preserved only in fragments.

In Ecclesiastical History, Book III, chapter 39, Eusebius quotes Papias mentioning John among the apostles and then referring separately to John the Elder.

Eusebius understood these references as identifying two different men.

He also questioned Irenaeus's description of Papias as a hearer of John, because Papias's surviving words appeared to distinguish what he had learned from earlier disciples from what he heard directly from later teachers.

The significance of this should not be overlooked.

If two men named John were associated with the churches of Asia, it is possible that accounts concerning their lives became confused in subsequent generations.

That possibility does not establish that Irenaeus confused them. But it provides a reason for examining the tradition carefully rather than assuming that every later reference to John necessarily concerned the apostle.

The historical question remains whether John the Apostle himself can reliably be shown to have lived and taught beyond AD 70.

11. The Parousia and the Reliability of Later Christian Tradition

There is a further question concerning the transmission of Christian historical knowledge.

The apostles taught the Church concerning Christ's coming, resurrection and judgment. Their teaching was preserved in the Scriptures of the New Testament, together with the prophecies of the Old Testament.

The Lord Jesus also gave his disciples instruction concerning the approaching destruction of Jerusalem and the events associated with his coming.

In Matthew 24:34 (KJV), he declared:

> *"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."*

The interpretation of this passage is important to the wider argument of this book.

If the promised gathering of the saints occurred in the first century, those who experienced that event would have possessed personal knowledge of its fulfilment.

But if those Christians were gathered to Christ, their experience would not have been communicated personally to subsequent generations.

The Continuation of Saving Faith

This would not mean that the gospel disappeared or that salvation ceased.

God's elect would continue to be brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ through the gospel by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

The authority of the gospel would remain in the written Word of God, not in a succession of persons claiming apostolic authority.

Later believers could therefore possess genuine saving faith while misunderstanding the historical fulfilment of biblical prophecy.

The knowledge necessary for salvation must not be confused with a complete understanding of the chronology of the last things.

Salvation is through Jesus Christ alone, not through possessing a correct system of eschatology.

Could Knowledge of the Fulfilled Parousia Have Been Lost?

Edward E. Stevens argues that the absence of surviving firsthand Christian testimony concerning the fulfilled Parousia is consistent with the gathering, or rapture, of the original believers.

In Final Decade Before the End, printed pages 257–259, he asks why no identifiable Christian from the original apostolic generation subsequently appeared to announce that Christ's promised coming had taken place.

His proposed explanation is that those faithful Christians had already been gathered to Christ.

This is a historical and theological argument worthy of consideration.

Nevertheless, the absence of surviving testimony cannot, by itself, establish that the gathering occurred. Ancient writings have been lost, and the surviving historical record is incomplete.

What can be said is that later Christian teachers should not automatically be treated as eyewitnesses to events they did not personally experience.

Nor does their expectation of a future Parousia necessarily establish that the prophetic event had not already occurred.

If the original witnesses were no longer present, later Christians would have needed to examine the Scriptures to determine what Christ and his apostles had taught concerning the time and nature of his coming.

Their understanding would depend upon the written revelation and the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, not upon an inherited claim to apostolic authority.

What Weight Should We Give Irenaeus?

We can now distinguish what is known from what has been assumed.

We know that Irenaeus claimed to have heard Polycarp.

We know that he reported Polycarp's association with John.

We know that he referred to the end of Domitian's reign when discussing the apocalyptic vision.

But we do not know from his surviving testimony that Polycarp personally supplied that particular date.

Nor can we independently establish from Polycarp's own surviving writings that John was alive and teaching after AD 70.

These limitations do not prove that Irenaeus deliberately misrepresented the facts or that his chronology was necessarily mistaken.

They demonstrate that his testimony is not equivalent to a dated statement from John himself.

The traditional date of AD 95–96 therefore rests upon historical testimony that must be weighed against the internal evidence of Revelation, rather than accepted as an unquestionable fact.

The proper question is not whether Irenaeus was an influential Christian teacher. He certainly was.

The question is whether the available evidence justifies placing Revelation twenty-five years after Jerusalem's destruction, despite the indications within the book that its predicted events were near at hand.

That question must ultimately be answered by examining the combined biblical and historical evidence.12. Can the Late Date Be Established from Irenaeus Alone?

Having examined the evidence, we can now consider what weight should be assigned to Irenaeus's statement.

There are good reasons for taking it seriously. He lived relatively close to the apostolic period, had connections with Christians who knew the apostles, and his statement was subsequently understood by Eusebius as supporting a Domitianic date.

Furthermore, the traditional interpretation of the Greek is contextually plausible and probably stronger than the alternative interpretation that John himself was seen.

These considerations mean that the testimony cannot simply be dismissed.

Nevertheless, several limitations remain. Irenaeus was not an eyewitness to the composition of Revelation. He did not identify the particular source of his chronological information. His statement occurs incidentally in a discussion of the beast's number. Its Greek wording permits some grammatical uncertainty, even though the traditional reading has considerable contextual support.

We have also seen that Irenaeus was capable of drawing questionable chronological conclusions.

Taken together, these considerations suggest that his testimony should be regarded as significant historical evidence, but not as an unquestionable chronological authority.

This is the distinction upon which our investigation turns. If Revelation itself contains convincing indications that it was written before Jerusalem's destruction, those indications deserve careful consideration alongside the statement of Irenaeus.

The external tradition should not automatically determine the interpretation of the internal evidence.

Nor should a preferred interpretation of Revelation lead us to reject external testimony without examination.

Both must be weighed together.

13. The Importance of Scripture's Own Testimony

The opening words of Revelation identify the book as:

> *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass."*
>
> — Revelation 1:1, KJV

John then declares:

> *"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."*
>
> — Revelation 1:3, KJV

At the conclusion of the book, the same emphasis appears:

> *"And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand."*
>
> — Revelation 22:10, KJV

These declarations are central to understanding Revelation. The book was addressed to real Christian congregations in the first century.

Its warnings and promises were intended to be read, heard, and obeyed by those congregations.

The repeated expressions concerning the nearness of the predicted events must therefore be given their proper significance.

There are different interpretations of these expressions, and their meaning requires a separate investigation.

Nevertheless, their presence raises an important question for the late-date theory.

If the principal subject of Revelation concerns the judgment of Jerusalem and the conclusion of the old covenant order, how could the book have been written approximately twenty-five years after Jerusalem had already been destroyed?

The late date would require a different understanding of the visions or of their historical application.

Therefore, determining the meaning of the book's internal evidence is indispensable to establishing its date.

We cannot settle that question simply by appealing to Irenaeus.

14. Conclusion: The Limits of the Testimony of Irenaeus

The testimony of Irenaeus is undoubtedly one of the most important pieces of external evidence supporting the traditional late date of Revelation.

It would be historically irresponsible to ignore or dismiss it. Nevertheless, our examination has demonstrated that his statement does not possess the absolute certainty sometimes attributed to it.

The Greek wording admits a possible alternative interpretation, although the traditional understanding remains contextually strong.

Irenaeus did not identify the source of his chronological information, and the later quotation of his statement by Eusebius does not constitute an entirely independent confirmation.

Furthermore, Irenaeus's treatment of the age of Christ demonstrates that his historical judgments were not infallible.

These observations do not establish an early date. They establish something necessary before the case for an early date can be properly considered:

The testimony of Irenaeus does not place the traditional late date beyond reasonable historical examination.

Consequently, we must investigate whether the internal testimony of Revelation points more convincingly towards the period preceding the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

If such evidence proves sufficiently strong, the statement of Irenaeus must be reassessed in its light.

The final question is not which date has been repeated most frequently by later commentators.

It is which date best explains the combined historical and biblical evidence.

References for Chapter 2

1. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V.30.3 — the statement concerning the vision and the end of Domitian's reign.
2. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, III.18.1–5 — John's exile to Patmos and the quotation from Irenaeus.
3. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, III.18.3 — Greek text preserving the relevant statement from Irenaeus.
4. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, II.22.4–6 — his argument concerning the age of Jesus Christ. .
5. Milton S. Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics (1890), discussion of the date of Revelation.

Chapter 3 — Eusebius and the Historical Tradition Concerning John's Exile

Does the Evidence Independently Establish That Revelation Was Written During the Reign of Domitian?

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we examined the testimony of Irenaeus, one of the earliest Christian writers commonly cited in support of a late date for the Book of Revelation.

We discovered that Irenaeus made a statement concerning something being seen towards the end of Domitian's reign. Although the traditional interpretation is that he referred to John's apocalyptic vision, the wording has been questioned by those who favour an earlier date.

We also observed that Irenaeus did not identify the particular source of his chronological information.

We must now consider how the tradition developed in subsequent Christian writings.

This investigation is particularly important because the late date of Revelation is often supported by quotations from several early Christian authors.

At first sight, this may appear to provide a considerable body of independent historical testimony.

But we must distinguish between two very different kinds of evidence.

The first is the testimony of a writer who possesses independent knowledge of an event.

The second is the testimony of a later writer who repeats information already recorded by an earlier authority.

Both may be valuable. However, they do not carry the same historical weight.

If several writers depend upon a single earlier source, their agreement may demonstrate how widely that source was accepted without independently confirming the original event.

Our task is therefore to determine whether the Domitianic dating of Revelation rests upon several independent witnesses or upon a tradition that gradually acquired greater authority through repetition.

1. Eusebius, the Historian of the Early Church

Eusebius of Caesarea lived approximately from AD 260 to AD 340.

He is best remembered for his Ecclesiastical History, a major account of the Christian Church from the apostolic period to his own time.

His work is of enormous historical value because he preserved information from earlier Christian authors, including passages from writings that might otherwise have been lost.

Nevertheless, Eusebius wrote more than two centuries after the destruction of Jerusalem.

He was not an eyewitness to the events surrounding John's exile or the composition of Revelation.

For these matters, he necessarily depended upon earlier historical records, Christian traditions, and his interpretation of those materials.

This does not make his testimony worthless. Indeed, his careful preservation of earlier writings makes his work indispensable to our investigation.

But the reliability of his conclusions must be assessed in relation to the sources upon which he depended.

This is especially important when he gives us not merely a quotation from an earlier writer but a historical conclusion drawn from several traditions.

2. What Eusebius Says About John's Exile

In Ecclesiastical History, Book III, Chapter 18, Eusebius discusses the persecution of Christians during Domitian's reign.

He records that the apostle John was condemned to live on Patmos because of his testimony to the word of God.

He then appeals directly to Irenaeus and quotes the statement concerning the end of Domitian's reign.

Eusebius therefore places John's banishment within his account of Domitian's persecution.

This is a significant historical statement. It establishes that, by the early fourth century, an influential Christian historian understood John's exile and the visions of Revelation to belong to Domitian's reign.

But we must ask how Eusebius reached that conclusion. Did he possess a contemporary Roman record of John's banishment?

Did he have an independent account written by one of John's companions?

Or did he understand the earlier statement of Irenaeus as sufficient to establish the date?

In this chapter, Eusebius identifies Irenaeus as his authority for the chronological connection with Revelation.

He does not produce a contemporary Roman document recording John's exile.

Nor does he quote an eyewitness account expressly stating that John received the Revelation in AD 95 or 96.

This distinction is important. It does not prove that Eusebius possessed no other information. It establishes the more limited fact that the particular evidence he presents does not amount to a surviving contemporary record of the event.

Accordingly, we must be careful not to treat his quotation of Irenaeus as an additional independent witness.

3. The Persecution Under Domitian

Domitian ruled the Roman Empire from AD 81 until his assassination in AD 96.

Eusebius records acts of persecution during his reign and mentions the exile of Flavia Domitilla, who was associated with the imperial family.

In Ecclesiastical History III.18, he reports her banishment to the island of Pontia and places this event in Domitian's fifteenth year.

This historical setting is relevant to John's exile. It demonstrates that the tradition about John was not presented in isolation but formed part of Eusebius's wider account of Domitian's treatment of Christians.

Nevertheless, we must distinguish the general historical circumstances from the specific date of Revelation.

Even if we establish that Domitian persecuted Christians and banished individuals, that does not necessarily establish that John was among those banished.

And even if John was exiled during Domitian's reign, we would still need to determine whether he received and wrote Revelation during that exile.

These are related questions, but they are not identical. The Book of Revelation itself provides one relevant piece of information:

"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

— Revelation 1:9, KJV

John states that he was on Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The verse does not identify the Roman emperor responsible for his circumstances.

It does not explicitly state that he had been formally sentenced to exile.

Nor does it provide an absolute date. Consequently, the identification of Domitian as the emperor responsible for John's banishment comes from external historical tradition, not directly from Revelation 1:9.

This must be kept in mind when weighing the evidence.

4. John's Return from Patmos

Eusebius provides additional information in Ecclesiastical History, Book III, Chapters 20 and 23.

He states that after Domitian's death, the Roman Senate annulled certain acts of the deceased emperor and permitted people who had been unjustly exiled to return.

Eusebius then connects John's return from Patmos with this change of government.

According to his account, John returned to Ephesus and continued his ministry among the churches of Asia.

Here we encounter a potentially important argument for the late date.

If John was released following Domitian's death in AD 96, his exile would naturally belong to the preceding period.

But where did Eusebius obtain this information? One of the earlier sources he used was Clement of Alexandria. Clement lived around the end of the second century and beginning of the third.

He therefore wrote before Eusebius and independently recorded a tradition concerning John's return from Patmos.

We must now examine his testimony.

5. Clement of Alexandria and the Death of the Tyrant

In his work Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?, Clement of Alexandria relates an account of the apostle John's ministry after returning from Patmos.

The account describes John travelling among neighbouring churches, appointing ministers, and caring for a young man who had fallen into serious sin.

Clement introduces these events as occurring after the death of a tyrant.

The significant feature is that Clement does not name the tyrant in this passage.

Eusebius identifies the historical setting with the death of Domitian.

This interpretation is understandable because Domitian had acquired a reputation for tyranny, and Eusebius had already connected John's exile with his reign.

Nevertheless, Clement's actual words deserve careful attention. His account establishes that a tradition existed concerning John's return from Patmos after the death of a ruler described as a tyrant.

It does not, by itself, expressly identify that ruler as Domitian. Could Clement have meant Nero? That possibility has been suggested by advocates of the early date. Nero was certainly remembered as a persecutor of Christians, and his reign ended violently in AD 68.

An exile under Nero followed by a return after his death would therefore be chronologically possible.

But possibility is not proof. Clement does not name Nero either. We must not make the same mistake that we are questioning in the traditional interpretation by assigning a definite name to an unidentified ruler without sufficient evidence.

The most defensible conclusion is that Clement supplies an early and potentially independent tradition concerning John's exile and subsequent return.

His account does not independently establish whether the emperor was Nero or Domitian.

This does, however, leave an important distinction between Clement's original testimony and Eusebius's later chronological interpretation.

6. Tertullian and the Tradition of John's Banishment

Another early Christian writer who deserves attention is Tertullian, who lived approximately from AD 155 to AD 220.

Tertullian wrote before Eusebius and was roughly contemporary with Clement of Alexandria.

In his work The Prescription Against Heretics, Chapter 36, he refers to the sufferings of the apostles at Rome.

He recalls the martyrdom of Peter, the death of Paul, and an extraordinary tradition concerning John.

According to Tertullian, John was placed in boiling oil, survived unharmed, and was subsequently banished to an island.

The account is important because it provides testimony to a tradition of John's banishment that predates Eusebius.

But it raises several questions. Tertullian does not explicitly name the emperor who banished John.

Nor does he say when Revelation was written. The significance of his statement lies partly in its historical setting. He places John's ordeal alongside events associated with the persecution of Christians in Rome.

Peter and Paul were traditionally believed to have suffered martyrdom during Nero's reign.

It is therefore reasonable to ask whether Tertullian also understood John's persecution to have occurred during that period.

This interpretation has been proposed by advocates of an early date.

However, we must distinguish association from chronology. Tertullian may have grouped these incidents together because they illustrated the sufferings of the apostles at Rome, rather than because they happened under the same emperor.

Consequently, his testimony is consistent with the possibility of a Neronian exile, but it does not establish one.

What Tertullian does demonstrate is that a tradition concerning John's persecution and exile existed before Eusebius wrote his history.

Furthermore, since Tertullian does not identify Domitian, his account cannot independently establish the Domitianic date.

This brings us to a significant distinction. Tertullian supports the historicity of a tradition concerning John's exile, but not the particular year in which Revelation was composed.

7. Victorinus: An Important Witness for the Late Date

We must now consider evidence that presents a more substantial challenge to the early-date position.

Victorinus of Pettau was a Christian bishop and writer who died during the persecution under Diocletian, around AD 303–304.

He wrote one of the earliest surviving Latin commentaries on Revelation.

Unlike Clement and Tertullian, Victorinus explicitly names Domitian.

Commenting upon Revelation 10:11, Victorinus states that John was on Patmos, having been condemned to labour in the mines by Domitian.

He also connects the publication of Revelation with Domitian's reign in his discussion of chapter 17.

This testimony cannot simply be explained as Victorinus copying Eusebius, because Victorinus wrote before Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History.

Here, therefore, we possess an important pre-Eusebian witness to the Domitianic tradition.

Any historical defence of the early date must acknowledge this fact.

It would be incorrect to claim that every writer who connected Revelation with Domitian depended directly upon Eusebius.

But several questions remain. First, Victorinus wrote approximately two centuries after Domitian.

Second, he does not identify an eyewitness or contemporary document as the source of his information.

Third, his commentary was subsequently revised by Jerome, and different recensions of the text circulated.

This last point requires careful handling. Jerome's revision altered portions of the earlier commentary, and modern scholarship distinguishes between the original text of Victorinus and the later revised forms.

It is therefore important that any quotation attributed to Victorinus be checked against the critically reconstructed original text.

The mere fact of Jerome's revision does not invalidate Victorinus's testimony.

Nevertheless, it requires us to establish which statements genuinely belong to Victorinus rather than assuming that every passage in a later printed edition represents his original wording.

The correct historical conclusion is that Victorinus supplies important early testimony for the Domitianic tradition, although he does not tell us how he obtained that tradition.

His witness increases the external support for the late date. It does not, however, make the date historically indisputable.

8. Jerome and the Later Establishment of the Tradition

Jerome lived approximately from AD 347 to AD 420.

He was a major biblical scholar and is particularly remembered for his work on the Latin Bible.

In On Illustrious Men, Chapter 9, Jerome provides an explicit account of John's banishment.

He associates it with Domitian's persecution, states that John wrote Revelation on Patmos, and records his return to Ephesus after Domitian's death, during Nerva's reign.

Jerome's testimony is therefore much more definite than the statement of Clement.

There is no uncertainty about which emperor Jerome intended. But Jerome wrote approximately three centuries after Domitian. He also knew the earlier Christian historical tradition, including the writings of Eusebius.

Consequently, although his account is important evidence for the reception of that tradition, it does not necessarily constitute a fresh and independent historical witness to events in the first century.

Jerome may have possessed additional information, but the mere repetition of a detailed chronology does not establish that it came from a separate contemporary source.

This is the distinction we must maintain. By Jerome's time, the association of Revelation with Domitian had become firmly established in influential Christian historical writing.

The development of a well-established tradition is historically significant.

Nevertheless, the certainty with which later authors repeat a tradition is not necessarily a measure of the certainty of its original evidence.

9. What About the Witnesses Who Give a Different Date?

These deserve investigation because they challenge the claim that all ancient Christian testimony agrees upon the late date.

One such witness is Epiphanius of Salamis, a fourth-century Christian bishop.

In his Panarion, he associates John's time on Patmos with the reign of Claudius Caesar.

The emperor Claudius ruled from AD 41 to AD 54. If Epiphanius intended that emperor, the date would be substantially earlier than either Nero or Domitian.

Some early-date writers have suggested that the name might refer to Nero, who bore the name Nero Claudius Caesar following his adoption.

That explanation is possible, but it should not be presented as established fact.

The difficulties in Epiphanius's chronology also require examination.

His testimony demonstrates that not every ancient Christian account used the same imperial chronology.

It does not, by itself, establish that Revelation was written under Nero.

The Syriac tradition

This heading attributes John's banishment to Nero Caesar. The statement is especially interesting because it directly identifies the emperor associated with Patmos.

However, Revelation was absent from the earliest standard Syriac New Testament collection known as the Peshitta. It appears in later Syriac textual traditions.

Consequently, the date of the surviving heading must be distinguished from the possible age of the tradition which it preserves.

A heading copied centuries after the apostolic period may preserve older information, but we cannot assume that it does without supporting evidence.

The Syriac witness therefore provides evidence that a Neronian attribution circulated within part of the manuscript tradition.

It is an important subject for our continuing investigation, but its historical weight depends upon establishing its textual history.

We shall examine the Syriac evidence more fully in the following chapter.

10. Are These Witnesses Truly Independent?

We are now in a position to review the principal historical witnesses.

Writer	Approximate period	Relevant testimony	Historical limitation
Irenaeus	Late second century	Something or someone was seen near the end of Domitian's reign	The precise subject and source of the statement are debated
Clement of Alexandria	Around AD 200	John returned from Patmos after a tyrant's death	Does not name the tyrant
Tertullian	Around AD 200	John suffered persecution and was sent into island exile	Does not identify the emperor
Victorinus	Late third century	Explicitly associates John's exile and Revelation with Domitian	Source of his tradition is not identified
Eusebius	Early fourth century	Places John's exile under Domitian	Relies in part upon earlier testimony
Epiphanius	Fourth century	Associates John's Patmos experience with Claudius	His chronology presents difficulties
Jerome	Late fourth century	Explicitly places Revelation under Domitian	Wrote later and knew earlier traditions

This comparison reveals something important. The Domitianic date does not rest solely upon Eusebius. Nor would it be correct to say that Irenaeus is the only early Christian writer whose testimony supports it.

Victorinus presents a particular difficulty for that claim because he wrote before Eusebius and explicitly named Domitian.

However, we must also recognise that the exact sources of these traditions are not always known.

We cannot confidently establish that every writer possessed independent first-century information.

Equally, we cannot demonstrate that every writer merely copied Irenaeus.

The evidence does not justify either extreme conclusion. What we can say is that a Domitianic tradition was established within the early Christian historical record, but the available testimony does not provide a contemporary account of the composition of Revelation.

That leaves the historical question open to further investigation.

11. Can the Historical Tradition Override the Internal Evidence of Revelation?

The significance of these findings becomes clearer when we return to

the Book of Revelation itself.

John identifies the circumstances of his prophecy in Revelation 1:9, but he does not name the emperor.

The book also contains statements that appear to locate its message within circumstances familiar to its earliest readers.

For example, John is commanded:

"Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein."

— Revelation 11:1, KJV

The following verse refers to the Gentiles treading the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.

If this refers to the historical Temple and Jerusalem before their destruction in AD 70, the passage would provide substantial evidence for an early date.

However, that identification must first be established. Prophetic visions frequently contain symbolic representations. The presence of a Temple in a vision does not automatically prove that the physical building was standing when the vision was received.

Likewise, Revelation 17:10 states:

> *"And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space."*

— Revelation 17:10, KJV

If the kings represent successive Roman emperors and the sixth is Nero, this would place the vision within Nero's reign.

But that conclusion depends upon establishing that the kings are Roman emperors and deciding where the sequence begins.

These matters must be argued rather than assumed. The point is that Revelation contains possible chronological indications that can be tested against the external tradition.

The historical evidence should not be allowed to determine their meaning before they have been examined.

Nor should a proposed interpretation of these verses automatically be allowed to set aside early Christian historical testimony.

The correct method is to examine both sets of evidence independently, then determine which date best accounts for them together.

12. Conclusion: What Has the Historical Investigation Established?

Our examination of Eusebius and the wider Christian tradition has produced several findings.

First, the connection between Revelation and Domitian is older than Eusebius.

Irenaeus provides the earliest commonly cited testimony, and Victorinus explicitly associates John with Domitian before Eusebius wrote his history.

Second, Clement and Tertullian preserve traditions concerning John's exile without identifying the responsible emperor.

Their testimony cannot independently settle the date. Third, later writers such as Jerome provide definite chronological statements, but their distance from the events and their knowledge of earlier traditions must be considered when assessing their independence.

Fourth, some ancient traditions associate John's experience with other emperors, although these alternative accounts also contain historical and chronological difficulties.

The conclusion is therefore more precise than the simple assertion that the late date rests upon a single unreliable quotation.

The Domitianic date has substantial early Christian support, but that support is not equivalent to direct contemporary documentation.

Some of the evidence is explicit; some is ambiguous; and some consists of later writers transmitting established traditions.

This does not demonstrate that Revelation was written before AD 70.

It does demonstrate that the evidence for the late date must be assessed critically rather than accepted merely because it became traditional.

The case for the early date will ultimately depend upon whether the internal evidence of Revelation provides a more compelling chronological explanation.

If the Temple in chapter 11 refers to the Temple still standing in Jerusalem, if the sixth king of chapter 17 is Nero, and if the repeated declarations that the time was near relate to events immediately approaching the original readers, then there would be substantial reasons for preferring a pre-AD 70 date.

But each of these propositions must be established through careful interpretation of Scripture.

We have now examined the principal historical tradition supporting the late date.

The next task is to examine the ancient evidence that has been offered in favour of the earlier date, beginning with the Syriac witness and the traditions concerning Nero.

Historical sources and references

1. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, III.18, III.20 and III.23. .

2. Clement of Alexandria, Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?, Section 42. .

3. Tertullian, The Prescription Against Heretics, Chapter 36. .

4. Victorinus of Pettau, Commentary on the Apocalypse, on Revelation 10 and 17. .

5. Jerome, On Illustrious Men, Chapter 9, concerning the apostle John. .

6. F. F. Bruce, “The Earliest Latin Commentary on the Apocalypse,” The Evangelical Quarterly 10 (1938), pp. 352–366, discussing Victorinus and the subsequent revision of his commentary. .

Chapter 4 — The Early Christian Witnesses and the Syriac Evidence

Was the Book of Revelation Written During the Reign of Nero?

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, we examined the historical evidence commonly used to place the composition of Revelation towards the end of Domitian's reign, around AD 95–96.

We discovered that the late-date tradition has substantial support among early Christian writers, particularly Irenaeus, Victorinus, Eusebius, and Jerome.

However, we also found that their statements differ in the information they provide and that not every writer identifies the source of his chronological knowledge.

We must now turn to another body of historical evidence. Although the Domitianic date eventually became the dominant tradition, it was not the only date associated with John's exile and the composition of Revelation.

Other historical witnesses connect John with earlier emperors, particularly Nero and Claudius. Some later Christian commentators also understood important passages of Revelation to concern the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70.

These witnesses are significant because they demonstrate that the traditional late date was not universally accepted.

Nevertheless, our purpose must be more demanding than simply collecting quotations favouring an early date.

We must ask when each testimony was written, whether it records an independent tradition, and whether its words actually establish the conclusion attributed to them.

In particular, we shall examine the Syriac tradition, the testimony of Epiphanius, the commentaries of Arethas and Theophylact, and the arguments advanced by Isaac Newton and Robert Young.

Our central question is straightforward:

Is there sufficient historical testimony to make a Neronian date for Revelation a credible alternative to the traditional Domitianic date?

1. The Reign of Nero and the Historical Setting

Nero became emperor of Rome in AD 54 and ruled until his death in June AD 68.

His reign is particularly significant in Christian history because of the persecution that followed the great fire of Rome in AD 64.

The Roman historian Tacitus describes Nero's punishment of Christians and the terrible sufferings inflicted upon them.

According to the early Christian tradition, the apostles Peter and Paul also suffered martyrdom during Nero's reign.

The Book of Revelation opens with John describing himself as a fellow sufferer with the churches:

> *"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."*
>
> — Revelation 1:9, KJV

John therefore wrote as someone who shared in the tribulation experienced by other followers of Christ.

This is consistent with the conditions under Nero. However, we must be careful. The existence of Christian persecution during Nero's reign does not establish that Revelation was written under Nero. Christians also experienced suffering and official hostility at other periods.

The historical circumstances provide a possible setting, but a date requires additional evidence.

The importance of Nero becomes clearer when we examine the traditions that explicitly associate John's exile with his reign.

2. The Syriac Title of Revelation

One of the most interesting pieces of external evidence for the early date appears in the Syriac manuscript tradition.

Syriac was a form of Aramaic used by Christian communities in Syria and neighbouring regions.

The Syriac-speaking churches developed their own biblical translations and manuscript traditions, some of which preserve readings and historical notices different from those found in Greek and Latin sources.

In a later Syriac tradition of Revelation, the heading attributes John's banishment to Nero Caesar.

The wording, as quoted by Isaac Newton, states:

> *"The Revelation which was made to John the Evangelist by God in the Island Patmos, into which he was banished by Nero the Cæsar."*

This statement expressly names Nero rather than Domitian. Its significance should not be overlooked. It is not merely an argument that Nero could have banished John. It records a tradition in which Nero is identified as the emperor responsible.

If that tradition preserves accurate historical information, John's experience on Patmos would belong to the period before Nero's death in AD 68.

Such a date would place Revelation before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

But what do we know about the antiquity of this heading?

The age of the Syriac evidence

The standard early Syriac New Testament, commonly called the Peshitta, did not originally contain Revelation among its recognised books.

Revelation entered the Syriac manuscript tradition through other textual forms, including later translations.

Therefore, we must distinguish between the antiquity of Christianity in Syria and the antiquity of the particular manuscript heading that mentions Nero.

The fact that Syriac Christianity developed in the early centuries does not mean every statement preserved in a Syriac manuscript originated in those centuries.

Furthermore, a heading supplied by a copyist is not the same as the inspired text of Revelation.

It may preserve an ancient historical memory, but it may also reflect a later opinion about the book's authorship and date.

This distinction limits the weight that can be assigned to the evidence.

Nevertheless, the heading remains important. It demonstrates that a tradition identifying Nero as the emperor responsible for John's banishment existed within the Syriac transmission of Revelation.

The question is whether this tradition arose independently or whether it reflects an interpretation adopted by later Christian scholars.

The available evidence does not yet establish its original source. Consequently, the Syriac title provides positive testimony to the existence of a Neronian tradition, though not conclusive proof of a Neronian date.

3. Isaac Newton and the Syriac Tradition

iIsaac Newton is remembered primarily for his contributions to mathematics and natural philosophy. However, Newton also devoted considerable attention to biblical chronology, ancient history, and prophecy.

However, Newton also devoted considerable attention to biblical chronology, ancient history, and prophecy.

In his Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John, published in 1733 after his death, Newton argued that Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem.

His discussion is especially relevant because he examined historical testimony rather than relying upon prophetic interpretation alone.

Newton appealed to the Syriac title attributing John's exile to Nero.

He also considered the account of John's return from Patmos and his subsequent activity among the churches.

According to Newton, the tradition describing John's ministry after his exile fitted more naturally with a return following Nero's death in AD 68 than with a return after Domitian's death in AD 96.

His reasoning deserves examination. Clement of Alexandria described John travelling among the churches following his return from Patmos.

The account portrays John as sufficiently active to visit congregations and intervene personally in the affairs of their members.

Newton considered the account difficult to reconcile with a return in AD 96, when John would have been advanced in years.

He therefore regarded an earlier return as more plausible.

How strong is Newton's argument?

Newton raises a legitimate chronological question. If John had been approximately the same generation as the other apostles, he would have been an elderly man by AD 96.

If he returned from exile around AD 68, he would have had considerably more time to undertake the activities described by Clement.

But the argument depends upon matters that cannot be established with certainty.

We do not know John's exact year of birth.

Nor do we know precisely when the events described by Clement occurred.

Furthermore, advanced age does not necessarily prevent an individual from travelling or exercising considerable influence.

We should therefore regard Newton's reasoning as a historical probability argument rather than a demonstration.

Its importance lies in showing that a serious investigator could question the traditional chronology by comparing the surviving accounts of John's life.

Newton's conclusion is especially relevant to our study because it demonstrates that the early-date position was not simply a modern response to futurist interpretations of Revelation.

It has a substantial history among Christian scholars and interpreters.

4. Epiphanius and the Reign of Claudius

We now come to one of the most unusual pieces of evidence. Epiphanius of Salamis was a Christian bishop who lived during the fourth century.

He is remembered for his work Panarion, in which he examined and opposed numerous religious teachings that he regarded as heretical.

In Book 51, Epiphanius discusses a group commonly called the Alogi, who rejected the Gospel and Revelation associated with John.

During his discussion, Epiphanius connects John's prophetic activity and his stay on Patmos with the reign of Claudius Caesar.

He makes this connection in more than one passage, including Panarion 51.12.2 and 51.33.9.

This testimony is important because it expressly differs from the Domitianic tradition.

The emperor Claudius ruled from AD 41 to AD 54. If Epiphanius meant Claudius himself, his chronology would place John's prophetic activity substantially earlier than the date traditionally assigned to Revelation.

But an important difficulty arises. Why would Epiphanius place John on Patmos under Claudius when other Christian historians placed him there under Domitian?

Several explanations have been proposed. One possibility is that Epiphanius preserved a separate historical tradition.

Another is that he confused the names or chronology of Roman emperors.

A third suggestion is that he intended Nero, whose imperial name included Claudius.

We must consider each possibility. Did Epiphanius mean Nero Claudius Caesar? Nero was adopted by Claudius and became known by the imperial name Nero Claudius Caesar.

Some writers favouring an early date have suggested that Epiphanius's reference to Claudius may therefore identify Nero rather than the emperor Claudius.

If that were correct, his testimony would support the Syriac tradition.

However, this interpretation presents a difficulty. The expression Claudius Caesar ordinarily identifies the emperor Claudius unless the context provides reason to understand it otherwise.

The fact that Nero bore the name Claudius does not prove that Epiphanius intended him.

Nor does Epiphanius explicitly identify the emperor as Nero. Consequently, we should not claim that his testimony independently confirms a Neronian date.

What it does establish is that an ancient Christian writer associated John's prophetic activity with a period earlier than Domitian.

This is significant, even if the precise historical explanation remains uncertain.

How reliable is Epiphanius?

Epiphanius wrote several centuries after the events. His work contains historical and chronological claims that require critical examination.

The date he assigns to John's writings has therefore been questioned by scholars who otherwise recognise the importance of his testimony.

We should not accept his chronology merely because it favours an early date.

Nevertheless, the existence of a different chronology among Christian writers demonstrates that the transmission of information concerning John's life was not entirely uniform.

This matters because historical certainty cannot be established simply by appealing to what later became the prevailing tradition.

The evidence must be examined at its source.

5. Arethas of Caesarea and the Destruction of Jerusalem

Another witness deserves particular attention because his comments are directly relevant to the early-date interpretation of Revelation.

Arethas of Caesarea was a Byzantine scholar and bishop who lived during the late ninth and early tenth centuries.

He produced a commentary on the Book of Revelation, drawing upon earlier Christian interpretations.

In his discussion of Revelation 7, Arethas considers the sealing of the servants of God from the tribes of Israel.

The passage reads:

> *"And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel."*
>
> — Revelation 7:4, KJV

Arethas connects these sealed Israelites with Jewish believers in Christ who were preserved from the calamities that overtook Jerusalem.

He then makes a remarkable chronological statement. He says that the destruction inflicted upon the Jews by the Romans had not yet occurred when John received the prophecies.

The passage is reproduced in historical discussions of the date of Revelation and expressly places the reception of the visions before Jerusalem's destruction.

This is unusually relevant to our argument. Unlike a witness who merely names an emperor, Arethas relates the chronology of Revelation to the actual events described in the book.

He understands the prophecy as looking forward to the Roman judgment upon Jerusalem.

If his interpretation is correct, Revelation must have been received before AD 70.

How much weight should we give Arethas?

We must immediately acknowledge an important limitation. Arethas wrote many centuries after the apostolic period. His interpretation cannot be regarded as contemporary historical evidence.

Furthermore, he may have inherited his understanding from earlier commentators rather than from a separate tradition concerning the circumstances of John's exile.

Nevertheless, his testimony is valuable in a different way. It demonstrates that the interpretation of Revelation in relation to Jerusalem's destruction was known within the older Christian exegetical tradition.

It was not invented by modern interpreters. Arethas also shows that a Christian commentator could be familiar with the traditional association of John with Domitian while nevertheless interpreting particular visions in relation to events before AD 70.

This raises an important question. Did Arethas preserve an older interpretation that understood Revelation as a prophecy concerning Jerusalem's approaching judgment?

His commentary suggests that such an interpretative tradition existed, but further investigation would be necessary to establish its antiquity and development.

For the purposes of our argument, the distinction is clear. Arethas does not provide early eyewitness testimony that Revelation was written under Nero.

He does, however, give explicit evidence of a historical interpretation in which the book's visions preceded the destruction of Jerusalem.

6. Theophylact and the Thirty-Two Years After the Ascension

Another witness is Theophylact of Ohrid, a Byzantine biblical commentator who lived during the eleventh and early twelfth centuries.

In his preface to the Gospel of John, Theophylact states that John wrote his Gospel thirty-two years after Christ's ascension while living in exile on Patmos.

This is interesting because, depending upon the chronology adopted for the ascension, thirty-two years would place the event approximately in the AD 60s.

Such a date would fall within Nero's reign. However, there is a significant qualification. Theophylact is speaking about the Gospel of John, not expressly about the composition of Revelation.

Therefore, we cannot simply quote him as saying that Revelation was written thirty-two years after the ascension.

His statement associates John with Patmos at an early date, but it also presents a chronology that differs from the more familiar tradition concerning the composition of John's Gospel.

Moreover, Theophylact wrote approximately a thousand years after Christ.

Without an identifiable earlier source, his statement cannot establish an early date independently.

Nevertheless, the passage remains useful because it demonstrates another chronological tradition connecting John and Patmos with a period earlier than Domitian.

It should be included in our historical investigation, but with its limitations clearly stated.

7. Robert Young and the Identification of Domitius Nero

The nineteenth-century biblical scholar Robert Young, best known for Young's Analytical Concordance, also supported an early date for Revelation.

Young argued that Revelation was written on Patmos around AD 68.

He appealed to the Syriac heading which attributed John's banishment to Nero.

He also proposed that the reference in Irenaeus to Domitian had been misunderstood.

His suggestion was that the emperor intended was Domitius Nero rather than Domitian.

This argument is worthy of historical mention because it represents an attempt to reconcile the apparently conflicting traditions.

If Irenaeus had referred to Nero rather than Domitian, the supposed disagreement between his testimony and the Syriac heading would largely disappear.

But does the Greek support this explanation? This is where we must exercise particular care. Nero bore the name Domitius before his adoption into the Claudian family.

Domitian, however, was a different emperor, whose name is conventionally represented in Greek by the form appearing in Irenaeus's statement.

The similarity between the names cannot itself establish that one has been mistaken for the other.

In order to sustain Young's suggestion, we would need textual or historical evidence demonstrating that the name transmitted in Irenaeus was corrupted or misunderstood.

Merely observing that Nero had once been called Domitius is insufficient.

Consequently, Young's proposal should be presented as a historical argument advanced by an early-date scholar, rather than as a demonstrated correction of Irenaeus.

Indeed, it would weaken our study to insist that Irenaeus certainly meant Nero without producing direct supporting evidence.

A stronger case would acknowledge that Irenaeus probably intended Domitian, while maintaining that his testimony must still be weighed against the internal evidence of Revelation.

This allows the case for an early date to stand without depending upon a speculative alteration of the historical record.

8. The Muratorian Fragment and the Seven Churches

There is one further ancient witness which deserves examination. The Muratorian Fragment is an early list of New Testament writings, commonly associated with the late second century, although its precise date and textual history remain disputed.

The surviving Latin text discusses the writings of Paul and John.

It observes that Paul wrote to seven churches, following the pattern of his predecessor John.

This is significant because Revelation contains messages addressed to seven churches in Asia.

The passage has therefore been interpreted by some scholars as suggesting that John wrote Revelation before Paul composed his epistles.

If that chronological implication is intended, it would provide very early evidence favouring a date before AD 70.

Indeed, it might point to an even earlier date than is usually proposed by advocates of the Neronian theory.

However, the interpretation is not beyond dispute. The writer may have meant that Paul followed John's literary pattern, without intending to provide an exact chronology of composition.

Alternatively, the statement may reflect the compiler's understanding of the order in which the apostolic writings were produced.

The significant point is that the wording appears to place John before Paul in some sense.

The Muratorian Fragment therefore deserves inclusion among the external considerations supporting the possibility of an early date. Its meaning, however, must be established through careful examination of the Latin text and its context.

If it can be shown that the writer intended chronological priority, its testimony would be particularly interesting because of the fragment's relatively early origin.

Even so, a statement concerning literary order is not the same as an eyewitness account of Revelation's composition.

We should distinguish the two.

9. Comparing the Historical Evidence

We have now considered the principal external witnesses advanced in favour of an early date.

Their value is not identical. Some expressly name Nero; others identify Claudius; still others interpret Revelation as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem.

The following comparison helps us distinguish what each witness establishes.

Witness	Evidence relevant to an early date	Historical weight
Syriac heading	Names Nero as the emperor responsible for John's exile	Explicit, but the surviving tradition is later
Isaac Newton	Defends a Neronian date using earlier traditions and John's subsequent ministry	Scholarly argument, not an ancient witness
Epiphanius	Associates John's stay on Patmos with Claudius	Explicit alternative chronology, but historically disputed
Arethas	States that the Roman destruction of Jerusalem had not occurred when John received the prophecies	Explicit early-date interpretation, but much later
Theophylact Theophylact	Places John on Patmos thirty- two years after the ascension	Early chronology, but refers to John's Gospel
Robert Young	Supports AD 68 and proposes a difefrent reading of the imperial identification	Scholarly interpretation requiring further proof
Muratorian Fragment	May place John's writing before Paul's letters	Potentially early evidence, but the chronological meaning is disputed

We can therefore draw an important conclusion. The traditional Domitianic chronology was not the only chronology circulating within Christian historical and interpretative traditions.

There was also a body of testimony connecting John with earlier emperors or relating Revelation's prophecies to events preceding Jerusalem's destruction.

However, we must not exaggerate what this proves. The existence of several alternative traditions does not establish that they are all correct.

Indeed, they cannot all be correct in every detail, because

Claudius, Nero, and Domitian reigned at different times.

Nor should we automatically assume that a later witness favouring Nero is more dependable than an earlier witness favouring Domitian.

The correct approach is to recognise the differences in the testimony and investigate which chronology best agrees with the biblical and historical evidence.

10. Does the External Evidence Prove an Early Date?

This is the central question of the chapter. We have established that some historical traditions favour a date before AD 70.

The Syriac heading explicitly attributes John's exile to Nero. Epiphanius preserves a different chronology involving Claudius. Arethas understands Revelation's visions as preceding the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

Theophylact and the Muratorian Fragment raise further chronological questions.

These witnesses prevent us from claiming that all Christian antiquity spoke with one voice concerning the date of Revelation.

But do they establish that John wrote under Nero? Not conclusively. The Syriac heading, although explicit, survives in a later textual tradition whose original authority remains uncertain.

Epiphanius's account differs from the Neronian chronology as well as the Domitianic one.

Arethas provides an interpretation of Revelation rather than an eyewitness report.

Theophylact's chronological statement concerns the Gospel of John.

The Muratorian Fragment requires further textual examination. Consequently, the strongest argument for the early date cannot rest upon the external witnesses alone.

Their importance lies in demonstrating that the traditional date is open to historical investigation and that an earlier chronology possesses some support outside Revelation itself.

We must now determine whether the book provides stronger evidence concerning the period in which it was written.

11. The Relationship Between Historical Testimony and Scripture

The Christian interpreter must distinguish between the authority of Scripture and the historical testimony of those who wrote after the apostles.

This distinction does not mean that the testimony of the early Church Fathers should be ignored.

Their writings preserve valuable information concerning the life, worship, doctrine, and historical circumstances of the early Christian Church.

Nevertheless, they were not inspired in the same sense as the authors of Scripture.

Their historical conclusions may therefore be examined and, where sufficient evidence exists, questioned.

The Book of Revelation identifies itself as a prophetic communication given by Jesus Christ to John.

It also identifies the original recipients as seven churches in Asia. Furthermore, it repeatedly speaks of events that were near at hand.

These statements provide the starting point for our examination of its internal evidence.

If Revelation contains references that can be securely connected with the Roman Empire under Nero, the Jewish nation before AD 70, and the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, such references would provide substantial evidence for an early date.

But those connections must be established through careful exposition.

We cannot first assume that Revelation concerns Jerusalem's destruction and then use that assumption as proof that it was written before the destruction occurred.

That would be circular reasoning. Instead, we must examine the relevant passages, consider the possible interpretations, and determine which explanation most naturally accounts for the language and historical circumstances.

This is particularly important in the case of Revelation 11, where John is instructed to measure the Temple.

The passage reads:

> *"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.*
>
> *But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."*
>
> — Revelation 11:1–2, KJV

If John was describing the Temple then standing in Jerusalem, the passage would provide a powerful indication that the book was written before AD 70.

The reference to the Gentiles treading the holy city underfoot would also invite comparison with the prophecy of Jesus recorded in Luke 21.

However, the possibility that the Temple forms part of a symbolic prophetic vision must also be considered.

This question cannot be settled merely by appealing to an ancient heading or the opinion of a later commentator.

It requires a close examination of Scripture.

12. Conclusion: An Early Date Is Historically Defensible

The historical evidence examined in this chapter does not conclusively establish that Revelation was written during Nero's reign.

Nevertheless, it provides several important reasons why the traditional late date should not be regarded as beyond examination.

First, the Syriac tradition expressly attributes John's banishment to Nero.

Second, Epiphanius preserves a chronology placing John's prophetic activity before Domitian.

Third, Arethas interprets Revelation as containing prophecies received before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

Fourth, other historical and literary traditions raise questions about the conventional chronology of John's writings.

These sources differ in age, reliability, and significance. They cannot simply be combined as though they constituted independent eyewitness accounts of the same event.

Nevertheless, their existence demonstrates that the historical

record is more complicated than a simple assertion that John wrote Revelation in AD 95–96.

The traditional date has meaningful external support, but an early date also has historical advocates and witnesses deserving examination.

We must therefore turn to the internal evidence of the book. Our next task is to determine whether Revelation itself describes historical circumstances that existed before the destruction of Jerusalem.

If it does, the case for an early date will rest upon a firmer foundation than the uncertain chronology of later traditions.

The issue is no longer merely what early Christian writers believed about John's exile.

The decisive question becomes whether the Book of Revelation contains historical indications that place its composition before Jerusalem fell in AD 70.

References and sources for Chapter 4

1. Isaac Newton, Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John (1733), Part II, Chapter I. The Newton Project, University of Oxford preserves the text of his argument and his quotation of the Syriac heading.

2. Epiphanius, Panarion, 51.12.2 and 51.33.9, translated by Frank Williams, The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III, Brill. These are the principal passages associating John with Claudius.

3. Arethas of Caesarea, Commentary on Revelation, exposition of Revelation 7:4–8. The original Greek and the attribution of the translation should be checked before final publication.

4. Theophylact of Ohrid, The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to John, Preface. Theophylact associates John's composition of his Gospel with his exile on Patmos, thirty-two years after Christ's Ascension.

5. Robert Young, Concise Critical Comments on the Holy Bible, introduction to Revelation. The quotation concerning Nero and Domitian requires verification against the original printed edition before use as a formal citation.

6. The Muratorian Fragment, lines 47–60, concerning Paul, John and the seven churches. The fragment describes Paul as following John's example in writing to seven churches. Whether this implies that Revelation was composed before Paul's epistles remains disputed.

Chapter 5 — The Temple and the Holy City — Revelation 11

Does the Book of Revelation Describe Jerusalem Before Its Destruction in AD 70?

Introduction

Having examined the external historical evidence concerning the date of Revelation, we must now consider the testimony of the book itself.

This is of particular importance because the Book of Revelation contains descriptions of circumstances, places, rulers, and events which may help us establish when it was written.

One of the most significant passages is found in Revelation chapter 11.

Here the apostle John is instructed to measure the Temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. He is then told that the outer court has been given to the Gentiles and that the holy city will be trodden underfoot for forty-two months.

These words bear a remarkable resemblance to the prophecy given by Jesus Christ concerning the destruction of Jerusalem.

If the Temple in Revelation 11 is the historical Temple that stood in Jerusalem during the first century, and if the events described were still future when John received the vision, this would provide substantial evidence that Revelation was written before AD 70.

The question therefore deserves careful examination. There are three principal matters to establish. First, what Temple was John commanded to measure? Second, what city was to be trodden underfoot by the Gentiles? Third, do the circumstances described correspond with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies?

We shall examine these questions in the light of Scripture, allowing the historical evidence to help us understand the circumstances to which the prophecy may refer.

1. John Is Commanded to Measure the Temple

The passage begins:

> *"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.*
>
> *But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."*
>
> — Revelation 11:1–2, KJV

Several features deserve attention. John is instructed to measure three things: the Temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.

He is also instructed to leave the outer court unmeasured because it has been given to the Gentiles.

The passage then states that the holy city will be trodden underfoot for forty-two months.

The description immediately raises the question of whether John was referring to the Temple standing in Jerusalem during the first century.

At the time of Christ's earthly ministry, that Temple was the centre of Jewish worship.

It was the place where the priests offered sacrifices according to the Law of Moses.

It was also the building whose destruction Jesus expressly foretold. The Temple remained standing until AD 70, when Jerusalem was captured by the Roman armies under Titus.

If John was instructed to measure that building while it still existed, the passage would naturally point to a time before its destruction.

However, Revelation is a book containing prophetic visions, and a vision may portray something that is not physically present at the time.

We must therefore investigate the language more closely.

2. What Does the Word Temple Mean?

The Greek word translated "temple" in Revelation 11:1 is naos (ναός).

This word commonly refers to the sanctuary or sacred dwelling place, rather than to every building and courtyard belonging to the

wider Temple complex.

The distinction is important. The New Testament also uses the word hieron, which frequently refers to the wider Temple precincts.

In Revelation 11, John uses naos when referring to the Temple of God.

Yet he also mentions the altar, the worshippers, and the outer court.

These details suggest that the vision concerns a sanctuary within a wider sacred setting.

The description is consistent with the arrangement of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, where a distinction existed between the sacred interior and the surrounding courts.

However, the word naos does not by itself establish that John was describing a physical building.

The New Testament also uses Temple language to describe the people of God.

For example, the apostle Paul writes:

> *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"*
>
> — 1 Corinthians 3:16, KJV

This demonstrates that naos can have a spiritual application. The use of Temple language does not always require the existence of a literal building.

Nevertheless, we should not conclude that the Temple in Revelation 11 must therefore be entirely symbolic.

Words can possess both literal and figurative applications, and their meaning must be determined by their context.

In the present passage, the mention of the outer court, the Gentiles, and the holy city invites comparison with historical Jerusalem.

It is this wider context, rather than the word naos alone, which provides the principal argument for identifying the Temple with the sanctuary standing before AD 70.

3. The Temple Which Jesus Said Would Be Destroyed

During his earthly ministry, Jesus foretold the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Matthew records: "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

— Matthew 24:1–2, KJV

The disciples were looking at an actual building. Jesus was speaking about the same building. His words therefore concerned a recognisable historical structure. Luke records the same prophecy: "And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,

As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

— Luke 21:5–6, KJV

The Temple that Jesus described was the Temple standing in Jerusalem during the first century.

Its destruction was not merely a symbolic event. It occurred in history.

In AD 70, during the Jewish–Roman War, the Roman armies captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple.

The historian Josephus provides a detailed account of the catastrophe in The Jewish War, Book VI.

He describes the fighting around the sanctuary, the interruption of the daily sacrifices, the burning of the Temple, and the destruction that followed.

Thus, an event foretold by Jesus became a historical reality within the lifetime of many who had heard his words.

This provides the background against which Revelation 11 must be examined.

4. The Remarkable Parallel Between Luke 21 and Revelation 11

One of the strongest arguments connecting Revelation 11 with the destruction of Jerusalem is the similarity between its language and that of Luke 21.

Jesus declared:

> *"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."*
>
> — Luke 21:24, KJV

Now compare the words given to John:

> *"And the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."*
>
> — Revelation 11:2, KJV

The resemblance is striking. In Luke, Jesus identifies Jerusalem by name. He states that the city will be trodden down by the Gentiles. In Revelation, John is told that the holy city will be trodden underfoot by the Gentiles.

The parallel can be seen clearly:

Luke 21:24	**Revelation 11:2**
Jerusalem	The holy city
Trodden down	Tread under foot
By the Gentiles	By the Gentiles
Until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled	Forty-two months

The Greek expressions for trampling are also closely related. Both passages use forms of the verb pateō (πατέω), meaning to tread or trample.

This strengthens the possibility that they refer to the same event. The similarity is more than a general reference to persecution. Both passages describe the subjection of a city to the Gentiles, and in Luke the city is explicitly identified as Jerusalem.

The natural question is therefore whether John's prophecy is describing the same judgment foretold by Jesus.

If it is, Revelation 11 concerns the destruction of Jerusalem. That would provide an important indication of the book's historical subject.

But a further question remains. Does the fact that John describes Jerusalem's destruction prove
that he wrote before the event?

We shall return to this question after examining the remaining evidence.

5. Which City Is Called the Holy City?

Revelation 11:2 does not expressly name Jerusalem. Instead, it calls the place "the holy city." In Scripture, Jerusalem is frequently identified in this way. For example, Nehemiah records:

> *"And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities."*
>
> — Nehemiah 11:1, KJV

The same designation appears in Isaiah:

> *"Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city."*
>
> — Isaiah 52:1, KJV

These passages establish that Jerusalem could properly be called the holy city.

The description in Revelation 11:2 is therefore entirely consistent with historical Jerusalem.

But the matter does not rest upon the title alone. A few verses later, John identifies a city by reference to the place where Christ was crucified.

6. The City Where Our Lord Was Crucified

Revelation 11:8 states:

> *"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."*
>
> — Revelation 11:8, KJV

This is a particularly important statement. The city is given three descriptions. It is called the great city. It is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt. And it is identified as the place where our Lord was crucified. The historical location of Christ's crucifixion is not in doubt.

Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem. The writer to the Hebrews confirms this:

> *"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."*
>
> — Hebrews 13:12, KJV

The reference is to his suffering outside the city. Therefore, the most immediate historical identification of the city in Revelation 11:8 is Jerusalem.

The city is described spiritually as Sodom and Egypt, but the statement concerning Christ's crucifixion provides a geographical indication.

Why, then, would Jerusalem be called Sodom? The answer is found in the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah begins his prophecy by identifying its subject: "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem."

> — Isaiah 1:1, KJV

Later in the same chapter he declares:

> *"Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah."*
>
> — Isaiah 1:10, KJV

Isaiah was not addressing the ancient inhabitants of Sodom. He was addressing Judah and Jerusalem. The name Sodom was being used to describe their moral and spiritual corruption.

Jeremiah employed similar language. Speaking of the prophets in Jerusalem, he declared:

> *"They are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah."*
>
> — Jeremiah 23:14, KJV

Thus, Scripture itself provides a precedent for describing Jerusalem as Sodom.

This is important because John's description need not refer to some unidentified future city.

It accords with language already used by the Old Testament prophets when condemning Jerusalem for covenant unfaithfulness.

The reference to Egypt introduces another symbolic description. Egypt was the land of Israel's former bondage. Its name could therefore evoke oppression, spiritual bondage, and divine judgment.

Nevertheless, unlike Sodom, the designation Egypt is not directly applied to Jerusalem in the same way in the passages just examined.

Consequently, we should treat the identification cautiously. What is clear is that Revelation 11:8 associates the great city with the crucifixion of Jesus.

Taken with the preceding reference to the holy city, this supplies a substantial argument that John is speaking of Jerusalem.

The connection has also been considered seriously in modern scholarship on Revelation 11.

7. The Forty-Two Months

Revelation 11:2 states that the Gentiles would tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.

This period is equivalent to three and a half years. It also corresponds to the 1,260 days mentioned immediately afterwards:

> *"And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth."*
>
> — Revelation 11:3, KJV

Using a prophetic year of 360 days, forty-two months of thirty days equal 1,260 days.

The same general period appears elsewhere in Revelation. In chapter 12, the woman is nourished in the wilderness for 1,260 days.

In chapter 13, the beast is given authority to continue for fortytwo months.

These repeated references suggest that the period is important to the structure of John's prophecy.

But how should it be understood? Advocates of the early date frequently connect the forty-two months with the Jewish–Roman War.

The Jewish revolt began in AD 66, and Jerusalem was destroyed
in AD 70.

This period broadly corresponds with three and a half years, depending upon the particular events chosen as its beginning and conclusion.

The resemblance is significant. If the forty-two months describe the period during which the Roman armies were bringing Jerusalem under their power, the prophecy fits the historical events of the first century.

However, precision is necessary. The entire Jewish–Roman War lasted longer than forty-two months. Fighting continued after Jerusalem's destruction, and the fortress of Masada did not fall until AD 73 or 74.

Furthermore, the final Roman siege of Jerusalem lasted only several months in AD 70, not three and a half years.

Therefore, the forty-two months should not simply be described as the exact duration of the siege.

A defensible early-date interpretation would need to identify the specific beginning and ending of the period and demonstrate that these dates correspond to the prophecy.

There is also an alternative explanation. The period of three and a half years may be symbolic, drawing upon the prophecies of Daniel.

Daniel speaks of a period described as:

> *"a time and times and the dividing of time."*
>
> — Daniel 7:25, KJV

A similar expression occurs in Daniel 12:7. The use of this prophetic period in both Daniel and Revelation suggests that John may be employing an established biblical symbol for a limited period of oppression and judgment.

These explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A prophetic period may carry symbolic significance while also having a recognisable historical fulfilment.

Nevertheless, the number alone cannot establish the precise date of Revelation.

Its evidential value depends upon the identification of the city, the Gentile oppressors, and the events to which the prophecy refers.

8. The Connection with Daniel's Prophecy

The reference to the Temple and its desecration also invites comparison with Daniel.

Daniel 9:26 declares:

> *"And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."*
>
> — Daniel 9:26, KJV

This verse is particularly important. Daniel speaks of the destruction of a city and a sanctuary. Revelation 11 speaks of a Temple and a holy city that are to be given over to the Gentiles.

Jesus himself referred to Daniel in his discourse concerning the destruction of Jerusalem.

In Matthew 24:15 he said:

> *"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)"*
>
> — Matthew 24:15, KJV

Luke gives a corresponding description:

> *"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh."*
>
> — Luke 21:20, KJV

Luke's account explicitly connects the approaching desolation with armies surrounding Jerusalem.

This provides an important interpretative link between Daniel's prophecy and the historical circumstances Jesus described.

Revelation 11, with its Temple, holy city, Gentiles, and limited period of oppression, contains features that fit within this same prophetic framework.

The argument may therefore be expressed as follows. Daniel foretold the destruction of the city and sanctuary. Jesus identified an approaching desolation involving Jerusalem and hostile armies.

John described the Temple and holy city being given over to the Gentiles.

The similarities suggest that these passages may concern the same great historical judgment.

This would be consistent with an early date for Revelation. Yet we should distinguish the strength of the connection from the conclusion we wish to establish.

A prophecy written after AD 70 could still employ the imagery of Daniel and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Therefore, the literary connection alone does not establish when Revelation was composed.

It becomes chronological evidence when combined with the manner in which John describes the event as approaching and with the wider time statements of the book.

9. Was the Temple Still Standing When John Wrote?

We now come to the principal question. Does Revelation 11 indicate that the Temple was still standing when John received the vision?

The argument for the early date is straightforward. John is instructed to measure the Temple and its altar. The outer court is excluded because it is given to the Gentiles. The holy city is then described as being subjected to Gentile domination.

The passage does not explicitly say that the Temple has already been destroyed.

Instead, the vision portrays a sanctuary and a city facing judgment. If these are the historical Temple and city of Jerusalem, their situation corresponds naturally with the period before AD 70.

By contrast, if Revelation was written around AD 95–96, the physical Temple had already been destroyed for approximately twenty-five years.

The late-date interpreter must therefore explain why John was given a vision of a Temple that no longer existed.

Several explanations have been offered. Some understand the Temple spiritually, as representing the Church.

Others regard the vision as drawing upon the Old Testament sanctuary without referring to a building standing at the time.

Still others believe John is describing a future Temple. A further explanation is that Revelation 11 preserves an earlier prophecy incorporated into the completed book at a later date.

Each possibility must be examined rather than dismissed. The early-date argument becomes strongest when the historical identification of the Temple is supported by the surrounding references to Jerusalem and the impending Gentile oppression.

It is not sufficient merely to say that John mentions a Temple. The important point is the particular historical situation in which that Temple and the holy city are presented.

10. The Objection: Could This Be a Symbolic Temple?

A major objection to the early-date argument is that John's Temple may be entirely symbolic.

This objection deserves careful consideration because the Book of Revelation repeatedly uses symbolic language.

Furthermore, the New Testament identifies believers themselves as the Temple of God.

Paul writes:

> *"For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."*
>
> — 2 Corinthians 6:16, KJV

Peter also describes believers as living stones forming a spiritual house.

The symbolic interpretation is therefore not without biblical foundation.

Some interpreters understand the measuring in Revelation 11 as an act of divine protection or separation.

On this understanding, the sanctuary and those worshipping within it represent God's faithful people.

The outer court, which is surrendered to the Gentiles, represents the sphere exposed to persecution or judgment.

This interpretation is supported by parallels with the measuring visions of Ezekiel 40–48 and Zechariah 2.

Indeed, scholars have differed over whether John's measuring signifies protection, judgment, or the identification of God's dwelling

place.

Does symbolism exclude a historical reference? Not necessarily. This is a crucial point. Revelation frequently communicates historical truths through symbols.

A symbolic description need not lack a historical subject. For example, in Revelation 11:8, Jerusalem may be described spiritually as Sodom and Egypt.

Neither description requires that Jerusalem literally became either of those places.

Yet the symbolic names can still refer to a real city. In the same way, the measuring of the Temple may possess spiritual significance while the prophecy concerns the historical judgment of Jerusalem.

The question is not simply whether the language is symbolic. It is whether the symbolism refers to Jerusalem in the first century. The explicit description of the city where Christ was crucified provides an important reason for considering that possibility.

Nevertheless, there remains a legitimate difficulty for the literal interpretation.

John is instructed not only to measure a building but also to measure those who worship within it.

This suggests that the action has a spiritual meaning beyond ordinary architectural measurement.

We should therefore avoid presenting the passage as though John were simply surveying the dimensions of a physical building.

The measuring is prophetic and symbolic. The disputed question is whether the symbolic action concerns the historical Temple and Jerusalem before AD 70.

There is no contradiction in maintaining both that the measuring is symbolic and that the judgment concerns an actual first-century city.

11. The Objection: Could John Be Describing a Future Rebuilt Temple?

Some interpreters maintain that Revelation 11 concerns a Temple

that will be built in Jerusalem at a future time.

According to this interpretation, the prophecy does not refer to the Temple destroyed in AD 70.

It therefore provides no evidence for an early date. However, this interpretation requires careful scrutiny. Revelation 11 does not expressly state that the Temple has been rebuilt.

It does not describe its construction. Nor does it identify the sanctuary as a replacement for the building destroyed by the Romans.

The chapter simply speaks of the Temple of God and the holy city. Therefore, the identification of this Temple as a future rebuilt sanctuary must be derived from a wider interpretation of biblical prophecy.

It is not stated directly in the passage. This is important because the historical Temple of Jerusalem provides an immediate first-century referent.

When John wrote, his readers would have known that Jerusalem possessed a Temple until AD 70.

If the book was composed before that event, the description would naturally have been understood against that existing historical background.

The interpretation of a future rebuilt Temple is possible within certain prophetic systems, but it requires additional arguments.

It cannot be established merely by appealing to Revelation 11. A sound approach is to ask which explanation introduces the fewest assumptions and most naturally accounts for the details of the text.

The early-date interpretation has the advantage of relating the prophecy to a Temple and city known to have existed during the apostolic period.

However, the question of whether this is the intended historical referent must still be resolved through the whole context of Revelation.

12. The Objection: Could Revelation Contain an Earlier Prophecy?

There is another interpretation that must be considered.

Some scholars have proposed that Revelation 11 contains material originally composed before the destruction of Jerusalem but later incorporated into the completed book.

According to this explanation, the passage may indeed reflect circumstances before AD 70 without requiring the whole Book of Revelation to have been written at that time.

This is an important objection because it acknowledges the historical character of the passage while questioning the conclusion drawn from it.

However, a distinction must be made between what is possible and what can be demonstrated.

It is possible that a biblical author incorporated earlier written material into a later composition.

But to establish that Revelation 11 was written separately from the rest of the book requires evidence.

The passage itself does not tell us that John was copying an older prophecy.

Nor does it identify another author or an earlier document. Therefore, the proposal must be supported by literary analysis, textual evidence, or other historical considerations.

Without such evidence, it remains a hypothesis. At the same time, the early-date interpreter cannot simply assume that every part of Revelation was composed at precisely the same moment.

The correct question is whether the text supplies sufficient reason to distinguish an earlier source from the completed work.

Unless that distinction can be established, Revelation 11 should be examined as part of the book in which it has been preserved.

13. The Destruction of Jerusalem as Divine Judgment

We must now consider the theological importance of the event. The destruction of Jerusalem was not merely a military victory by Rome.

According to the teaching of Jesus, it was also an act of divine judgment upon the generation that rejected him.

In Matthew 23, Jesus pronounced judgment upon the religious leaders of Jerusalem.

He declared:

> *"Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."*
>
> — Matthew 23:36, KJV

He then lamented:

> *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*
>
> Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."
>
> — Matthew 23:37–38, KJV

The expression "this generation" is particularly important. Jesus did not merely warn that judgment would fall upon Jerusalem at some unspecified point in the distant future.

He connected the approaching judgment with the generation to whom he was speaking.

Luke records another solemn declaration:

> *"For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."*
>
> — Luke 21:22, KJV

The immediate context concerns Jerusalem surrounded by armies.

Thus, Jesus identifies the approaching destruction as the days of vengeance.

This provides a theological setting for understanding Revelation 11.

If John is describing the same event, the Gentile trampling of the holy city is not an isolated prediction.

It belongs to the fulfilment of Christ's warning concerning Jerusalem.

The significance is considerable. The Temple had been central to the worship established under the Law of Moses.

Its destruction marked the ending of the Temple's sacrificial service.

For Christians who understood Christ's sacrifice as the fulfilment

of the Old Testament offerings, this event carried profound theological meaning.

The writer to the Hebrews had already explained that Christ had offered one sufficient sacrifice for sin.

He declared:

> *"Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin."*
>
> — Hebrews 10:18, KJV

The destruction of the Temple did not make Christ's sacrifice sufficient.

His sacrifice was already complete. Rather, the removal of the Temple brought the old sacrificial system to its historical conclusion.

This distinction is essential. The efficacy of Christ's redemption rests upon his death, resurrection, and heavenly priesthood, not upon the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, the destruction of the Temple publicly demonstrated that the former system of sacrifices could no longer continue.

From this perspective, the events of AD 70 possess both historical and theological significance.

They also provide a plausible setting for the judgment described in Revelation.

14. Would John Have Ignored Jerusalem's Destruction?

There is another consideration that has frequently been advanced in favour of the early date.

If Revelation was written around AD 95–96, Jerusalem had already been destroyed for approximately twenty-five years.

Yet the book contains no unambiguous historical statement saying that the Romans had already destroyed the Temple in AD 70.

This omission is striking if Jerusalem's judgment forms a central subject of Revelation.

Suppose that the book describes the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, the trampling of the holy city, and the judgment of the generation responsible for rejecting Christ.

In that case, it would seem natural for those events to be presented

as future if they had not yet occurred.

Conversely, if they had already taken place, we might expect some indication that the prophecy concerned an accomplished judgment.

This argument is commonly called an argument from silence. Such arguments must be used cautiously. The absence of a historical reference does not prove that an event had not occurred.

Revelation is not a conventional history of the Jewish nation. It is a prophetic book filled with visions, symbols, warnings, and promises.

John was not necessarily expected to provide a chronological record of every significant event.

Nevertheless, the omission becomes more important if the principal visions are shown independently to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem.

The argument would then be cumulative. It would consist not merely in John's failure to mention AD 70 as a past event, but in the combination of that omission with descriptions of Jerusalem and its Temple facing judgment.

Thus, the silence concerning the completed destruction is not conclusive evidence.

But it is consistent with an early date and may strengthen the argument when considered alongside the other evidence.

15. Does Revelation 11 Establish the Early Date?

We are now able to assess the force of the argument. Several observations have emerged. First, Revelation 11 describes a Temple, altar, worshippers, outer court, and holy city.

Second, Jerusalem is repeatedly called the holy city in the Old Testament.

Third, Revelation 11:8 identifies the great city by reference to the place where Christ was crucified, providing strong grounds for identifying it with Jerusalem.

Fourth, the Gentile trampling of the city closely resembles the prophecy of Jesus in Luke 21:24.

Fifth, the forty-two months may correspond to the limited period

of tribulation associated with the Jewish–Roman War, although the precise chronological relationship remains disputed.

Sixth, the Temple and city are presented within the vision as objects of approaching judgment.

Taken together, these features provide a substantial case for connecting Revelation 11 with Jerusalem and its destruction in AD 70.

But what does this tell us about the date of the book? The conclusion depends upon whether John was predicting the historical event before it occurred or presenting it symbolically from a later standpoint.

If the passage is a prophecy of Jerusalem's approaching destruction, received and written as part of Revelation before the event, then it necessarily points to a date before AD 70.

If, however, it is a symbolic description of the Church, a vision of a future Temple, or an earlier prophecy incorporated into a later composition, the chronological conclusion would be different.

Therefore, we should not claim that Revelation 11, considered in isolation, proves the early date beyond all possible dispute.

Its importance lies in the convergence of several historical and scriptural details.

The passage fits remarkably well with the circumstances surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem.

It is this cumulative correspondence which gives the early-date argument its strength.

16. Conclusion: The Temple and the Coming Judgment Revelation 11 contains one of the most important passages for determining the date of the book.

The Temple, the holy city, the Gentile oppression, and the identification of the city where Christ was crucified all point towards the historical circumstances of Jerusalem.

The close parallel between Revelation 11:2 and Luke 21:24 provides particular reason to connect John's prophecy with the destruction foretold by Jesus.

The early-date interpretation does not require us to invent an otherwise unidentified city or to assume the existence of a future rebuilt Temple.

It understands the prophecy against the background of the Jerusalem known to Christ, his apostles, and the first generation of Christians.

This is a considerable advantage. However, the Temple is presented in a prophetic vision, and this prevents us from treating the passage as though it were an ordinary eyewitness description of a building.

The possibility of symbolic language must be recognised. Nevertheless, symbolism does not exclude historical fulfilment. Jerusalem could be described spiritually as Sodom and Egypt while remaining the actual city upon which judgment was to fall.

Similarly, the measuring of the Temple may carry spiritual meaning while referring to the historical circumstances preceding its destruction.

Our investigation therefore supports the conclusion that Revelation 11 is naturally and coherently understood as a prophecy concerning Jerusalem before its destruction in AD 70.

This does not, by itself, settle the date of the entire book. But it supplies a substantial element in the case for an early date. The argument will become considerably stronger if other passages in Revelation independently identify the same historical period.

In particular, Revelation 17:10 contains an unusual chronological statement:

> *"Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come."*
>
> — Revelation 17:10, KJV

If those words identify the Roman emperor reigning when John received the vision, they may provide a much more precise indication of the book's date.

We must therefore examine the seven kings and determine whether the reigning sixth king was Nero.

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Chapter 6 — The Seven Kings and the Reign of Nero — Revelation 17

Does the Book of Revelation Identify the Roman Emperor Who Was Reigning When John Received His Vision?

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, we examined the Temple and the holy city described in Revelation 11. We considered the possibility that John was referring to Jerusalem before its destruction by the Roman armies in AD 70.

We found that the language of Revelation 11 bears a remarkable resemblance to the prophecy of Jesus concerning Jerusalem's destruction, particularly the statement that the city would be trodden underfoot by the Gentiles.

This provides an important argument for an early date. However, the interpretation of Revelation 11 is disputed because the Temple appears within a prophetic vision. Some understand it as the historical Temple in Jerusalem, while others regard it as symbolic or as representing a future sanctuary.

We must therefore examine whether Revelation contains any more precise chronological indications.

One of the most important passages is Revelation 17:9–11.

Here John describes seven kings. Five have fallen, one is reigning, and another has not yet come.

Unlike a general prophecy concerning a future calamity, this statement appears to identify a particular position within a succession of rulers.

If these kings represent Roman emperors, and if the words "one is" refer to the emperor reigning when John received the vision, the passage may provide an unusually precise means of dating Revelation.

The argument advanced by many defenders of the early date is that the sixth king was Nero.

Nero ruled from AD 54 until AD 68. If this identification can be established, Revelation must have been written before his death and therefore before Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70.

But the question requires careful examination. We must establish what the seven kings represent, where their succession begins, and whether the sixth king can reasonably be identified as Nero.

We must also consider the eighth king mentioned in the following verse, together with the wider symbolism of the beast.

Our task is to determine whether the text supports an early date or whether the interpretation depends upon assumptions that cannot be securely established.

1. The Seven Kings in Revelation 17

The relevant passage begins with John's description of the beast and its seven heads.

The angel explains: "And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition."

— Revelation 17:9–11, KJV

Several statements immediately deserve our attention.

First, the seven heads represent seven mountains. Second, they are also associated with seven kings. Third, the kings are described in a sequence: five have fallen, one presently exists, and another is yet to come.

Fourth, the seventh king will remain for only a short period. Finally, the beast is described as an eighth king who nevertheless belongs to the seven.

These details suggest that the passage is not simply listing seven unrelated rulers.

It describes a succession possessing both historical and prophetic significance.

The expression "five are fallen" suggests rulers whose reigns have ended.

The words "one is" appear to identify a ruler presently exercising authority.

The phrase "the other is not yet come" places another ruler in the future.

If this chronological language refers to actual Roman emperors, it provides a means of identifying the period represented in the vision.

The crucial question is whether the present tense describes the time when John was writing or a point within the prophetic vision itself.

We shall consider this distinction later in the chapter. For the moment, let us examine the identity of the kingdom represented by the beast.

2. The Beast and the Roman Empire

The beast described in Revelation 17 has seven heads and ten horns.

Similar imagery appears in Revelation 13:

> *"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy."*
>
> — Revelation 13:1, KJV

The description recalls the prophecy of Daniel chapter 7, where successive beasts represent kingdoms exercising dominion over the nations.

Daniel was shown four great beasts arising from the sea. The fourth was particularly dreadful. The angel explained:

> *"Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces."*
>
> — Daniel 7:23, KJV

In the traditional Christian interpretation of Daniel's four kingdoms, the fourth kingdom is identified with Rome.

The succession is commonly understood as Babylon, Medo- Persia, Greece, and Rome.

This interpretation provides an important connection between Daniel and Revelation.

John's beast, like Daniel's fourth beast, represents a power characterised by political authority, domination, and opposition to God.

The Roman Empire is therefore a strong historical candidate. This identification is reinforced by the reference to seven mountains.

3. Rome, the City of Seven Hills

Rome was widely associated in antiquity with seven hills. The seven hills traditionally identified with the city are the Palatine, Capitoline, Aventine, Caelian, Esquiline, Viminal, and Quirinal.

This geographical feature became one of the city's distinguishing characteristics.

Consequently, the reference to seven mountains in Revelation 17:9 has frequently been understood as an allusion to Rome.

The identification is particularly plausible because Rome was the dominant imperial power during the apostolic period.

Its emperors exercised authority over the provinces surrounding the Mediterranean, including Judea and the cities of Asia Minor to which Revelation was addressed.

The churches receiving John's prophecy lived within the political and social world of the Roman Empire.

They would therefore have been familiar with the power exercised by Rome and the claims made on behalf of its emperors.

However, we must avoid assuming that every element of the vision is geographical.

In biblical prophecy, mountains can also represent kingdoms. For example, Daniel speaks of the stone that became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

The seven mountains in Revelation may therefore carry political and symbolic significance as well as evoking the geography of Rome.

Nevertheless, the combination of seven mountains, imperial power, and successive kings makes Rome a strong candidate for the kingdom represented.

If the beast represents Rome, the next question concerns the identity of its seven kings.

4. The Roman Emperors and Their Succession

The Roman historian Suetonius, writing during the early second century, produced a work commonly called The Twelve Caesars.

He began with Julius Caesar and continued through the emperors to Domitian.

This is important because it demonstrates that a historical account of Roman rulers could begin with Julius Caesar, even though Augustus is generally recognised as Rome's first emperor in the formal constitutional sense.

The succession was as follows:

Ruler	Period of rule	Position counting Julius first
Julius Caesar	49–44 BC, with dictatorial authority	1
Augustus	27 BC–AD 14	2
Tiberius	AD 14–37	3
Caligula	AD 37–41	4
Claudius	AD 41–54	5
Nero	AD 54–68	6
Galba	AD 68–69	7
Otho	AD 69	8
Vitellius	AD 69	9
Vespasian	AD 69–79	10
Titus	AD 79–81	11
Domitian	AD 81–96	12

The dates make the early-date argument immediately apparent. If Julius Caesar is counted as the first ruler, Nero becomes the sixth.

This corresponds with the statement:

> *"Five are fallen, and one is."*
>
> — Revelation 17:10, KJV

The five rulers who had fallen would then be Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius.

The reigning ruler would be Nero. The seventh would be Galba, whose reign was exceptionally brief. This interpretation provides a coherent historical explanation for the words of the passage.

But its strength depends upon whether Julius Caesar should be counted as the first king.

5. Should Julius Caesar Be Counted as the First?

This is one of the most important objections to the identification of Nero as the sixth king.

Julius Caesar possessed extraordinary political and military authority, but Rome did not formally become the imperial principate until the establishment of Augustus's rule.

For this reason, Augustus is conventionally regarded as the first Roman emperor.

If we begin counting with Augustus instead of Julius Caesar, the sequence changes.

Position	Counting Julius first	Counting Augustus first
First	Julius Caesar	Augustus
Second	Augustus	Tiberius
Third	Tiberius	Caligula
Fourth	Caligula	Claudius
Fifth	Claudius	Nero
Sixth	Nero	Galba
Seventh	Galba	Otho

Under the second method, the sixth ruler would be Galba rather than Nero.

This would place the vision after Nero's death, during the second half of AD 68 or the beginning of AD 69.

Such a date would still precede Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70. Therefore, counting from Augustus does not necessarily destroy the case for an early date.

It changes the proposed emperor and the period in which the vision may have been received.

However, a difficulty arises. If Galba is the sixth ruler, Otho becomes the seventh. Otho ruled for only about three months. This certainly fits the description of a ruler continuing for a short space, but it does not establish that John intended Otho.

The question remains whether Galba, Otho, and Vitellius should all be included in the succession.

Some interpreters omit these three short-lived rulers because their authority was contested during Rome's civil wars.

If the count begins with Augustus and omits them, Vespasian becomes the sixth emperor.

Vespasian began his reign in AD 69. This would again permit a date before Jerusalem's destruction, although his reign continued until AD 79.

A date during Vespasian's reign is therefore not automatically a pre-AD 70 date.

The exact chronological conclusion depends upon additional evidence.

These alternative calculations show that the identification of the sixth king is more complicated than a simple list may suggest.

Nevertheless, they also demonstrate that several historically plausible enumerations point towards the period surrounding Nero's death and the Jewish–Roman War.

6. Why Counting from Julius Caesar Is Defensible

The argument for beginning with Julius Caesar should not be dismissed merely because Augustus is formally recognised as the first emperor.

The Roman imperial system did not emerge without historical preparation.

Julius Caesar's dictatorship marked the collapse of the old republican order and laid the foundations for the political system established under Augustus.

His adopted son Augustus inherited his name and became the first emperor.

The title Caesar subsequently became associated with imperial authority.

Furthermore, as already noted, Suetonius began his Lives of the Caesars with Julius.

This demonstrates that Julius could reasonably be included in a historical succession of Caesars.

The New Testament itself uses the title Caesar as a designation of Roman imperial authority.

For example, Luke records:

> *"And there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed."*
>
> — Luke 2:1, KJV

Later, the Jews told Pilate:

> "*We have no king but Caesar.*"
>
> — John 19:15, KJV

Thus, Caesar had become a recognised title associated with the supreme ruler of Rome.

A first-century Christian familiar with Roman political history could therefore have understood the succession as beginning with Julius Caesar.

This makes the enumeration leading to Nero historically defensible.

However, we must distinguish a defensible method of counting from a method established by the text.

Revelation 17 does not expressly state that the first king was Julius Caesar.

Neither does it identify Augustus as the starting point. Consequently, we cannot prove the Neronian identification merely by demonstrating that the count works when Julius is included.

We must seek corroboration from the remaining details of the prophecy.

One particularly important detail is the statement concerning the seventh king.

7. The Seventh King Would Continue Only a Short Time

Revelation 17:10 states:

> *"And the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space."*
>
> — Revelation 17:10, KJV

If Nero was the sixth king, the seventh would be Galba. Galba became emperor following Nero's death in June AD 68. He was killed in January AD 69. His reign lasted approximately seven months. This is a remarkably brief period when compared with the reigns of Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, and Domitian.

The words "a short space" therefore correspond naturally with Galba's reign.

The historical account of Galba's accession and death is preserved by Suetonius and other Roman historians.

This correspondence is an important point in favour of the earlydate interpretation.

If John received the vision during Nero's reign, he could describe five rulers as having fallen, Nero as presently ruling, and Galba as a future ruler who would reign briefly.

The sequence would correspond with actual historical events. However, the argument requires qualification. If the count begins with Augustus, Galba is the sixth and Otho is the seventh.

Since Otho's reign was even shorter than Galba's, the phrase "a short space" also fits that alternative.

Consequently, the brevity of the seventh reign does not decisively establish where the succession begins.

Nevertheless, both interpretations place the sequence within the turbulent years surrounding Nero's death.

This provides a significant connection with the historical setting of the Jewish–Roman War.

8. The Eighth King and the Beast That Was and Is Not

We now come to one of the more difficult statements in Revelation 17.

John writes:

> *"And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition."*
>
> — Revelation 17:11, KJV

At first sight, this presents a problem for the interpretation identifying Nero as the sixth king.

If Nero is the sixth, Galba is the seventh, and Otho is the eighth. Yet John says that the eighth belongs to the seven. How are these words to be understood? We must first observe that John is not simply saying that another emperor will follow the seventh.

He identifies the eighth with the beast itself and declares that it is "of the seven."

This suggests that the eighth ruler has some special relationship with the preceding seven.

Several interpretations have been proposed.

The return of Nero

One explanation connects the passage with the ancient belief that Nero would return after his death.

Following Nero's suicide in AD 68, reports circulated that he had survived or would appear again.

Several individuals subsequently claimed to be Nero. This expectation is commonly called the Nero redivivus tradition, meaning Nero returned to life or restored.

Some interpreters believe that Revelation 17 draws upon this tradition.

On this understanding, the eighth king resembles Nero, or symbolically represents Nero returning to exercise his former power.

The interpretation is significant because it may explain how the eighth could also belong to the seven.

However, it introduces a chronological difficulty. If John was describing a belief that arose following Nero's death, the passage might suggest that Revelation was written after AD 68.

Some scholars have therefore argued that the imagery is more consistent with a later date, when the traditions concerning Nero's return had become established.

But this conclusion is not unavoidable. Rumours concerning Nero's survival appeared shortly after his death, and a false Nero was already active during the period following AD 68.

Consequently, an allusion to Nero's return would not necessarily require a date as late as AD 95–96.

It might still belong to the years immediately preceding the destruction of Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, the interpretation cannot establish a date during Nero's lifetime unless the language is understood as prophetic rather than as a reference to an existing legend.

The beast as imperial power

Another explanation distinguishes between individual emperors and the imperial system represented by the beast.

On this understanding, the seven kings represent successive manifestations of Roman authority, while the eighth represents the continuation or renewed manifestation of that same persecuting power.

The beast is therefore greater than any individual ruler. Nero may represent its most recognisable manifestation, but the imperial power continues after his death.

This explanation accords with the manner in which biblical prophecy can use a ruler to represent a kingdom.

Daniel's beasts, for example, are associated with both kings and kingdoms.

It is therefore possible that John's imagery likewise moves between the individual ruler and the political power he represents.

However, identifying the precise eighth ruler remains difficult. The text does not expressly name him.

Consequently, although this interpretation may explain the relationship between the beast and the seven kings, it does not provide an exact chronological date.

9. The Wounded Head and the Crisis of the Roman Empire

Another passage may help explain the symbolism. Revelation 13:3 states:

> *"And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast."*
>
> — Revelation 13:3, KJV

This description has frequently been connected with Nero's death and the political crisis that followed.

Nero's suicide in June AD 68 brought the Julio-Claudian dynasty to an end.

The Roman Empire then passed through a period of extraordinary instability.

Galba, Otho, and Vitellius each held power briefly, before Vespasian established a new dynasty.

The year AD 69 is consequently remembered as the Year of the Four Emperors.

During this period, the survival of the imperial system was threatened by civil war and competing claims to supreme authority.

Yet the Empire survived. Vespasian's accession restored a degree of stability and established the Flavian dynasty.

This historical sequence provides a possible explanation of the beast's apparently fatal wound and recovery.

Nero's death might represent the wound, while the restoration of imperial authority under Vespasian represents its healing.

The imagery would then describe not the literal resurrection of Nero, but the survival of the imperial power which he had embodied.

This interpretation is attractive because it connects the symbolic language with a major historical crisis.

However, the chronology is important. If John was writing before Nero's death, the events would have been prophetic.

If he wrote during or after AD 69, the imagery might reflect

events already experienced.

Therefore, the wounded-head interpretation cannot by itself establish that Revelation was written under Nero.

It may, however, connect the book closely with the political circumstances of AD 68–69.

Those circumstances remain much closer to the destruction of Jerusalem than to the end of Domitian's reign.

10. Nero and the Persecution of Christians

The identification of Nero deserves further consideration because he was not merely one emperor among many.

His reign occupies an important place in the history of Christian persecution.

Following the great fire of Rome in AD 64, Nero subjected Christians to severe punishments.

The Roman historian Tacitus, in Annals XV.44, describes these persecutions.

Christians were tortured and executed in cruel and public ways. This provides a recognisable historical setting for the suffering described in Revelation.

John identifies himself as a companion in tribulation.

The churches are warned of persecution. The martyrs are depicted as crying to God for justice. Revelation 6:9–10 states: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

— Revelation 6:9–10, KJV

These words are consistent with the sufferings experienced by Christians during the first century.

Furthermore, the persecution under Nero occurred during the same decade in which the Jewish revolt began.

The historical setting therefore brings together two circumstances central to the early-date interpretation: persecution of Christians and the approaching destruction of Jerusalem.

But we must distinguish historical suitability from chronological proof.

Christian persecution did not cease with Nero's death. The sufferings described in Revelation could also be applied to later circumstances.

Moreover, the surviving evidence does not establish that Nero conducted a systematic empire-wide persecution against every Christian congregation in Asia Minor.

His persecution is most securely documented in Rome. It would therefore be unwise to claim that every warning addressed to the seven churches must refer directly to Nero's actions.

Nevertheless, the conditions under Nero provide a credible historical background for Revelation's language concerning the beast, tribulation, and martyrdom.

11. Nero and the Jewish–Roman War

There is another significant reason why Nero is relevant to our investigation.

The Jewish revolt began during his reign. In AD 66, rebellion broke out in Judea against Roman rule. Nero appointed Vespasian to conduct the military campaign against the Jewish forces.

Vespasian, accompanied by his son Titus, began operations in Galilee in AD 67.

The Roman campaign was interrupted by the political crisis following Nero's death in AD 68.

Vespasian subsequently became emperor in AD 69. The campaign against Jerusalem was completed under Titus in AD 70.

This chronology is particularly important. Nero initiated the Roman military response that eventually resulted in Jerusalem's destruction.

However, he did not live to see the city captured. Nor did he personally command its final siege. Therefore, we should not describe Nero as the emperor who directly destroyed Jerusalem.

The destruction occurred under the Flavian dynasty, during the reign of Vespasian, with Titus commanding the Roman forces.

Nevertheless, the war began under Nero. This brings his reign into direct historical contact with the events that Jesus had foretold concerning Jerusalem.

If Revelation was written during Nero's reign, the prophecy would have been given as these events were approaching or beginning to unfold.

Such a setting would accord closely with the repeated statements that the time was near at hand.

The historical relationship between Nero, the war, and the destruction of Jerusalem therefore strengthens the plausibility of the early-date interpretation.

12. Does the Expression "One Is" Identify John's Own Time?

We now return to the central chronological statement. Revelation 17:10 declares:

> *"Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come."*
>
> — Revelation 17:10, KJV

The importance of the present tense cannot be overlooked. The Greek expression translated "one is" is ho heis estin (ὁ εἷς ἔστιν).

The verb estin means "is." The words therefore naturally distinguish the present ruler from those whose reigns have ended and the ruler who has not yet appeared.

If the angel is describing the political circumstances existing when John received the vision, the statement provides a chronological marker.

The first five kings belong to the past. The sixth belongs to the present. The seventh belongs to the future. On the enumeration beginning with Julius Caesar, the sixth ruler is Nero.

This would place the vision within Nero's reign, between AD 54 and June AD 68.

But we must consider an important objection. The Book of Revelation contains visions in which John is shown events from different periods.

It is therefore possible that the angel's words "one is" refer to the present moment within the vision rather than the actual date of John's writing.

On this interpretation, the statement identifies a particular stage in the prophetic sequence, not necessarily the emperor reigning when John received the vision.

This objection cannot be dismissed. Prophetic literature does not always maintain the same chronological standpoint as ordinary historical narrative.

Nevertheless, the natural reading of the angel's explanation is that he is interpreting the vision for John in terms John can understand.

The statement distinguishes past, present, and future rulers without explicitly announcing a change of chronological standpoint.

Accordingly, the interpretation that "one is" refers to the ruler reigning in John's own time possesses considerable force.

However, that conclusion requires support from the context. It is not established by the present tense alone. The cumulative argument must include the identification of the beast, the succession of rulers, and the historical correspondence of the seventh king.

When these considerations are taken together, the Neronian interpretation becomes a serious and coherent reading of the passage.

13. Could the Seven Kings Represent Kingdoms Rather Than Emperors?

Another objection must be considered. In biblical prophecy, the word king can represent a kingdom. Daniel provides an example. Daniel 7:17 states:

> *"These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth."*
>
> — Daniel 7:17, KJV

Yet verse 23 explains the fourth beast as a kingdom. Therefore, prophetic language may move between individual rulers and the kingdoms they represent.

Some interpreters consequently understand the seven kings of Revelation 17 as seven successive world powers rather than seven Roman emperors.

Various lists have been proposed, including Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

The difficulty is determining why these particular kingdoms should be included and where the sequence should begin.

Revelation does not provide an explicit list. Nor does it tell us that the seven kings represent the entire succession of world empires from the beginning of Israel's history.

This does not make the kingdom interpretation impossible. But it introduces additional questions. By contrast, the Roman-emperor interpretation draws upon a known succession of rulers belonging to the imperial power under which the original readers lived.

It also offers a direct explanation for the sixth king and the brief reign of the seventh.

These are significant advantages. Nevertheless, the fact that the passage refers to seven mountains as well as seven kings may suggest a symbolism more complex than a straightforward imperial list.

The interpreter should therefore be cautious about treating the numbering as an uncomplicated historical code.

The individual-emperor interpretation is plausible, but it must be tested against the entire vision.

14. Can Revelation 17 Be Reconciled with a Domitianic Date?

If Revelation was written around AD 95–96, Domitian was the reigning emperor.

Can he be identified with the sixth king? Not by simply counting all the Caesars in their historical order. Beginning with Julius Caesar, Domitian is the twelfth ruler in the sequence recorded by Suetonius.

Beginning with Augustus, he is the eleventh. Therefore, a straightforward consecutive enumeration does not make Domitian the sixth king.

To identify him as the sixth, one would need to employ another method of counting, omit particular rulers, or understand the seve kings symbolically.

Some late-date interpreters do not attempt to identify Domitian as the sixth at all.

Instead, they regard the seven kings as a symbolic succession or understand the passage as describing an earlier historical period from the standpoint of the vision.

Other interpreters connect Domitian with the eighth king, viewing him as a second Nero.

Under this interpretation, the beastly character manifested in Nero reappeared in Domitian.

This explanation may account for the language of the eighth king belonging to the seven.

However, it does not establish why the angel describes the sixth king as presently reigning unless the present tense is understood within the prophetic vision.

Thus, Revelation 17 creates a genuine interpretative difficulty for the straightforward Domitianic chronology.

It does not make that chronology impossible. But it requires the late-date interpreter to explain why the succession is expressed in this particular way.

The early-date interpretation offers a relatively direct explanation when Julius Caesar is counted first.

That is one of its principal strengths.

15. The Seven Kings and the Destruction of Jerusalem

We should now consider how Revelation 17 relates to the wider argument developed in the preceding chapter.

Revelation 11 describes the holy city being trodden underfoot by the Gentiles.

Revelation 17 describes a powerful beast associated with kings and imperial authority.

If the beast represents Rome and the holy city represents Jerusalem, the two passages may be understood together.

Rome was the political power that destroyed Jerusalem. Nero was the emperor under whom the Jewish revolt began and the Roman response was organised.

Vespasian and Titus subsequently completed the campaign.

This historical sequence provides a coherent setting for the prophecies.

The Roman Empire supplies the political power. The Jewish–Roman War supplies the military circumstances. Jerusalem supplies the city subjected to judgment. The succession of emperors provides a possible chronological indication.

This interpretation does not require every symbol in Revelation to refer exclusively to the events of AD 70.

But it establishes a plausible connection between major elements of the prophecy and the circumstances of the first century.

The argument becomes particularly important when considered alongside the book's repeated declarations of nearness.

At the beginning, John is told that the predicted events must shortly come to pass.

At the end, he is commanded not to seal the prophecy because the time is at hand.

If the sixth king was Nero, these statements would naturally refer to events approaching within the lifetime of the original recipients.

The destruction of Jerusalem would then stand within the same historical period.

Thus, the evidence from Revelation 17 does not stand alone. It contributes to a wider chronological argument.

16. The Strength and Limitations of the Neronian Interpretation

We can now identify the principal strengths of the interpretation that makes Nero the sixth king.

First, it identifies the beast with a known first-century imperial power.

Second, it uses a historically recognised succession of Caesars beginning with Julius Caesar.

Third, it identifies the five fallen kings without needing to rearrange the sequence.

Fourth, it identifies Nero as the reigning sixth king.

Fifth, it identifies Galba as the seventh king whose reign was exceptionally brief.

Sixth, it places the vision within the period of persecution and political upheaval preceding the destruction of Jerusalem.

These considerations form a substantial cumulative argument. However, several limitations must also be acknowledged. The passage does not expressly identify the seven kings as Roman emperors.

It does not state that Julius Caesar should be counted first. The wording concerning the eighth king remains difficult. And the expression "one is" may be understood from the standpoint of the vision rather than from John's own time.

Furthermore, alternative enumerations beginning with Augustus can also produce historically plausible sequences.

These difficulties prevent us from treating the passage as an indisputable proof of the Neronian date.

Nevertheless, a difficulty is not the same as a refutation. The question is which interpretation most naturally explains the text with the fewest unsupported assumptions.

The identification of Nero as the sixth king remains a strong candidate because it offers a direct correspondence between the sequence described by John and the historical succession of the Caesars.

For this reason, even scholars who do not accept every aspect of the early-date interpretation have recognised the significance of Revelation 17 for the question of dating.

17. Conclusion: Was Nero the Reigning Sixth King?

Revelation 17:9–11 provides one of the most important possible chronological indications in the Book of Revelation.

The statement that five kings had fallen, one was reigning, and another had not yet come appears to describe a succession of rulers.

The identification of the beast with Roman imperial power is historically and contextually plausible.

If the succession begins with Julius Caesar, Nero becomes the sixth king.

The five preceding rulers had died, and Galba, Nero's successor, would reign for only a short period.

This provides a notable correspondence with the language of the prophecy.

The interpretation also places Revelation within the years leading to Jerusalem's destruction.

Nero's reign witnessed the persecution of Christians, the outbreak of the Jewish revolt, and the appointment of Vespasian to conduct the Roman military campaign.

These events provide a credible historical background for the tribulation and approaching judgment described in Revelation.

The Neronian interpretation is therefore not an arbitrary attempt to impose a preferred date upon Scripture.

It rests upon a recognisable historical succession and a plausible understanding of the passage.

Nevertheless, the text does not expressly name Nero, and other methods of counting the kings remain possible.

We should therefore avoid claiming that the sixth king has been identified beyond all reasonable dispute.

The evidence supports a more measured conclusion. If the seven kings represent the Roman Caesars, counted from Julius Caesar, and if the words "one is" refer to the emperor reigning when John received the vision, then Revelation was composed during Nero's reign, before June AD 68.

This is a substantial argument for the early date. It becomes more persuasive when considered alongside Revelation 11 and the repeated statements that the events of the book were near at hand.

But there is another remarkable piece of evidence that deserves separate examination.

In Revelation 13:18, John provides the number of the beast:

> *"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."*
>
> — Revelation 13:18, KJV

The numerical value of the name Nero Caesar, when represented in Hebrew letters, can be calculated as 666.

Even more significantly, an ancient textual variant gives the number as 616, corresponding to another form of Nero's name.

If this connection is established, it would provide independent support for the identification of Nero with the beast.

That is the subject of our next chapter.

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Chapter 7 — The Number of the Beast — 666 and 616

Does the Number Given in Revelation Identify Nero Caesar and Support an Early Date for the Book?

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, we examined the seven kings described in Revelation 17 and considered whether the sixth king could be identified as the Roman emperor Nero.

We discovered that if the succession begins with Julius Caesar, Nero becomes the sixth ruler, while Galba, who succeeded him, becomes the seventh. Galba's brief reign corresponds with the statement that the seventh king would continue only a short time.

This provides an important argument for dating Revelation during Nero's reign, before his death in June AD 68.

Nevertheless, the argument depends upon several matters that remain disputed. We must establish whether the seven kings represent Roman emperors, whether Julius Caesar should be counted first, and whether the words "one is" refer to the time when John received the vision.

We must therefore seek additional evidence. One of the most remarkable passages in Revelation appears in chapter 13, where John gives the number of the beast.

He writes:

> *"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."*
>
> — Revelation 13:18, KJV

The number is 666. For centuries, interpreters have attempted to discover the identity of the man represented by this number.

Some have applied it to political rulers. Others have identified religious institutions, kingdoms, or individuals who lived long after the apostolic period.

However, one particular explanation deserves careful attention. When the name and title Nero Caesar are represented in Hebrew letters, using a form derived from the Greek pronunciation of his name, their numerical values total precisely 666.

Even more significantly, some ancient manuscripts of Revelation give the number as 616 rather than 666.

That alternative number can also be produced from Nero Caesar by using the shorter Latin form of his name.

This raises an important question. Could the two ancient readings, 666 and 616, preserve evidence that the beast was originally understood to represent Nero Caesar?

If so, Revelation 13 would provide additional support for the identification of Nero with the beast described in Revelation 17.

But we must proceed carefully. It is one thing to demonstrate that a name has the numerical value 666.

It is another to establish that John intended his readers to identify that particular person.

And even if the beast is Nero, we must still determine whether that identification establishes the date when Revelation was written.

These are the matters we shall examine in this chapter.

1. The Beast Whose Number Must Be Counted

Before examining the number, we must consider the passage in which it appears.

Revelation 13 describes two beasts. The first rises from the sea:

> *"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy."*
>
> — Revelation 13:1, KJV

The beast possesses political authority and receives the admiration of those who dwell upon the earth.

John continues:

> *"And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?"*
>
> — Revelation 13:4, KJV

The beast is also permitted to persecute the saints. John writes:

> *"And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations."*
>
> — Revelation 13:7, KJV

The description recalls the fourth beast in Daniel chapter 7. There, a terrifying kingdom exercises dominion and makes war against the saints.

In Chapter 6, we considered the evidence that the beast represents Roman imperial power.

That identification remains important because Nero was a ruler of the Roman Empire.

However, the beast may represent more than Nero as an individual. Biblical prophecy frequently presents a king as the embodiment

of the kingdom over which he rules.

The beast could therefore represent the Roman imperial system while being particularly associated with one of its emperors.

This distinction helps us understand why John might describe the beast as a political power while also providing the number of a man.

The kingdom and its ruler need not be entirely separate symbols.

2. The Second Beast and the Mark

John next describes another beast, which rises from the earth. This beast exercises authority on behalf of the first and directs people to worship it.

The passage then introduces the mark of the beast:

> *"And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:*
>
> *And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."*
>
> — Revelation 13:16–17, KJV

The reference to the number occurs immediately after the mention of the beast's name.

This is important. John does not simply introduce an unexplained number. He associates the number with a name. The expression in verse 17, "the number of his name," provides a strong reason for believing that some method of calculating the numerical value of a name is intended.

The following verse then tells the reader to count that number. Thus, the immediate context directs us towards a calculation associated with a person's name or title.

The next question is how such a calculation would have been understood in the ancient world.

3. How Names Could Be Represented by Numbers

In the ancient world, letters were sometimes used to represent numerical values.

This was possible in both Greek and Hebrew. For example, certain letters of the Hebrew alphabet carried conventional numerical values.

The first letter, aleph, represented one. The second, beth, represented two. Other letters represented tens and hundreds. Consequently, a word or name could be given a numerical total by adding together the values of its letters.

This method is commonly called gematria. The term is associated particularly with Hebrew interpretation, although numerical wordplay was also known in the wider Greekspeaking world.

The important point is that a person's name could possess a numerical value without requiring a modern mathematical code.

For readers familiar with such practices, the instruction to count the number of a name would not necessarily have been mysterious.

It could invite them to identify a person whose name produced the stated total.

The method is illustrated by surviving ancient inscriptions and examples of numerical wordplay. Craig R. Koester has examined this evidence in his study of Revelation 13:18.

However, there is a difficulty. Many names can be made to produce particular numerical values, especially if different languages, spellings, and titles are permitted.

Therefore, a numerical calculation alone cannot securely identify the intended individual.

The interpretation must also agree with the historical and literary context.

This is why Nero Caesar deserves particular consideration. His name provides a coherent numerical explanation, while his reign also corresponds with several features of the beast described in Revelation.

4. How Nero Caesar Produces the Number 666

The emperor whom we know as Nero was called Nerōn in Greek. His imperial title was Caesar. When the Greek form of his name and title is represented in Hebrew letters, it can be written:

HEBREW TRANSLITERATION

Hebrew letter	Transliterated letter	Numerical value
נ	N	50
ר	R	200
ו	W / O	6
ן	N	50
ק	Q	100
ס	S	60
ר	R	200
Total		666

The calculation is straightforward. 50+200+6+50+100+60+200= 666 The correspondence is exact when this particular Hebrew spelling is employed.

The first four letters represent the Greek form of Nero's name, Nerōn.

The remaining three represent Caesar, using the spelling QSR. It is important to understand that the calculation does not involve inventing numerical values.

The values assigned to the Hebrew letters are those conventionally used in Hebrew numerical notation.

The interpretative question concerns the spelling and language chosen.

Is this a historically plausible representation of Nero's name? The answer is yes. The Greek form Nerōn Kaisar provides a basis for the Hebrew rendering.

The title Caesar was also used in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, where several languages were spoken.

Thus, the calculation is not merely a modern invention involving an arbitrary sequence of letters.

It is based upon a historically recognisable form of the emperor's name and title.

Nevertheless, we should not claim that the spelling alone proves the identification.

We must ask whether the original readers would have understood the calculation, particularly since Revelation was written in Greek.

That is a legitimate objection, which we shall consider later. For the present, the important finding is that Nero Caesar supplies a genuine numerical correspondence with 666.

5. The Alternative Number — 616

We now come to one of the most interesting features of the evidence.

Although the familiar text of Revelation 13:18 gives the number as 666, some ancient witnesses give the number as 616.

This is not a modern alteration introduced by recent Bible translators.

The alternative reading was already known in the second century. Irenaeus specifically discussed it in Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter 30.

He regarded 666 as the correct number and objected to copies which contained the alternative reading.

He believed that the variation had arisen through a copying error. This means that the existence of 616 is historically significant. It was known long before modern scholars began investigating the numerical connection with Nero.

The variant has also survived in ancient Greek manuscripts. Among the important witnesses are Papyrus 115 and Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus, commonly designated by the letter C.

These preserve the reading 616 at Revelation 13:18. The discovery of such manuscripts confirmed that the alternative number belonged to the ancient textual transmission of Revelation.

It was not simply a mistake invented by a later medieval commentator.

But how does 616 relate to Nero?

6. Why Nero Caesar Can Also Produce 616

The explanation involves the difference between the Greek and

Latin forms of Nero's name.

In Greek, the name is Nerōn. In Latin, it is Nero. The Greek form contains a final letter corresponding to the Hebrew nun, whose numerical value is fifty.

The shorter Latin form does not contain that final consonant. Therefore, when the shorter name is represented in Hebrew letters, its value is reduced by fifty.

Hebrew letter	Transliterated letter	Numerical value
נ	N	50
ר	R	200
ו	W / O	6
ק	Q	100
ס	S	60
ר	R	200
Total		616

The difference is exactly fifty: 666 − 50 = 616. This is remarkable because the same man's name and title can explain both ancient readings through the difference between the Greek and Latin forms of his name.

The longer form, Neron Caesar, produces 666. The shorter form, Nero Caesar, produces 616. The difference corresponds exactly to the value of the final Hebrew letter omitted when Nerōn becomes Nero.

This makes the relationship between the two readings particularly significant.

It provides a possible explanation not only for the number originally intended by John but also for the emergence of the alternative reading.

As Craig Koester observes, many scholars regard the Nero Caesar calculation as a particularly plausible solution, although important objections remain.

7. Why the Two Numbers Are More Significant Together

If only 666 existed, the identification of Nero would still deserve consideration.

However, other names can also be calculated to produce 666. Some interpreters have therefore questioned whether the Nero calculation is anything more than an ingenious coincidence.

The existence of 616 changes the nature of the argument. We are no longer examining only one numerical correspondence. We have two ancient readings of the same verse. Both can be explained through the name and title of the same emperor, using two historically recognisable forms of his name.

This provides a more specific correspondence than simply discovering that a particular name adds up to 666.

It is possible that a copyist familiar with the shorter Latin form of Nero's name adjusted the number accordingly.

Alternatively, the variant may have arisen independently through an ordinary copying error.

Irenaeus favoured an explanation involving scribal error. It is also possible that a scribe or interpreter understood the number to refer to Nero and deliberately altered it to correspond with the familiar form of his name.

However, the surviving manuscripts do not reveal the intentions of the individuals responsible for the variation.

We must therefore avoid presenting the explanation as though we possess direct testimony from a copyist.

What can be established is that the two numbers correspond to the two forms of Nero's name.

This correspondence provides substantial support for the hypothesis that Nero lies behind the numerical riddle.

It does not establish with certainty how the textual variant originated.

8. Irenaeus and the Ancient Reading of 616

The testimony of Irenaeus is particularly interesting because of his importance to the late-date theory.

In Chapter 2, we examined his statement concerning the vision

being seen towards the end of Domitian's reign.

We must now consider another passage from the same work. In *Against Heresies,* Book V, Chapter 30, Section 1, Irenaeus discusses the correct reading of the number of the beast.

He declares that 666 was found in the most reliable and ancient copies known to him.

He also appeals to the testimony of those who had seen John. However, Irenaeus was aware that some copies contained another number.

He explains that certain people had reduced the numerical value by fifty.

In other words, they had substituted 616 for 666. Irenaeus believed this was an error and argued that 666 should be retained.

This testimony establishes two important historical facts. First, 666 had strong manuscript support by the late second century.

Second, the reading 616 was already circulating at that time. We should give considerable weight to both observations. Irenaeus was writing much closer to the composition of Revelation than the majority of surviving Greek manuscripts.

His testimony therefore provides valuable evidence concerning the early textual history of the book.

But there is another question. Did Irenaeus recognise the possible connection between Nero Caesar and the two numbers?

He gives no indication that he did. Instead, he discusses other possible names, including Lateinos and Teitan.

He remains cautious about identifying the person represented by the number.

This observation is important. We should not claim that Irenaeus himself confirmed the identification of Nero.

He did not. Indeed, he regarded the identification of the beast as a matter that should not be settled through speculation.

Nor should we claim that his reference to ancient manuscripts proves Revelation was written before AD 70.

As we observed in Chapter 2, manuscripts produced during the decades following AD 95 could also have been regarded as old by the late second century.

The significance of Irenaeus's testimony lies rather in the antiquity of the two readings and his preference for 666.

If the Nero explanation is correct, it means that the numerical variation arose sufficiently early to be known to Irenaeus.

This is a significant historical consideration.

9. Could the Original Readers Have Understood a Hebrew Calculation?

A substantial objection must now be addressed. Revelation was written in Greek and addressed to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia.

Why, then, should John have expected his readers to calculate the name of Nero using Hebrew letters?

This question cannot be ignored. The calculation works only after the name has been represented in Hebrew.

If the letters of the Greek name are added using ordinary Greek numerical values, they do not produce the same result.

Consequently, the proposed identification requires an explanation of why John might employ a Hebrew calculation in a Greek book.

Several considerations are relevant.

John's extensive use of the Old Testament.

Revelation is filled with images and expressions drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Its visions repeatedly recall Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Zechariah, and other Old Testament books.

For example, the beasts of Revelation 13 recall Daniel 7. The heavenly worship in Revelation 4 and 5 contains imagery associated with the prophetic visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel.

The great city described as Sodom and Egypt recalls earlier biblical judgments.

Thus, John's Greek writing is deeply influenced by the language and thought of the Hebrew Scriptures.

This makes it possible that he employed a Hebrew numerical calculation.

Jewish believers among the original recipients

The first Christian churches included believers familiar with Jewish Scripture and tradition.

The churches in Asia existed in a region containing Jewish communities, and the apostolic mission had brought the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles.

It is therefore possible that some readers possessed the knowledge necessary to recognise a Hebrew numerical calculation.

However, we should not assume that every Christian in the seven churches could read Hebrew.

The explanation may have required someone possessing particular understanding.

John introduces the number with the words:

> *"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast."*
>
> — Revelation 13:18, KJV

The instruction suggests that the calculation required discernment rather than ordinary familiarity.

Nevertheless, the words do not expressly identify Hebrew as the language to be used.

Consequently, the Hebrew calculation remains a plausible interpretation rather than an explicitly stated instruction.

10. Is the Hebrew Spelling of Nero Historically Plausible?

Another objection concerns the precise spelling required to produce 666.

The calculation uses the form NRWN QSR. Critics have questioned whether this representation of Nero Caesar would have been familiar to the original readers.

This is an important point because numerical calculations can become unreliable when names are altered to produce a desired result.

For the argument to possess historical value, the spelling must be defensible independently of the number it produces.

The Greek form of Nero's name contained the final n, making NRWN a reasonable Hebrew representation.

The imperial title Caesar was also represented in Semitic languages.

However, different spellings were possible, and the particular form QSR is important to the calculation.

We should therefore distinguish between showing that the spelling is linguistically plausible and proving that it was the form John expected every reader to use.

The former can be defended. The latter cannot be established with certainty from Revelation itself.

Nevertheless, the double correspondence with 666 and 616 provides a substantial reason for taking the proposed spelling seriously.

The interpretation is not based upon an entirely arbitrary manipulation of letters.

It employs two forms of the emperor's name corresponding to known linguistic differences.

11. Could the Number Refer to Someone Other Than Nero?

Before reaching a conclusion, we must consider alternative interpretations.

One important objection is that the number 666 can be produced by names other than Nero Caesar.

Irenaeus himself recognised this problem. He discussed several candidates and warned against making a definite identification without sufficient evidence.

This is particularly important because the history of biblical interpretation contains many unsuccessful attempts to identify the beast through numerical calculations.

Names have been adapted, translated, abbreviated, and supplemented with titles until they produce the desired number.

Such methods are unreliable. The correct interpretation should not depend upon arbitrary changes made solely to achieve a numerical result.

Nor should it disregard the historical circumstances of the original readers.

The identification of Nero possesses an advantage because it is supported by more than the calculation itself.

Nero was a first-century Roman emperor. He was associated with persecution of Christians. His reign coincided with the outbreak of the Jewish–Roman War. If the seven kings of Revelation 17 are counted from Julius Caesar, Nero is the sixth.

And his name can explain both 666 and 616. These independent considerations make him a stronger candidate than a person identified solely through an ingenious numerical calculation.

Nevertheless, there are serious alternative explanations.

The number as a symbol of imperfection

Some interpreters understand 666 symbolically.

In Revelation, the number seven frequently possesses associations with completeness or fullness.

The number six may therefore suggest something falling short of that completeness.

On this understanding, 666 could symbolise human rebellion or the repeated failure of human power to attain divine perfection.

This interpretation has theological appeal, especially given the symbolic character of Revelation.

However, it must explain why John specifically commands the reader to calculate the number of a name.

A purely symbolic explanation may not adequately account for that instruction.

It is possible, of course, for a number to possess symbolic significance while also referring to a particular historical person.

The two interpretations need not be mutually exclusive. The number and Solomon's gold Another explanation draws upon 1 Kings 10:14:

> *"Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold."*

— 1 Kings 10:14, KJV The number 666 therefore appears elsewhere in Scripture. Some scholars have argued that John's use of this number recalls

Solomon's accumulation of wealth and the dangers associated with royal power, luxury, and idolatry.

The association is relevant because Revelation condemns the arrogance, wealth, and corruption of worldly powers.

A study published in New Testament Studies explores this possible Old Testament background.

Nevertheless, a reference to Solomon would not necessarily identify the individual represented by the beast.

It may explain part of the symbolism without settling the historical question.

Other names and imperial associations

Scholars have proposed additional names and titles using Greek, Latin, or Hebrew numerical values.

Some alternatives seek to identify other Roman emperors. Others understand the number as a broader representation of imperial power.

A recent study in The Journal of Theological Studies, entitled Concealed Claudian: The Meaning of 666 in Revelation, challenges the assumption that Nero Caesar is necessarily the correct solution.

The existence of such arguments demonstrates that the matter is still debated.

However, the strength of the Nero explanation lies in its ability to account for the two ancient numerical readings through closely related forms of the same imperial name.

Any proposed alternative should be evaluated against that evidence as well as the wider context.

12. Does the Number 616 Prove That Nero Was Intended?

We should now assess the particular significance of the alternative reading.

The relationship between 666 and 616 is one of the strongest features of the Nero interpretation.

The difference of fifty corresponds exactly to the final Hebrew letter in the longer form Nerōn.

This provides a coherent explanation of why two numbers might have circulated in ancient copies.

But we must avoid a logical mistake.

The existence of two readings does not necessarily provide two independent testimonies that John intended Nero.

If 616 arose when a copyist deliberately adapted 666 to the shorter form of Nero's name, the two readings may reflect a single interpretative tradition.

Alternatively, if 616 arose accidentally, its agreement with the shorter form of Nero's name may be coincidental.

Therefore, the textual variant alone cannot establish the identification.

Its importance is that it corresponds naturally with a specific explanation already supported by the historical setting.

We can express the argument in this way: The calculation of 666 from Nero Caesar provides one piece of evidence.

The possibility that 616 arose through the shorter form of the same name provides a second, related consideration.

The identification of Nero with the sixth king provides further contextual support.

The persecution under Nero and the events leading to Jerusalem's destruction provide the historical setting.

Taken together, these considerations form a substantial cumulative argument.

The variant should therefore be regarded as strong corroborative evidence for the Nero interpretation, but not as an independent proof beyond all possible doubt.

13. Does Identifying Nero Establish the Date of Revelation? We now come to the central question of our investigation. Suppose that Nero Caesar is indeed the person represented by 666.

Would this necessarily prove that Revelation was written during his reign?

Not by itself. This distinction is essential. A book written after the death of a ruler may still contain prophecies, visions, or symbolic descriptions referring to that ruler.

For example, a work composed during Domitian's reign could describe Nero as an earlier manifestation of Roman tyranny.

Some interpreters believe that the beast represents the return of Nero-like imperial power under Domitian.

On this understanding, the number could identify Nero while the composition of Revelation belonged to a later period.

Therefore, the identification of Nero does not automatically establish that John wrote before AD 68.

However, the argument changes when Revelation 13 is considered alongside Revelation 17.

In Revelation 17, John is told:

> *"Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space."*
>
> — Revelation 17:10, KJV

If the six kings represent the succession of Roman rulers beginning with Julius Caesar, Nero is the reigning sixth king.

If the beast's number also identifies Nero, we have two passages pointing towards the same historical person.

This is a more substantial argument than either passage considered separately.

Revelation 17 would identify the emperor presently reigning. Revelation 13 would identify the beast through the numerical value of his name.

The two passages would therefore reinforce one another. But we must remember the qualifications established in Chapter 6.

The chronological force of Revelation 17 depends upon counting Julius Caesar first and understanding "one is" as referring to John's present time.

If these conditions are accepted, the numerical identification of Nero strengthens the conclusion that Revelation was written before June AD 68.

If they are rejected, the number 666 remains relevant to the interpretation of the beast but cannot independently settle the book's date.

Thus, the strongest early-date argument is cumulative rather than dependent upon a single calculation.

14. The Connection Between Nero, the Beast, and Jerusalem

Our investigation must now consider how this identification relates to the larger purpose of Revelation.

In the preceding chapters, we examined the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

We considered the Temple in Revelation 11, the Gentile trampling of the holy city, and the similarity between John's language and Christ's prophecy in Luke 21.

We also examined the Roman succession in Revelation 17. The identification of Nero in Revelation 13 would bring these passages into a coherent historical relationship.

Rome was the imperial power ruling Judea during the first century.

Nero was emperor when the Jewish revolt began in AD 66. He appointed Vespasian to conduct the Roman military campaign. Following Nero's death, Vespasian eventually became emperor, while his son Titus completed the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Therefore, Nero was associated with the beginning of the military events that culminated in Jerusalem's destruction.

The historical sequence is significant. The beast represents imperial power. The sixth king may identify Nero. The numerical value of the beast's name may identify Nero Caesar. The holy city subjected to Gentile oppression may represent Jerusalem.

The approaching judgment may refer to the events that culminated in AD 70.

On this interpretation, the principal symbols are related to a recognisable historical setting rather than to events separated by many centuries.

Nevertheless, we must distinguish the different roles involved. Nero persecuted Christians at Rome and initiated the Roman military response to the Jewish revolt.

Vespasian and Titus were directly associated with the conquest of Judea and Jerusalem.

John's description of the beast may embrace the wider Roman imperial system rather than Nero alone.

This helps explain how imperial persecution and Jerusalem's destruction could form parts of the same prophetic vision.

It also prevents us from identifying every action attributed to the beast exclusively with Nero as an individual.

15. The Relevance of the Original Readers

There is another consideration that deserves particular attention. Revelation was not originally addressed to people living many centuries after John.

It was addressed to actual churches in Asia. John writes:

> *"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne."*
>
> — Revelation 1:4, KJV

The churches were instructed to hear, understand, and obey the prophecy.

The number of the beast was therefore given within a message intended for those first-century congregations.

The instruction to calculate the number suggests that its meaning was not necessarily beyond the reach of the original readers.

This does not mean that every believer would immediately recognise the answer.

Indeed, John expressly calls for wisdom and understanding. Nevertheless, there is a reasonable expectation that the identification would be meaningful within the historical world in which the churches lived.

Nero Caesar was a ruler known throughout the Roman Empire. His title was associated with the imperial authority governing the provinces.

His reign was marked by events of considerable importance to the early Christian Church.

Consequently, identifying Nero as the beast would give the original readers a historical referent they could recognise.

This consideration does not eliminate the possibility that Revelation contains prophecies extending beyond the first century.

But it provides an important reason to begin interpretation with the circumstances of the original recipients.

The prophecy was given to them, and its language should first be understood in relation to the world they inhabited.

16. Why the Number Should Not Be Applied Arbitrarily to Later Figures

The history of Christian interpretation contains many attempts to identify the beast with political and religious figures who lived long after the apostolic period.

Some have applied the number 666 to emperors, popes, kings, military leaders, and modern rulers.

Others have connected it with particular organisations, systems of government, or technological developments.

The difficulty with many such interpretations is that they begin with a proposed individual and then attempt to make the numerical calculation fit.

Names may be translated into another language, modified, shortened, or expanded until their numerical values produce 666.

Such methods can generate an almost unlimited number of possibilities.

This is precisely why historical context is essential. A convincing identification should satisfy more than a numerical calculation.

It should account for the language of Revelation 13, agree with the symbolism of the beast, correspond with the historical circumstances of the original churches, and explain the relationship between the numerical readings 666 and 616.

The Nero interpretation satisfies several of these requirements. It identifies a historically relevant emperor. It provides a defensible numerical calculation. It explains the alternative number through a recognisable difference in the spelling of his name.

And it corresponds with a possible interpretation of the sixth king in Revelation 17.

This makes it considerably stronger than interpretations which depend solely upon numerical manipulation.

Nevertheless, these advantages should not lead us to overlook the remaining difficulties.

The correct identification must rest upon the combined evidence, not upon the attraction of a remarkable calculation.

17. The Cumulative Case for Nero Caesar

We may now bring together the principal arguments developed in this chapter.

Comparison of the Two Readings

Form	Number	Hebrew spelling	Explanation
Greek: Neron Caesar	666	רסק ורנ	Includes the final Nun, worth 50
Latin: Nero Caesar	616	רסק ורנ	Omits the final Nun, worth 50

Both calculations use the conventional numerical values assigned to Hebrew letters.

There are five principal reasons why Nero deserves serious consideration.

First, the Greek form of his name and title, represented in Hebrew letters, produces 666.

Second, the shorter Latin form, represented in the same manner, produces 616.

Third, the alternative reading 616 is genuinely ancient and was already known to Irenaeus.

Fourth, Nero was a first-century Roman emperor whose reign was associated with Christian persecution and the outbreak of the Jewish–Roman War.

Fifth, Nero becomes the sixth king in Revelation 17 if the sequence begins with Julius Caesar.

The importance of this cumulative argument should not be underestimated.

The numerical calculation does not stand alone. It fits within a broader interpretation of Roman imperial authority and the events preceding Jerusalem's destruction.

However, the identification is not beyond question.

It depends upon a particular linguistic representation of Nero's name.

It requires the assumption that John intended a Hebrew numerical calculation.

And it does not independently prove that Revelation was composed during Nero's lifetime.

These limitations should be openly acknowledged. They do not remove the force of the evidence, but they help us state the conclusion with proper precision.

18. Conclusion: The Number of a Man

The number of the beast has been the subject of speculation for many centuries.

Yet the Book of Revelation provides an important clue to its meaning.

John calls it the number of a man and instructs the reader to calculate the number of his name.

The name Nero Caesar provides one of the most compelling solutions to this instruction.

When the Greek form of his name and title is represented in Hebrew letters, the numerical value is 666.

When the shorter Latin form is represented in the same manner, the value is 616.

The existence of both numbers in the ancient manuscript tradition makes this correspondence especially noteworthy.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Nero Caesar is a strong historical candidate for the person identified by the number of the beast.

When considered alongside the succession of kings described in Revelation 17, the identification provides significant support for dating Revelation within the period of the early Roman Empire, and potentially during Nero's reign.

The identification does not, by itself, prove that the book was written before AD 70.

A later writer could refer to an earlier emperor. Nevertheless, the number becomes more important when combined with the other chronological evidence.

Revelation 11 may describe the Temple and Jerusalem before their destruction.

Revelation 17 may identify Nero as the reigning sixth king. Revelation 13 may identify Nero through the numerical value of his name.

Together, these passages offer a coherent historical explanation rooted in the events of the first century.

We should also remember that Revelation repeatedly declares that the events revealed to John were near at hand.

The opening chapter states that the things revealed must shortly come to pass.

The final chapter repeats the same expectation. If the beast represents Nero and the judgment concerns Jerusalem, those time statements would possess a natural application to the first-century recipients of the prophecy.

Thus, the evidence from 666 and 616 adds considerable weight to the early-date hypothesis.

It strengthens the argument that Revelation should first be interpreted within the historical world of the apostles, the Roman emperors, and the approaching destruction of Jerusalem.

The next question is whether the circumstances of the seven churches in Asia also support that historical setting.

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Chapter 8 — The Seven Churches of Asia and Their Historical Circumstances

Do the Conditions Described in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 Support a Date Before AD 70?

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, we examined several passages that may help establish when the Book of Revelation was written. We considered the Temple and holy city in Revelation 11, the seven kings in Revelation 17, and the number of the beast in Revelation 13.

We discovered that these passages can be understood within the historical circumstances of the first century, particularly the reign of Nero and the events leading to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

However, there is another important source of evidence within Revelation itself.

The opening three chapters contain messages addressed to seven Christian churches in the Roman province of Asia.

Unlike many of the visions that follow, these messages concern identifiable congregations, living in actual cities and facing recognisable spiritual difficulties.

Their circumstances may therefore provide valuable information about the period in which John wrote.

Some defenders of the late date argue that the churches had reached a stage of development which would have required several decades.

They maintain that the spiritual decline, false teaching, and established character of these congregations fit more naturally towards the end of Domitian's reign, around AD 95–96.

Others argue that the New Testament itself demonstrates that such problems were already widespread during the apostolic period.

Our purpose is to examine these competing arguments. We shall consider the history of the seven churches, their relationship with the ministry of Paul, the opposition they experienced, and the conditions described in Christ's messages to them.

Particular attention will be given to the earthquake at Laodicea, the presence of false apostles and Jewish opposition, and the warnings of approaching persecution.

The central question is whether anything in the circumstances of the seven churches requires Revelation to have been written after AD 70.

1. Revelation Was Addressed to Living Congregations

John begins his letter:

> *"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne."*
>
> — Revelation 1:4, KJV

A few verses later, he is commanded:

> *"What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea."*
>
> — Revelation 1:11, KJV

These instructions are important. John was not writing merely for Christians who might live centuries later.

He was commanded to send the book to seven churches already existing in Asia.

The messages were therefore intended to be received, read, and obeyed by those congregations.

This provides an essential principle for interpreting Revelation.

Whatever wider prophetic significance the book may possess, its first recipients were Christians living in the world of the Roman Empire during the first century.

The historical circumstances of these congregations must therefore be considered before assigning the visions to events far removed from their own experience.

This is especially important because the messages contain warnings of approaching judgment and persecution.

The promises and threats are addressed directly to the churches. We must ask how the original hearers would have understood them.

2. Why Were Only Seven Churches Addressed?

An argument sometimes advanced for an early date is that there were only seven Christian churches in Asia when Revelation was written.

According to this theory, the seven congregations mentioned in Revelation represent a particular period before the Christian faith had spread more widely through the province.

However, this argument presents serious historical difficulties. The New Testament itself mentions Christian congregations in Asia that are not included among the seven churches of Revelation.

For example, Paul wrote to the Colossians:

> *"Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house."*
>
> — Colossians 4:15, KJV

He also instructed them:

> *"And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."*
>
> — Colossians 4:16, KJV

Furthermore, Paul refers to believers in Hierapolis:

> *"For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis."*
>
> — Colossians 4:13, KJV

These passages demonstrate that Christian communities existed beyond the seven congregations addressed in Revelation.

Consequently, we cannot argue that only seven churches existed in Asia during a particular period.

The early twentieth-century scholar W. M. Ramsay also questioned this assumption, observing that the seven churches should not be treated as an exhaustive list of all congregations in the province.

Why, then, were these seven selected? The number seven possesses considerable significance throughout Revelation.

There are seven spirits, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls.

It is therefore reasonable to understand the seven churches as a representative selection.

They were real congregations, but their selection may also have symbolised the completeness of Christ's address to his churches.

Their geographical arrangement is also significant. The cities formed a route through western Asia Minor, providing a practical means of circulating the book among them.

Thus, the existence of seven named churches does not establish that Revelation was written when only seven congregations existed.

The stronger argument is not that these were the only churches in Asia, but that their recorded circumstances are consistent with the apostolic period.

3. The Establishment of the Churches in Asia

The ministry of the apostle Paul provides important background for understanding the development of Christianity in Asia.

During his missionary journeys, Paul spent considerable time at Ephesus.

The Book of Acts records that he taught there for an extended period.

Luke writes:

> *"And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they*
>
> *which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."*
>
> — Acts 19:10, KJV

This is an important statement. The gospel had already spread widely throughout the province of Asia during Paul's ministry.

The passage does not mean that every individual living in Asia personally heard Paul preach.

Rather, it describes the extensive spread of the Christian message through his work and the activity of others.

Paul's ministry at Ephesus is commonly placed during the middle of the AD 50s.

Therefore, by the middle of the following decade, Christianity had been established in Asia for a number of years.

This provides a possible historical setting for the letters in Revelation.

If Revelation was written during Nero's reign, the churches need not have been newly established congregations.

Some may already have possessed several years of experience, developed leadership, and encountered serious doctrinal problems.

Moreover, the Christian message had reached Asia before Paul's extended ministry in Ephesus.

The exact dates when each of the seven congregations was founded are not known.

We must therefore avoid assuming that they were all established at the same time.

Nevertheless, Acts 19 demonstrates that the spread of Christianity throughout Asia was already well advanced during the apostolic period.

Consequently, the existence of established congregations in Revelation 2 and 3 does not by itself require a date near AD 96.

4. The Church at Ephesus and Its False Apostles

The first message is addressed to Ephesus. Christ declares:

> *"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them*
>
> *which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars."*
>
> — Revelation 2:2, KJV

The church is commended for testing those who claimed apostolic authority.

This is significant because false apostles were already troubling Christian congregations during Paul's ministry.

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul declared:

> *"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ."*
>
> — 2 Corinthians 11:13, KJV

The existence of false apostles was therefore not a development belonging exclusively to the closing years of the first century.

It was already a recognised problem in the AD 50s. Paul's warning to the elders of Ephesus provides an even closer parallel.

He told them:

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

— Acts 20:29–30, KJV

Paul anticipated that false teachers would arise within the Ephesian church.

In Revelation 2, Christ addresses a congregation which had already encountered and resisted false claims to spiritual authority.

The correspondence is significant. If Revelation was written in the AD 60s, its description of Ephesus would fit the period following Paul's warnings.

However, it would also fit a later period. False teaching did not cease with the death of Paul. The passage therefore establishes compatibility with an early date rather than proving that date.

Nevertheless, it answers an important objection. There is no historical reason to insist that the presence of false apostles requires the church to have existed until AD 95–96.

Such dangers were already present during the apostolic ministry.

5. Had Ephesus Already Lost Its First Love?

Christ also rebukes the Ephesian congregation:

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

— Revelation 2:4, KJV

Some interpreters argue that this spiritual decline indicates a congregation which had existed for several decades.

According to this reasoning, the church must first have experienced a period of spiritual vitality before gradually losing its original devotion.

An early date, it is argued, would not allow sufficient time for such deterioration.

But this objection overlooks the testimony of the New Testament. Spiritual decline could occur very quickly. Paul wrote to the Galatians:

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel."

— Galatians 1:6, KJV

The phrase "so soon" is especially important. Paul was astonished that believers could turn away from the truth within a comparatively short period.

The Corinthian church also experienced serious divisions, moral corruption, and doctrinal confusion during Paul's lifetime.

Similarly, the warning to Ephesus need not imply that several generations had passed.

A congregation could lose its original devotion within a few years. Furthermore, the church in Revelation 2 was not entirely apostate. It was commended for labour, patience, perseverance, and resistance to false teaching.

Its problem was that outward faithfulness had been accompanied by a loss of its former love.

Such a condition could arise during either an early or a late period.

Therefore, the spiritual decline of Ephesus does not establish the Domitianic date.

It is entirely consistent with the kinds of difficulties already
recorded in Paul's epistles.

6. Smyrna and the Opposition of the Synagogue

The message to Smyrna contains another important historical indication.

Christ declares:

> *"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."*
>
> — Revelation 2:9, KJV

Here we encounter conflict between the Christian congregation and people whom Christ describes as falsely claiming Jewish identity or standing before God.

The expression "synagogue of Satan" is severe. It should be understood within the religious controversy of the first century, when the identity of God's covenant people was being contested.

It is not a statement that all Jewish people, or Judaism as an ethnicity, were evil.

The immediate concern is a particular group opposing the Christians addressed by John.

During the apostolic period, conflicts arose over the person of Jesus Christ, the authority of the apostles, and the relationship between the gospel and the Law of Moses.

The Book of Acts records examples of opposition to Paul's ministry from particular Jewish communities.

In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas encountered resistance at Antioch in Pisidia.

In Acts 14, opposition arose at Iconium. In Acts 17, similar conflicts occurred at Thessalonica and Berea. Such opposition was therefore already part of the experience of the early Christian Church.

The reference to Smyrna is consistent with this wider historical setting.

Nevertheless, it does not establish that Revelation was written before AD 70.

Conflicts between Jewish and Christian communities continued

after Jerusalem's destruction.

Indeed, scholars examining Christian and Jewish relationships in first-century Asia Minor recognise that such disputes involved questions of religious identity, community boundaries, and social relationships over an extended period.

Thus, the passage provides evidence that Revelation belongs to a period of active conflict over religious identity, but it does not identify a precise year.

The early-date argument must rest upon its correspondence with other passages rather than upon the expression alone.

7. The Ten Days of Tribulation

Christ continues his message to Smyrna:

> *"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*
>
> — Revelation 2:10, KJV

This passage contains an explicit warning of approaching persecution.

The congregation is told that some of its members will be imprisoned.

The suffering is still described as something they are about to experience.

This naturally raises the question of the historical circumstances in which the warning was given.

Advocates of the early date connect it with the persecution of Christians during Nero's reign.

Such an interpretation is possible because Nero's persecution began in AD 64.

However, the surviving historical evidence most clearly documents Nero's actions against Christians in Rome.

It does not establish that the persecution in Smyrna was directly ordered by Nero.

Nor can the ten days be confidently identified with ten literal days of a particular historical persecution.

In biblical prophecy, a limited number of days may represent a definite but restricted period of suffering.

The principal point is that Christ warns the congregation of a trial which lies before it.

The message is therefore immediate and practical. The Christians of Smyrna were expected to respond faithfully to the warning.

But this does not establish that the trial must have occurred before AD 70.

Persecution could arise under different Roman administrations or through local circumstances.

The passage therefore supports the first-century historical character of Revelation without independently deciding between Nero and Domitian.

8. Pergamos and the Martyrdom of Antipas

The message to Pergamos provides evidence that Christians had already suffered martyrdom.

Christ declares:

> *"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth."*
>
> — Revelation 2:13, KJV

The reference to Antipas is important because it describes a particular Christian who had been killed.

It is not simply a prophecy of persecution that might occur at some later time.

The event had already taken place. Some defenders of the late date argue that this indicates an organised persecution of Christians in Asia Minor.

However, the passage does not name the Roman emperor responsible.

Nor does it state that Antipas was killed under an imperial decree. He may have suffered as a result of local hostility, civic religious pressure, or action by Roman authorities.

The precise circumstances are not preserved in the biblical text. Pergamos was an important centre of Roman provincial government and imperial worship.

The city's political and religious environment provides a plausible setting for conflict between Christians and the surrounding society.

But that environment existed before Domitian's reign. Therefore, the death of Antipas does not require Revelation to have been written around AD 96.

At the same time, the passage provides no positive chronological evidence establishing a date before AD 70.

We should not assign Antipas's death to Nero merely because Nero is our proposed sixth king.

The text does not authorise that identification. The importance of the passage lies in demonstrating that persecution and martyrdom were already realities for the original recipients of Revelation.

9. Thyatira and the Rise of False Teaching

The message to Thyatira describes another kind of danger. Christ declares:

> *"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols."*
>
> — Revelation 2:20, KJV

Here the problem is not persecution from outside the church. It is corruption arising from within. A woman symbolically called Jezebel claimed prophetic authority and encouraged practices that Christ condemned.

The name Jezebel recalls the Old Testament queen who promoted idolatry in Israel.

It is therefore reasonable to understand the name as a deliberate biblical comparison rather than necessarily the woman's personal name.

The problem described in Thyatira resembles difficulties already encountered in the Pauline churches.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul addressed disputes concerning food offered to idols.

He also condemned sexual immorality and warned against participation in idolatrous worship.

These matters were therefore prominent during the AD 50s. Consequently, the existence of similar problems in Thyatira does not require a late date.

The Christian congregations of the apostolic period were already confronting the moral and religious influences of the surrounding pagan world.

However, the particular circumstances of Thyatira cannot be securely dated from the text.

The passage gives no indication of the emperor then reigning. It therefore provides compatibility with an early date, but not decisive chronological evidence.

10. Sardis and the Possibility of Rapid Spiritual Decline

Christ's message to Sardis is particularly severe:

> *"I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."*
>
> — Revelation 3:1, KJV

The church possessed a reputation for spiritual life but was inwardly deficient.

Some interpreters believe that this description suggests an established congregation which had declined over a long period.

Yet the New Testament shows that serious spiritual deterioration could occur during the lifetime of the apostles.

Paul warned Timothy:

> *"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."*
>
> — 1 Timothy 4:1, KJV

He also warned that some people would possess:

> *"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."*
>
> — 2 Timothy 3:5, KJV

These descriptions demonstrate that outward religious profession without spiritual reality was already a recognised danger in the apostolic period.

The condition of Sardis therefore does not require the passing of several generations.

Its spiritual decline may have developed rapidly. Nevertheless, it cannot be used to establish a precise date. The warning is consistent with the AD 60s, but it could also describe a congregation several decades later.

The proper conclusion is that the condition of Sardis provides no compelling reason to reject the early date.

11. Philadelphia and the Promise of Approaching Deliverance

The message to Philadelphia deserves particular attention because it contains an important promise concerning the time of trial.

Christ declares:

> *"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*
>
> *Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."*
>
> — Revelation 3:10–11, KJV

These statements are especially relevant to our investigation. The church is promised preservation during an approaching hour of trial.

Christ then declares that he is coming quickly. The warning is given to a congregation living in the first century. It was not presented merely as information for Christians who might live many centuries later.

The members of the church were commanded to hold fast in view of the approaching event.

This gives the passage an immediate pastoral significance. The Greek expression translated "all the world" uses oikoumenē, a word that can refer to the inhabited world and, in certain contexts, the Roman world.

Luke uses the same word in his account of the decree issued by Caesar Augustus:

> *"And there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed."*
>
> — Luke 2:1, KJV

The expression in Luke refers to the world under Roman imperial administration rather than every nation on earth.

It is therefore possible that Revelation 3:10 describes an approaching trial affecting the Roman world.

This is significant because the period surrounding the Jewish– Roman War witnessed political instability, warfare, persecution, and upheaval.

But the identification must not be forced. The word oikoumenē does not always mean the Roman Empire alone.

Nor does Revelation 3:10 expressly identify Nero, the Jewish revolt, or the destruction of Jerusalem.

Some interpreters regard the trial as a wider period of persecution under Roman authority.

Others understand it as a future worldwide tribulation. The verse therefore requires interpretation in the light of the whole book.

Nevertheless, the language of imminence is important. Christ says:

> *"Behold, I come quickly."*
>
> — Revelation 3:11, KJV

The natural force of these words must be considered in relation to the original hearers.

If the promised coming is connected with the events of the first century, the early-date interpretation gains further support.

The precise nature of this coming will be examined more fully in our later chapter concerning the time statements of Revelation.

For the present, we may conclude that Philadelphia provides one of the most important examples of the book's immediate expectation.

12. Laodicea and the Earthquake of AD 60

We now come to one of the most frequently discussed arguments concerning the date of Revelation.

The church at Laodicea is rebuked for its spiritual complacency. Christ declares:

> *"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched,*
>
> *and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."*
>
> — Revelation 3:17, KJV

The language suggests a congregation influenced by wealth and self-sufficiency.

But Laodicea had experienced a serious earthquake during Nero's reign.

The Roman historian Tacitus records the event in Annals, Book XIV, Chapter 27.

He places the earthquake in AD 60 and reports that Laodicea recovered through its own resources, without financial assistance from Rom

This is an important piece of historical evidence. Some defenders of the late date argue that the city could not have recovered its wealth sufficiently by the middle of the AD 60s.

According to this argument, the description in Revelation 3:17 is more consistent with the city several decades after the earthquake.

However, Tacitus's testimony creates a difficulty for that reasoning. He expressly states that Laodicea possessed the resources to recover without imperial assistance.

His account therefore demonstrates the city's considerable financial capacity.

It does not tell us precisely how many years reconstruction required.

Nevertheless, it would be unreasonable to assume that Laodicea remained impoverished throughout the AD 60s.

The rebuilding of damaged structures and the continued possession of wealth are different matters.

A city may suffer severe physical damage while retaining substantial private resources and commercial activity.

Furthermore, Christ's rebuke is directed to the church, not simply to the municipal government.

The congregation's boast of wealth may reflect the attitude of its members rather than the completed reconstruction of every building.

Thus, the earthquake does not provide a secure argument against an early date.

Indeed, the city's known financial self-sufficiency could have contributed to the complacency described in Revelation.

Did the earthquake leave only seven churches in Asia?

It was suggested that an earthquake destroyed Colosse, Hierapolis, and Laodicea, leaving only seven churches in Asia for a limited period.

The available historical evidence does not justify that conclusion. Tacitus records Laodicea's earthquake, but his statement does not establish that the Christian congregations in Colosse and Hierapolis ceased to exist.

Nor does it establish that only seven churches remained throughout the province.

We should therefore omit that claim from our final argument. The stronger historical point is that Laodicea's wealth in Revelation 3:17 is compatible with an early date, notwithstanding the earthquake of AD 60.

The earthquake cannot reliably be used to prove either the Neronian or the Domitianic date.

13. The Nicolaitans and the Development of False Teaching

Two of the churches are warned concerning the Nicolaitans.

To Ephesus, Christ declares:

> *"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."*
>
> — Revelation 2:6, KJV

A similar warning appears in the message to Pergamos. The precise identity of the Nicolaitans remains uncertain. Later Christian writers associated them with particular forms of immoral teaching, but the surviving historical information is limited.

Some interpreters have argued that the presence of such a group indicates a period of doctrinal development extending beyond the earliest years of the Church.

However, false teaching was already widespread during the apostolic period.

Paul warned the Corinthians about false apostles. He warned the Galatians about teachers who corrupted the gospel.

He warned the elders of Ephesus about people who would arise within the congregation to draw away disciples.

John himself wrote:

> *"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."*
>
> — 1 John 2:18, KJV

The precise date of John's first epistle is debated, so this verse cannot independently establish when Revelation was written.

Nevertheless, it demonstrates the apostolic understanding that dangerous false teaching was a present reality.

Consequently, the presence of the Nicolaitans does not require a date towards the end of the first century.

The church faced doctrinal corruption from its earliest years.

14. Does the Condition of the Seven Churches Require Several Decades?

We are now able to consider one of the principal arguments advanced for the late date.

Some scholars maintain that the seven churches appear too established, spiritually developed, and troubled by internal corruption to have existed for only a relatively short period.

Colin J. Hemer, in The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting, argues that details of the churches' historical circumstances favour the traditional later date.

His study deserves serious consideration because it examines the local settings of the individual congregations rather than relying solely upon the testimony of Irenaeus.

Nevertheless, we must distinguish historical probability from necessity.

The New Testament provides ample evidence that churches could develop serious difficulties within a few years.

The Galatians departed rapidly from the gospel. The Corinthians experienced divisions and moral corruption. False teachers troubled the churches during Paul's lifetime.

Spiritual complacency, persecution, and doctrinal confusion were all present before the end of the apostolic age.

Therefore, the conditions described in Revelation 2 and 3 cannot be used to establish that several decades must have passed.

The late date remains possible, but it is not demanded by the spiritual condition of the churches.

Likewise, an early date is possible, but it is not established simply because the difficulties resemble those encountered by Paul.

The most that can be safely concluded is that the evidence from the seven churches is compatible with the historical circumstances of the AD 60s.

15. The Churches and the Approaching Judgment

There is one further consideration that deserves attention. The messages to the churches are not merely descriptions of their existing circumstances.

They contain warnings of approaching events. Christ tells Ephesus:

> *"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."*
>
> — Revelation 2:5, KJV

He warns Pergamos:

> *"Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."*
>
> — Revelation 2:16, KJV

He tells Philadelphia:

> *"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."*
>
> — Revelation 3:11, KJV

These declarations are important because they are addressed directly to existing congregations.

Christ warns them to repent, persevere, and remain faithful in view of his approaching intervention.

We must not automatically assume that every reference to Christ coming describes the same event.

Some warnings clearly concern judgment upon a particular congregation.

Others may relate to wider prophetic events. Nevertheless, the repeated language of nearness is unmistakable

The churches were expected to take these warnings seriously during their own lifetime.

This raises an important question for any interpretation that places the fulfilment of Revelation's principal warnings many centuries beyond its original recipients.

How were those Christians expected to understand the declarations that Christ was coming quickly?

An early-date interpretation can answer that the warnings belonged to the circumstances of the first century, culminating in events associated with the judgment of Jerusalem and the vindication of Christ's people.

However, that conclusion must be established through the wider prophetic context.

The seven churches alone do not prove that Christ's coming in these passages refers to AD 70.

They do demonstrate that the language of imminence formed an essential part of the original message.

This will be particularly important when we examine the opening and closing declarations of Revelation.

16. Weighing the Evidence

We may now summarise the principal historical considerations.

Evidence	What it establishes
The ministry of Paul in Asia	Christianity was already widely established in the province during the AD 50s.
False apostles at Ephesus	Such opposition was already known during Paul's ministry.
Spiritual decline	Serious difficulties could arise rapidly and did not require several generations.
Opposition from particular synagogues	Consistent with first-century religious conflicts, but not limited to the years before AD 70.
Martyrdom at Pergamos	Shows persecution had occurred, but does not identify an emperor.
The earthquake at Laodicea	Does not prove that a wealthy church was impossible during the AD 60s.
Christ's promises and warnings	Were addressed to actual congregations and contain repeated language of imminence.

These observations are important because they answer several arguments commonly advanced against an early date.

They demonstrate that the churches could have experienced the conditions described during the reign of Nero.

But none of these details independently identifies the exact year in which Revelation was composed.

Therefore, the evidence must be understood as part of the cumulative argument developed in the preceding chapters.

Revelation 11 may describe Jerusalem before its destruction. Revelation 17 may identify Nero as the reigning sixth king. Revelation 13 may identify Nero through the numerical value of his name.

The messages to the seven churches are compatible with that same historical period.

The significance lies in the agreement between these possible indications.

17. Conclusion: The Seven Churches and the Early Date

The condition of the seven churches does not require Revelation to have been written towards the end of Domitian's reign.

False teaching, persecution, apostasy, and spiritual decline were already present within the Christian Church during the apostolic period.

The New Testament provides clear testimony to these difficulties. Moreover, the earthquake at Laodicea does not establish that the church could not have possessed wealth during the AD 60s.

Tacitus's account of the city's recovery demonstrates that Laodicea possessed substantial resources.

The existence of the seven churches, their spiritual condition, and their immediate concerns are therefore consistent with an early date.

Nevertheless, we should not claim more than the evidence establishes.

The messages do not expressly identify Nero. Nor do they provide an independent chronological statement establishing that Revelation was written before AD 70.

Their principal contribution is to demonstrate that the late date cannot be established simply by appealing to the maturity or spiritual decline of the churches.

The evidence remains compatible with the apostolic period. This supports the broader argument for a pre-AD 70 composition when considered alongside the Temple, the seven kings, and the number of the beast.

But perhaps the most important feature of these messages is their repeated declaration that Christ was coming quickly.

This language was addressed to living congregations. It called them to repentance, faithfulness, and perseverance in the face of approaching events.

The natural significance of these warnings becomes especially important when we consider the opening and closing statements of Revelation.

John begins by announcing that the things revealed must shortly come to pass.

He concludes with the command not to seal the prophecy because the time is at hand.

The repeated declarations of nearness may therefore provide some of the most important evidence for understanding Revelation within the historical circumstances of its original first-century readers.

That is the subject of our next chapter.

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7. The Holy Bible, King James Version (KJV). Principal passages examined in this chapter include Acts 19:10; 20:29–30; Galatians 1:6; 1 Corinthians 11:13; 2 Corinthians 11:13; Colossians 4:13–16; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 2:2, 2:4–6, 2:9–10, 2:13, 2:16, 2:20; and 3:1, 3:10–11, 3:17.

Chapter 9 — The Time Was at Hand — The Language of Imminence in Revelation

Were the Events Revealed to John Expected to Take Place Within the Lifetime of His First Readers?

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, we examined the historical circumstances surrounding the Book of Revelation and the evidence that may help establish when it was written.

We considered the Temple and holy city in Revelation 11, the

seven kings in Revelation 17, the number of the beast in Revelation 13, and the condition of the seven churches of Asia.

Each of these subjects provides evidence that must be considered when determining whether Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 or during the reign of Domitian, approximately twenty-five years later.

We must now turn to one of the most important features of the book itself.

From its opening verses to its closing chapter, Revelation repeatedly declares that the events revealed to John were near at hand.

The book begins by announcing that certain things must shortly come to pass.

It tells the first readers that the time is at hand. Christ repeatedly declares that he is coming quickly. Finally, John is specifically instructed not to seal the words of the prophecy because the time is near.

These statements deserve careful attention. They are not incidental remarks inserted into the book without significance. They appear at its beginning, throughout its messages, and again at its conclusion.

They form an important part of the way Revelation presents its prophetic message.

Yet Christians have interpreted these statements in very different ways.

Some understand them to mean that the principal events of Revelation were expected to occur within a comparatively short period after the book was written.

Others believe that they refer to events which could begin at any moment, although their fulfilment might remain distant.

Still others maintain that Christ will act swiftly whenever the appointed time arrives, regardless of how many centuries have passed before that time.

Our purpose is to examine these explanations in the light of Scripture and the original Greek.

We must distinguish between what the words ordinarily mean, how they are used elsewhere in the New Testament, and what they

establish concerning the fulfilment of Revelation.

In particular, we shall ask whether the repeated declarations of nearness are more naturally understood in relation to the firstcentury recipients of the prophecy.

This question has considerable importance for our investigation.

If Revelation was written before AD 70, the approaching destruction of Jerusalem provides a recognisable historical setting for its repeated warnings of imminent judgment.

If it was written around AD 95–96, that particular event had already occurred.

The question of what John meant by “shortly” and “at hand” therefore bears directly upon our understanding of the date and purpose of the book.

1. The Opening Declaration: Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass

The Book of Revelation begins:

> *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John."*
>
> — Revelation 1:1, KJV

Before John describes the seven churches, the heavenly throne, the seals, the trumpets, or the beast, he announces that the revelation concerns things which must shortly come to pass.

This statement provides an important introduction to the whole book.

The prophecy is not presented merely as a collection of mysterious symbols.

It concerns events that God has determined to bring about. Moreover, the reader is told something about their expected timing.

The English expression "shortly come to pass" deserves examination.

Does it mean that the events would occur soon after John received the vision?

Or does it mean only that they would happen rapidly whenever their fulfilment eventually began?

The answer requires us to consider the original Greek.

2. The Meaning of the Greek Expression En Tachei

The Greek expression translated "shortly" in Revelation 1:1 is en tachei (ἐν τάχει). It can convey the ideas of speed, promptness, or something taking place soon. The expression is related to the Greek noun tachos, meaning speed or swiftness.

It can describe an action performed quickly. It can also indicate that something will happen soon. The surrounding context helps determine the intended meaning. For example, when a person is told to perform an action en tachei, the expression commonly conveys urgency.

It may indicate that the action should be undertaken promptly rather than postponed.

The same expression appears elsewhere in the New Testament. In Acts 12:7, the angel told Peter:

> *"Arise up quickly."*
>
> — Acts 12:7, KJV

The instruction concerned an action Peter was to perform immediately.

In Acts 22:18, Paul recounts the Lord's instruction:

> *"Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me."*
>
> — Acts 22:18, KJV

Again, the expression conveyed urgency. Paul was not being told that he would eventually leave Jerusalem rapidly after an indefinite period of waiting.

He was instructed to depart without delay. These examples illustrate why the ordinary understanding of en tachei in Revelation 1:1 deserves serious consideration.

John's statement naturally suggests that the predicted events were expected to begin within a comparatively short period.

Nevertheless, the expression can also emphasise speed of action. It would therefore be too strong to claim that the Greek word alone makes every other interpretation grammatically impossible.

The important question is whether the wider context of Revelation supports the meaning of temporal nearness.

As we shall see, the book repeatedly supplies additional expressions which reinforce that understanding.

3. The Difference Between Soon and Suddenly

An important distinction must be made between two ideas. The first concerns when an event will happen. The second concerns how rapidly it will happen once it begins. These are not necessarily the same thing. Suppose a king announces that he will shortly visit a city. The ordinary expectation is that his visit will take place in the near future.

But suppose he announces that, whenever he eventually visits, his arrival will be sudden.

That statement concerns the manner of his arrival rather than the length of time before it occurs.

Some interpreters maintain that the language of Revelation should be understood in this second sense.

They argue that Christ is not promising to come soon but declaring that his coming will be swift whenever it occurs.

There are passages in Scripture where suddenness is certainly important.

Jesus warned that judgment could overtake the unprepared like a thief.

But suddenness and nearness are not identical. A warning that an event will come unexpectedly does not necessarily mean that it is near.

Conversely, a declaration that the time is near communicates more than the manner in which an event will eventually occur.

This distinction becomes particularly important because Revelation contains both kinds of language.

Christ warns that he will come as a thief. But John also declares that the time is at hand. Therefore, we must not assume that every statement concerning Christ coming quickly means only that his coming will be sudden.

The interpretation must account for the repeated declarations of temporal nearness.

4. The Time Is at Hand — Revelation 1:3

John continues:

> *"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."*
>
> — Revelation 1:3, KJV

This verse is particularly important because it connects the urgency of the prophecy with the duty of its original recipients.

Those who read, hear, and keep the words of Revelation are pronounced blessed.

The reason given is that the time is at hand. The Greek expression is ho gar kairos engys (ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς), meaning "for the time is near." The important word is engys, meaning near or close. The noun kairos refers to a time, season, or appointed occasion. Taken together, these words indicate that the appointed time is near. The statement does not merely declare that God has appointed a future time; it tells the original readers something about their relationship to that time. This is significant because the declaration was addressed to the churches that were to receive and hear the prophecy.The blessing is not restricted to an unidentified generation living thousands of years later.

The book was intended to be read aloud among the original congregations.

Those who heard it were instructed to obey its warnings. John's explanation that the time was near would naturally have encouraged them to regard its message as immediately relevant.

This does not prove that every vision must have been fulfilled within a few years.

But it does establish that nearness formed part of the message

communicated to the original readers.

Any interpretation of Revelation must explain why this language was used.

5. The Meaning of Engys Elsewhere in Scripture

We can better understand the expression "at hand" by examining its use elsewhere in the New Testament.

In Matthew 26:46, Jesus said:

> *"Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."*

— Matthew 26:46, KJV The betrayer was not thousands of years away. Judas was approaching. The expression indicated immediate proximity. In Matthew 24:33, Jesus declared:

> *"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."*

— Matthew 24:33, KJV The expression conveys the nearness of an approaching event. James uses similar language:

> *"Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."*

— James 5:8, KJV He continues:

> *"Behold, the judge standeth before the door."*

— James 5:9, KJV These statements communicate urgency. The readers are encouraged to remain faithful because the anticipated intervention of the Lord is near.

The same general idea appears in Revelation 1:3. The natural meaning of the language is not that the appointed time is necessarily separated from the readers by an indefinite period.

It is that the appointed time has drawn near. Of course, the context must determine precisely which event is approaching.

The word engys does not itself identify the destruction of Jerusalem.

But its ordinary meaning supports the understanding that John was announcing events of immediate significance to his first-century readers.

6. The Promise of Christ's Coming Quickly

The language of nearness is not confined to the opening verses. Christ repeatedly tells the churches that he will come quickly. To the church at Pergamos he declares:

> *"Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."*
>
> — Revelation 2:16, KJV

To Philadelphia he says:

> *"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."*
>
> — Revelation 3:11, KJV

Similar declarations occur in the closing chapter. The important Greek word is tachy (ταχύ), meaning quickly or speedily. In context, it may communicate either prompt arrival or swiftness of action.

The repeated use of this word presents an interpretative question. If Christ was warning Pergamos of approaching judgment unless the congregation repented, it would be natural to understand his coming as a judgment relevant to that congregation.

The warning would lose much of its immediate force if it concerned only an event thousands of years beyond the lives of its members.

However, we must distinguish between Christ coming in judgment upon a particular church and his coming in the wider prophetic visions.

Revelation does not necessarily use every reference to Christ's coming in precisely the same sense.

For example, Christ's threat to remove the candlestick of Ephesus concerns the standing of that particular congregation.

It need not describe the same event as the coming of Christ with the clouds in Revelation 1:7.

This is an important distinction. Our argument for the early date should not depend upon assuming that every occurrence of the word "come" refers directly to Jerusalem's destruction.

Instead, we should observe that the warnings repeatedly present Christ as ready to act within circumstances affecting his original readers.

The language therefore establishes an atmosphere of urgency throughout the book.

That urgency becomes especially significant when it is combined with the broader declarations that the time was at hand.

7. The Opening and Closing Statements Agree

An important feature of Revelation is that its beginning and conclusion employ substantially the same language.

At the beginning John writes:

> *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass."*
>
> — Revelation 1:1, KJV

At the conclusion he records:

> *"And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done."*
>
> — Revelation 22:6, KJV

The similarity is unmistakable. Both passages refer to God revealing things to his servants. Both employ the expression en tachei. Both present the predicted events as things which must take place.

This deliberate correspondence is important because it frames the whole prophecy.

The statement concerning nearness is not an isolated observation at the beginning which may be forgotten during the unfolding visions.

It is deliberately repeated at the end. The reader therefore encounters the same expectation upon finishing the book as upon beginning it.

In between, John describes judgments, persecution, the beast, Babylon, the defeat of God's enemies, and the establishment of the new heaven and new earth.

The concluding words return to the original declaration that the events must shortly take place.

This gives the language of imminence particular weight. Nevertheless, one question requires care. Does the statement mean that every single event described in Revelation must be completed within the same short period?

The wording naturally gives the whole book an atmosphere of nearness, but it does not separately specify the timetable of every vision.

It is therefore possible to argue that the fulfilment of the principal prophetic events was near without assuming that every symbolic detail must refer exclusively to AD 70.

This distinction is important for a careful defence of the early date.

The language may strongly support near fulfilment, but the scope of that fulfilment must still be established by interpreting the individual passages.

8. The Threefold Declaration in Revelation 22

The closing chapter contains three particularly important declarations.

Christ says:

> *"Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."*
>
> — Revelation 22:7, KJV

A few verses later he declares:

> *"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."*
>
> — Revelation 22:12, KJV

Finally, John records:

> *"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."*
>
> — Revelation 22:20, KJV

The repetition deserves emphasis. Three times in the closing chapter Christ announces that he is coming quickly.

The first declaration is connected with obedience to the prophecy. The second is connected with judgment and reward. The third forms the concluding promise to which John responds with prayer.

The language appears deliberately emphatic. The prophecy is not presented as a matter about which the original readers could remain indifferent.

They are called to obedience in view of Christ's approaching intervention.

But what coming is intended? There are several possibilities. Some understand these verses as referring exclusively to Christ's final coming at the end of human history.

Others understand them as referring to his judicial coming against Jerusalem in AD 70.

Still others believe that the language includes a near historical fulfilment while pointing towards a wider final consummation.

Our present concern is not to settle every aspect of that theological question.

It is to determine how the language bears upon the date of Revelation.

If the principal coming described in the book refers to the judgment of Jerusalem, the repeated expression "I come quickly" strongly supports a date before AD 70.

If, however, the coming refers exclusively to an event still future, the meaning of "quickly" requires another explanation.

The text itself places considerable weight upon the expectation of nearness.

Any interpretation must do justice to that emphasis.

9. The Relationship Between Revelation and the Prophecy of Daniel

We now come to one of the most important comparisons in the whole investigation.

The prophet Daniel received visions concerning kingdoms, persecution, judgment, and the deliverance of God's people.

However, Daniel was instructed to seal his prophecy.

He was told:

> *"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."*
>
> — Daniel 12:4, KJV

Later he was told:

> *"Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end."*
>
> — Daniel 12:9, KJV

The command is significant. Daniel received a revelation concerning events that were not yet ready to be fully disclosed or understood.

The prophecy was to be preserved until the appointed time. The expression "the time of the end" must be understood within Daniel's own prophetic context.

It does not, merely by its wording, necessarily mean the end of the physical universe.

A period, kingdom, or established order may reach its appointed end without the conclusion of all human history.

Nevertheless, the identification of the particular end intended in Daniel must be established from the surrounding prophecy.

The important point for our present investigation is the command to seal the book.

John receives the opposite instruction.

10. John Is Commanded Not to Seal His Prophecy

At the end of Revelation, the angel tells John:

> *"And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand."*
>
> — Revelation 22:10, KJV

The contrast with Daniel is striking. Daniel was told to seal the book until the time of the end. John was told not to seal his prophecy because the time was at hand.

The difference is not merely that the two prophets received different administrative instructions.

The reason supplied to John concerns time.

The appointed time was near. This contrast has long been recognised by biblical commentators, including those who do not accept the early date of Revelation.

We may set the two commands side by side.

Daniel 12:4, 9	**Revelation 22:10**
Seal the book	Seal not the prophecy
Preserved until the time of the end	The time is at hand

This comparison presents a strong argument for the significance of nearness in Revelation.

John's prophecy was not to be withheld until a remote future generation.

It was to be communicated to the churches. They were to read it, hear it, and obey it. And the reason given was that the time had drawn near. For those defending a pre-AD 70 date, this comparison possesses particular importance.

If Daniel's prophecy concerned the closing of the old covenant order and the judgment of Jerusalem, John's instruction could indicate that the time for those events had finally approached.

However, this conclusion depends upon establishing that Daniel and Revelation are describing the same appointed judgment.

The contrast between the commands strongly supports the nearness of John's prophecy.

It does not, by itself, prove that Daniel's entire prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70.

That broader question requires a separate examination of Daniel's visions and their relationship to Revelation.

11. Is Revelation the Opening of Daniel's Sealed Book?

One interpretation proposes that Revelation represents the opening of the book Daniel was commanded to seal. This suggestion deserves careful examination in view of the connections between the two prophetic books.

This interpretation deserves serious attention because Revelation contains numerous allusions to Daniel.

The beasts of Revelation recall those described in Daniel 7. The periods of forty-two months and 1,260 days correspond with the three and a half times mentioned in Daniel.

The language of kingdoms, judgment, and divine dominion also reflects Daniel's prophetic visions.

These connections demonstrate a substantial literary and theological relationship between the two books.

Moreover, Revelation 5 describes a sealed book which only the Lamb is worthy to open.

John writes:

> *"And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals."*
>
> — Revelation 5:1, KJV

The question arises whether this sealed book represents the prophecy given to Daniel.

The resemblance is suggestive. Daniel received a revelation that was to remain sealed until the appointed time.

John sees a sealed book opened by the Lamb. The connection is attractive because Christ is the one through whom God's purposes are revealed and accomplished.

Nevertheless, we must distinguish a literary connection from an explicit identification.

Revelation 5 does not state that the sealed book is the physical or symbolic book Daniel had previously sealed.

Furthermore, Revelation contains another command concerning sealing.

In Revelation 10:4, John hears the seven thunders but is commanded:

> *"Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not."*
>
> — Revelation 10:4, KJV

This demonstrates that sealing can serve different purposes within the same prophetic book.

Consequently, we should not argue that every sealed book in Scripture must refer to the same document.

A more defensible conclusion is that Revelation deliberately draws upon Daniel's prophetic language and presents the unfolding fulfilment of God's purposes through Jesus Christ.

The opposite commands concerning sealing provide strong evidence that the time perspectives of the two revelations are being contrasted.

Whether the scroll in Revelation 5 is specifically Daniel's sealed book remains an interpretative proposal rather than an established fact.

This distinction will strengthen our argument by preventing a possible parallel from being presented as an express biblical statement.

12. The Time of the End and the End of Time

There is another distinction in Daniel which deserves examination. Daniel was told to seal his book until "the time of the end." This expression is sometimes understood as referring to the end of the physical world and the conclusion of human history.

However, the language itself does not necessarily require that meaning.

The end of a particular age, kingdom, or divinely appointed order may be described as an end.

For example, Jesus spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem and the passing of the generation that had rejected him.

Matthew records:

> *"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."*
>
> — Matthew 24:34, KJV

The preceding discourse began with the prediction that the Temple would be destroyed.

The disciples asked:

> *"Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"*
>
> — Matthew 24:3, KJV

The Greek expression translated "the end of the world" uses the noun aiōn, meaning an age.

Consequently, the words may be rendered "the end of the age."

This does not by itself establish which age is intended or prove that every event in Matthew 24 was fulfilled in AD 70.

Nevertheless, it demonstrates that the English word "world" should not automatically be understood as the physical universe.

The distinction is particularly relevant to the early-date interpretation.

The destruction of Jerusalem marked the historical termination of the Temple's sacrificial service.

It also brought judgment upon the city and nation which had rejected Christ.

From this perspective, AD 70 was an event of profound covenantal significance.

The old covenant sacrifices had already been rendered unnecessary by Christ's perfect offering.

Their historical cessation followed with the destruction of the Temple.

The writer to the Hebrews declared:

> *"Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."*
>
> — Hebrews 8:13, KJV

The language is significant. The writer describes the old covenant order as obsolete and approaching disappearance.

If Hebrews was written before AD 70, as many interpreters maintain, the destruction of the Temple provides a recognisable historical context for this declaration.

However, the date of Hebrews is itself debated, and the phrase does not expressly predict the destruction of the Temple.

We must therefore avoid treating this verse as an independent proof.

Nevertheless, the theological relationship between Christ's completed sacrifice and the ending of the Temple system is clear.

This provides an important framework for understanding how the language of an approaching end might relate to events occurring within the first century.

13. Christ's Prophecy Concerning His Own Generation

The language of nearness in Revelation should also be compared with the teaching of Jesus concerning Jerusalem.

In Matthew 23, Christ declared:

> *"Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."*
>
> — Matthew 23:36, KJV

The following chapter contains his prediction of the Temple's destruction.

Luke records the same historical warning with particular clarity. Jesus declared:

> *"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh."*
>
> — Luke 21:20, KJV

He then warned the inhabitants of Judea to flee. The prophecy concerned circumstances in which his hearers, or members of their generation, might recognise the approaching danger.

He continued:

> *"For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."*
>
> — Luke 21:22, KJV

And later:

> *"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled."*
>
> — Luke 21:32, KJV

These declarations deserve particular attention. The destruction of Jerusalem occurred in AD 70, within approximately forty years of Christ's earthly ministry.

The prediction concerning Jerusalem and the Temple therefore possesses an identifiable historical fulfilment within the first century.

If Revelation concerns the same judgment, its repeated language of nearness would naturally correspond with Christ's earlier warnings.

The argument is cumulative. Christ foretold judgment upon Jerusalem within that generation. John described a holy city being trodden underfoot by the Gentiles.

Revelation repeatedly declared that the appointed time was near. These statements may therefore be understood as relating to the same historical crisis.

However, it is important not to assume the conclusion. The connection between Revelation and Jerusalem must be established through the evidence examined in Chapters 5–7 and through the further prophetic comparisons that will follow.

Once that identification has been made, the time statements provide powerful support for an early date.

14. The Coming of the Son of Man Before Some Would Die

Another important passage appears in Matthew 16. Jesus declared:

> *"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.*
>
> *Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."*
>
> — Matthew 16:27–28, KJV

The proximity of these statements has long raised questions concerning their fulfilment.

Jesus speaks of the Son of Man coming in glory and rewarding each person according to his works.

He then declares that some of those standing before him would not die before seeing the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Advocates of the early fulfilment interpretation connect these words with the judicial coming of Christ against Jerusalem in AD 70.

Their argument is that Jesus expressly placed the promised coming within the lifetime of at least some of his original hearers.

The destruction of Jerusalem occurred within that period. However, other interpreters understand verse 28 as referring to the Transfiguration, which is recorded immediately afterwards in the Synoptic Gospels.

Others connect it with Christ's resurrection, ascension, or the establishment and manifestation of his kingdom.

These alternatives must be acknowledged. The relationship between verses 27 and 28 is important, but it remains disputed.

Nevertheless, the passage establishes that Jesus spoke of a manifestation of his kingdom which some of his hearers would live to see.

This is relevant to the wider question of whether every reference to Christ's coming must describe one final event at the end of human history.

Biblical language concerning divine coming and judgment may have more than one historical application.

The identification of each occurrence must be determined by its context.

15. The Coming of Christ in Judgment

The Old Testament frequently describes God as coming in judgment against nations.

These descriptions sometimes employ the language of clouds, darkness, and cosmic upheaval.

For example, Isaiah prophesied concerning Egypt:

> *"Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it."*
>
> — Isaiah 19:1, KJV

The prophecy describes the Lord coming against Egypt in judgment.

It does not require the conclusion that God physically descended upon Egypt in a visible bodily form.

The language communicates divine intervention through historical events.

This provides an important biblical precedent. When Revelation speaks of Christ coming, the interpreter must consider whether the language describes a historical act of judgment, the final personal appearing of Christ, or another manifestation of his authority.

We should not assume that every divine coming described in Scripture is identical in manner and purpose.

At the same time, we must not use the existence of figurative judgment language to deny the reality of Christ's future appearing where Scripture teaches it.

The question is what each passage actually describes. The early-date interpretation maintains that many of Revelation's warnings concern Christ's judicial intervention against Jerusalem and the old covenant order.

If this is correct, the repeated statements that he was coming quickly would possess a natural historical fulfilment within the first century.

The question becomes especially important in Revelation 1:7, where Christ is described as coming with clouds and being seen by those who pierced him.

We shall examine that passage in greater detail in a later chapter. For the present, the Old Testament background establishes that coming language can refer to divine judgment within history.

This makes the early fulfilment interpretation biblically possible.

16. Can a Thousand Years Be as One Day?

A common objection to the early fulfilment interpretation appeals to the apostle Peter.

He writes:

> *"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."*
>
> — 2 Peter 3:8, KJV

Some interpreters appeal to this verse to explain how the prophecies of Revelation can describe events as near even if their fulfilment remains thousands of years away.

The argument is that God's understanding of time differs from ours.

This is certainly true. God is eternal, and his purposes are not limited by human expectations.

Peter's words, drawing upon Psalm 90:4, remind believers that the Lord does not measure time as human beings do.

However, we must consider how this principle should be applied. The statement does not mean that every biblical reference to a day, year, or approaching event should be interpreted according to a scale in which one day literally represents a thousand years.

Nor does it establish that the word "near" always means something different when used in prophecy.

Peter's purpose is to explain God's patience and faithfulness in the face of those who question his promises.

He continues:

> *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."*
>
> — 2 Peter 3:9, KJV

The passage therefore concerns God's patience rather than supplying a universal rule for redefining time expressions.

This distinction is important. When a biblical writer tells his readers that an event is near, we must first understand the statement according to its ordinary meaning and literary context.

If the surrounding passage provides reason to understand the expression differently, that reason should be examined.

But 2 Peter 3:8 should not automatically be used to remove the ordinary force of every declaration of nearness.

Otherwise, terms such as "shortly" and "at hand" would cease to provide meaningful chronological information.

The early-date interpretation therefore raises a legitimate question.

If Revelation was written for first-century churches and repeatedly told them that the time was near, what reason does the text provide for postponing its principal fulfilment for thousands of years?

This question cannot be answered merely by appealing to the difference between divine and human time.

The interpretation must be established from Revelation itself. 17.

Does Nearness Require the Fulfilment of Every Vision by AD 70?

We must now address an important question for the credibility of our argument.

If Revelation repeatedly declares that its events are near, does this mean that every event described in the book must have been completed by AD 70?

Some advocates of a full preterist interpretation answer yes. Others maintain that most of Revelation concerns the first century while recognising that particular passages may look beyond the destruction of Jerusalem.

Our immediate investigation concerns the date of Revelation, not the resolution of every question in Christian eschatology.

These two matters are closely connected, but they should not be confused.

The language of nearness may provide evidence that John expected the principal events of his prophecy to begin soon.

It does not automatically establish the exact fulfilment of every vision.

The resurrection, the final judgment, and the new heaven and new earth raise substantial theological and exegetical questions which require separate investigation.

It would be unwise to settle those questions merely by appealing to the words "shortly" or "at hand."

Nevertheless, the language of nearness cannot be disregarded. The proper method is to consider the time statements alongside the subject matter of the individual visions.

If the Temple and holy city refer to Jerusalem, the seven kings to the Roman emperors, and the beast's number to Nero Caesar, the repeated declarations of imminence become especially significant.

They would reinforce a historical interpretation already supported by other passages.

This is stronger than making the date of Revelation depend entirely upon one word or phrase.

The argument is cumulative and contextual.

18. Could Revelation Have Been Written in AD 95 and Still Describe Near Events?

We must now consider the implications for the traditional late date.

Suppose Revelation was written around AD 95–96. What events could John have been describing as near? Some late-date interpreters connect the prophecy with persecution and political circumstances during the closing years of Domitian's reign.

Others maintain that it concerns the continuing conflict between the Church and Roman imperial power.

These explanations can give the language of urgency a genuine first-century application.

Therefore, the presence of imminence language does not automatically refute the late date.

However, an additional difficulty arises if Revelation's principal historical subject is identified with Jerusalem's destruction.

By AD 95–96, that destruction had already occurred approximately twenty-five years earlier.

Consequently, if the Temple and holy city of Revelation 11 refer to the Jerusalem that fell in AD 70, the late date must explain why the event is represented within the book's prophetic sequence as approaching.

Several explanations are possible. The passage could be a retrospective vision. It could incorporate an earlier prophecy. Or the language could be symbolic rather than referring directly to AD 70.

These are possible interpretations, but each requires supporting evidence.

By contrast, if Revelation was written during Nero's reign, the approaching judgment of Jerusalem would provide a direct historical referent.

The readers could understand the warnings as concerning events unfolding within their own generation.

The time statements would then retain their ordinary sense. This is one of the principal advantages of the early-date interpretation.

It allows the historical setting, prophetic language, and original audience to be understood together.

Nevertheless, the early date must still be established through the combined evidence rather than asserted solely from the time statements.

19. The Cumulative Evidence of Nearness

We may now bring together the principal expressions examined in this chapter.

Scripture	KJV expression	Principal significance
Revelation 1:1	"Shortly come to pass"	Introduces the prophecy with an expectation of prompt fulfilment
Revelation 1:3	"The time is at hand"	Connects the nearness of the appointed time with the original readers
Revelation 2:16	"I will come unto thee quickly"	Warns Pergamos of approaching judgment
Revelation 3:11	"Behold, I come quickly"	Encourages Philadelphia to remain faithful
Revelation 22:6	"Must shortly be done"	Repeats the opening declaration
Revelation 22:7	"Behold, I come quickly"	Connects the promised coming with obedience
Revelation 22:10	"Seal not ... for the time is at hand"	Contrasts with Daniel's sealed prophecy
Revelation 22:12	"I come quickly"	Connects Christ's coming with reward and judgment
Revelation 22:20	"Surely I come quickly"	Concludes the prophetic testimony

The importance of these statements lies in their repetition and position within the book.

They are not confined to one passage. They appear at the beginning, in the messages to the churches, and at the end.

They employ different but related expressions conveying speed, urgency, and nearness.

The original readers were repeatedly told that the prophecy concerned events of approaching significance.

This creates a strong presumption that the book's principal historical warnings should be examined in relation to the period in which those readers lived.

That presumption can be challenged by contextual evidence, but it should not simply be set aside.

20. Conclusion: The Time Was at Hand

The repeated declarations of nearness in Revelation provide a substantial argument for understanding the book within the historical circumstances of its original first-century readers.

The expression en tachei, translated "shortly," naturally conveys promptness or speed.

The word engys, translated "at hand," declares that the appointed time is near.

The repeated promise "I come quickly" gives urgency to the warnings and encouragements addressed to the churches.

Most importantly, Revelation begins and ends with the declaration that the revealed events must shortly take place.

The command not to seal the prophecy because the time is at hand provides a striking contrast with Daniel, who was commanded to seal his book until the appointed time of the end.

These considerations support the conclusion that nearness is an essential feature of Revelation's prophetic message.

They also create a difficulty for interpretations which assign the principal fulfilment of the book exclusively to events many centuries beyond its original readers.

Nevertheless, the language does not independently establish the year in which Revelation was written.

A late-date prophecy could also announce events expected to occur soon after AD 95.

The argument becomes specifically relevant to AD 70 when the subject matter of Revelation is connected with the destruction of Jerusalem.

We have already examined several possible connections. The Temple and holy city in Revelation 11 correspond with the historical setting of Jerusalem.

The seven kings in Revelation 17 can be understood as the succession of Roman emperors, with Nero as the sixth.

The number 666, together with the alternative reading 616, provides a plausible identification of Nero Caesar.

The circumstances of the seven churches are compatible with the apostolic period.

When these considerations are brought together, the repeated declarations of nearness strengthen the argument for a date before AD 70.

The early-date interpretation offers a coherent explanation of why John was commanded to write to existing congregations concerning events described as shortly approaching.

It places the prophecy within the period when the old covenant Temple still stood, when Roman imperial power was exercising authority over Judea, and when the judgment foretold by Jesus was approaching.

We may therefore state our conclusion carefully: If the principal historical judgments of Revelation concern Jerusalem and the Roman Empire during the years leading to AD 70, the book's repeated declarations that the time was at hand provide powerful support for its composition before those events occurred.

This conclusion does not rest upon assigning an artificial meaning to the Greek words.

It arises from their ordinary sense, their repeated use, their relationship to the original readers, and their correspondence with the historical setting examined in the preceding chapters.

The language of Revelation is not merely that God will act at some unspecified point in the distant future.

It announces that the appointed time has drawn near. This is an important consideration which any proposed date for Revelation must explain.

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8. 2 Peter 3:8–9; Psalm 90:4. Passages concerning God's relationship to time and the exercise of his patience.

9. Isaiah 19:1. An Old Testament example of divine coming language used in a prophecy of national judgment.

Chapter 10 — Daniel's Sealed Book and John's Open Revelation

Does the Book of Revelation Announce the Approaching Fulfilment of Daniel's Prophecies Concerning Israel, Jerusalem, and the Time of the End?

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, we examined the repeated declarations in Revelation that the events revealed to John were near at hand.

We considered the meaning of the Greek expressions translated "shortly," "at hand," and "quickly." We also observed that Revelation begins and ends with the announcement that the things revealed must shortly come to pass.

These declarations are particularly important because they were addressed to Christians living in the first century.

The prophecy was given to the seven churches of Asia, and its warnings were intended to be heard, understood, and obeyed by those congregations.

We now turn to one of the most important connections between Revelation and the Old Testament.

The Book of Daniel contains prophecies concerning kingdoms, persecution, the sanctuary, Jerusalem, the suffering of God's people, and the time of the end.

Many of these subjects appear again in Revelation. Indeed, the similarities are so numerous that Revelation cannot be properly understood without considering Daniel.

Yet there is a remarkable difference between the instructions given to the two prophets.

Daniel was commanded to seal his prophecy because its fulfilment belonged to an appointed future time.

John was commanded not to seal his prophecy because the time was at hand.

This contrast lies at the centre of our investigation. If Daniel's prophecy concerned events that were distant from his own time, while John's prophecy concerned events that had drawn near, we must ask whether John was announcing the approaching fulfilment of what Daniel had foretold.

The question becomes especially important when we consider the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Daniel foretold the destruction of a city and sanctuary. Jesus foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple within the lifetime of his own generation.

John described a Temple, a holy city given over to the Gentiles, and a period of persecution and judgment.

Do these passages concern the same historical events? And if they do, what do they tell us about the date of Revelation? Our purpose is to examine the biblical evidence carefully, distinguishing what Scripture expressly states from the conclusions that may reasonably be drawn from it.

1. Daniel Was Commanded to Seal His Prophecy

Near the conclusion of Daniel's prophecy, the angel gives him this command:

> *"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."*
>
> — Daniel 12:4, KJV

The command is repeated a few verses later:

> *"And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end."*
>
> — Daniel 12:9, KJV

These statements deserve careful examination. Daniel had received visions concerning events that he did not fully understand.

He had seen kingdoms rising and falling, a persecuting power opposing the saints, and a period of extraordinary trouble.

He had also received promises concerning the deliverance of God's people.

Yet the full significance of these visions remained beyond his immediate understanding.

Daniel himself acknowledges this:

> *"And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?"*
>
> — Daniel 12:8, KJV

Daniel therefore knew that the prophecy concerned future events, but he did not fully understand their timing or manner of fulfilment.

The instruction to seal the book did not mean that its words were to be destroyed or permanently concealed.

Rather, the prophecy was to be preserved for the appointed time. Its full significance would become clearer as God's purposes unfolded.

This understanding is consistent with the character of biblical prophecy.

God sometimes reveals events long before their fulfilment, preserving the revelation as testimony to his knowledge and sovereign government of history.

The important point is that Daniel was told to seal the prophecy until the time of the end.

We must therefore ask what this expression means.

2. What Did Daniel Mean by the Time of the End?

The expression "the time of the end" appears several times in Daniel.

It is important to distinguish this expression from the idea of the end of physical time itself.

A kingdom may come to its end. A period of history may reach its appointed conclusion. A particular system of government or worship may cease. Such events can properly be described as an end without implying the immediate destruction of the physical universe.

However, the expression does not automatically mean the end of the old covenant age either.

Its meaning must be established from Daniel's own prophecy. In Daniel 12, the prophet is told:

> *"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."*
>
> — Daniel 12:1, KJV

The words "thy people" are particularly important. Throughout Daniel's prophecy, the expression naturally directs attention towards the people of Israel.

This is reinforced by the earlier explanation in Daniel 10:14:

> *"Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days."*
>
> — Daniel 10:14, KJV

The angel therefore expressly connects the vision with events concerning Daniel's people.

This does not mean that the prophecy has no significance for other nations.

Daniel's visions plainly concern world empires and the exercise of political power beyond Israel.

Nevertheless, Israel and its relationship to God's purposes occupy an important place in the prophecy.

Advocates of the early fulfilment interpretation therefore argue that the time of the end should be understood, at least in part, as the approaching conclusion of the old covenant order.

The destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in AD 70 provides a possible historical fulfilment.

Yet this interpretation must be tested against the whole passage.

Daniel 12 also speaks of resurrection, judgment, and everlasting life.

These are substantial theological themes which cannot simply be dismissed or assumed to have been exhausted by Jerusalem's destruction.

Therefore, while the expression "the time of the end" may refer to the conclusion of a particular historical age, the precise scope of Daniel 12 remains disputed.

Our argument must recognise this distinction.

3. Daniel's Vision Was for Many Days

An earlier instruction provides another important indication of Daniel's time perspective.

In Daniel 8:26, the prophet is told:

> *"And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days."*
>
> — Daniel 8:26, KJV

Here the reason for preserving the vision is expressly stated. Its fulfilment belongs to a time beyond Daniel's immediate circumstances.

The phrase "many days" communicates distance between the revelation and the events described.

The same idea appears in Daniel 10:14, where the angel explains that the vision concerns the latter days.

These statements provide important background for understanding the command to seal the prophecy.

Daniel was not told that everything he had seen was about to occur immediately.

He was informed that the visions concerned events lying ahead. The exact length of that interval varies according to the particular vision and its interpretation.

Daniel 8 contains imagery of the ram and goat, widely associated with the Medo-Persian and Greek kingdoms, and explicitly explained in those terms in verses 20–21.

Many scholars understand the persecution and sanctuary imagery in that chapter against the historical background of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century BC.

Other interpreters see additional or more distant fulfilments. This reminds us that Daniel's prophecies should not all be assumed to concern exactly the same event.

Nevertheless, the repeated language of postponement and sealing is clear.

Daniel's visions were to be preserved for a future time. This makes John's contrasting instruction particularly significant.

4. John Was Commanded Not to Seal His Prophecy

At the conclusion of Revelation, John receives a command very different from Daniel's:

> *"And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand."*
>
> — Revelation 22:10, KJV

The contrast is remarkable. Daniel was told to seal his prophecy until the time of the end. John was told not to seal his prophecy because the time was at hand.

Both commands concern the preservation or disclosure of prophetic revelation.

Both include a reason connected with the appointed time. But the directions are opposite. We may compare them directly.

Daniel	Revelation
"Seal the book" — Daniel 12:4	"Seal not the sayings" — Revelation 22:10
"For it shall be for many days" — Daniel 8:26	"Things which must shortly come to pass" — Revelation 1:1

Daniel	Revelation
"Till the time of the end" — Daniel 12:9	"For the time is at hand" — Revelation 22:10

This comparison is one of the strongest literary connections between the two books.

The similarity of the language strongly suggests that John intentionally recalls Daniel's prophecy.

Yet he reverses the instruction. Why? The reason given in Revelation is that the appointed time has drawn near.

The prophecy is not to be withheld from its readers. It is to be circulated among the churches. They are to hear its warnings, obey its instructions, and remain faithful through the events it describes.

This does not establish that every event foretold by Daniel was about to receive its complete and final fulfilment.

Nevertheless, it provides strong evidence that John understood his revelation as announcing a decisive stage in the unfolding of God's prophetic purposes.

The relationship between sealing, disclosure, and the nearness of fulfilment is recognised in studies of biblical apocalyptic literature.

For the early-date interpretation, the importance is considerable. If Revelation was written shortly before AD 70, the destruction of Jerusalem would provide a recognisable historical setting for the command not to seal the prophecy.

The judgment foretold by Jesus was approaching. The Temple still stood. The Roman Empire exercised authority over Judea. The old covenant sacrificial system was nearing its historical termination.

Within this setting, the statement that the time was at hand possesses an immediate and natural significance.

5. Is Revelation the Opening of Daniel's Sealed Book?

One interpretation proposes that Revelation represents the opening of the book Daniel was commanded to seal because of the connections between the two prophetic books.

Daniel was given visions that were to remain sealed until the appointed time.

In Revelation 5, John sees a book sealed with seven seals:

> *"And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a*
>
> *book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals."*
>
> — Revelation 5:1, KJV

John then describes the search for someone worthy to open the book.

No ordinary creature is found worthy. But one of the elders declares:

> *"Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."*
>
> — Revelation 5:5, KJV

The one worthy to open the book is Jesus Christ. John sees him represented as a Lamb that had been slain. This is a profound declaration of Christ's authority. Through his redeeming work, Christ has prevailed and is worthy to disclose and execute the purposes of God.

The comparison with Daniel is suggestive. Daniel received prophetic revelation concerning God's future purposes.

The vision was sealed. John sees a sealed book opened by the victorious Lamb. The imagery therefore invites consideration of whether Christ is revealing the fulfilment of what Daniel had foretold.

However, we must distinguish the connection from an explicit identification.

Revelation 5 does not state that the scroll in God's right hand is the same book Daniel was commanded to seal.

Nor does Daniel expressly predict that his sealed book would later appear in a heavenly vision.

Consequently, the identification cannot be treated as an established fact.

There is also another difficulty. Revelation 10:4 records John being commanded to seal what the seven thunders had spoken.

Thus, the act of sealing can signify the withholding of particular information even within Revelation itself.

The better conclusion is that Revelation draws extensively upon Daniel and presents Christ as the one through whom God's prophetic

purposes are disclosed and accomplished.

The suggestion that Christ opens Daniel's sealed prophecy is a meaningful theological interpretation, but it must be distinguished from what the biblical text expressly states.

This distinction does not weaken the early-date argument. Indeed, it enables us to rest the argument upon the clearer contrast between Daniel 12:9 and Revelation 22:10.

6. The Little Book in Revelation 10

Another important connection appears in Revelation chapter 10. John sees a mighty angel holding a little book which is already open.

He is instructed to take the book and eat it. John records:

> *"And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter."*
>
> — Revelation 10:10, KJV

He is then told:

> *"Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."*
>
> — Revelation 10:11, KJV

This passage recalls Ezekiel's prophetic commission. Ezekiel was likewise commanded to eat a scroll containing words of lamentation, mourning, and woe.

The eating of the book represents the prophet receiving and internalising the message he is commanded to declare.

The connection is important because John stands within the tradition of the Old Testament prophets.

He is not merely observing future events. He is commissioned to announce God's message. The little book is open, and John is instructed to prophesy. This accords with the wider emphasis of Revelation that the appointed time has drawn near and that the message must be communicated.

However, the statement that John must prophesy before many peoples and kings should not be understood as proof that he was

required to travel personally to each nation.

His prophetic message could reach nations and rulers through the circulation of the book.

Some advocates of an early date have suggested that John's advanced age would have made extensive travel difficult if Revelation had been written around AD 95.

Such an argument is unnecessary. Revelation 10:11 does not require that interpretation. The significance of the verse lies in the renewed prophetic commission, not in establishing John's physical ability to travel.

7. The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

We now come to one of the most important prophecies concerning Jerusalem.

In Daniel chapter 9, the prophet prays for his people and the holy city.

He confesses Israel's sins and acknowledges the justice of the judgment that had fallen upon them.

The angel Gabriel then gives him a prophecy concerning seventy weeks.

Daniel records:

> *"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy."*
>
> — Daniel 9:24, KJV

The words "thy people" and "thy holy city" are particularly important.

Gabriel is addressing Daniel concerning Israel and Jerusalem. The prophecy therefore possesses an identifiable historical setting. It concerns the people for whom Daniel had been praying and the city whose desolation troubled him.

The expression translated "seventy weeks" literally refers to seventy groups of seven.

The Hebrew word is commonly understood here to indicate weeks of years.

On this interpretation, seventy weeks represent 490 years.

The prophecy then divides the period into seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one final week.

These divisions have produced considerable debate concerning chronology.

Different interpreters identify different starting points and different events marking the conclusion of the periods.

Nevertheless, several features of the prophecy deserve particular attention.

First, the period concerns Daniel's people and holy city. Second, it concerns sin, reconciliation, and everlasting righteousness.

Third, it anticipates the appearance and cutting off of an anointed person.

Fourth, it foretells the destruction of the city and sanctuary. These subjects provide important connections with the New Testament.

The work of reconciliation finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. The destruction of the city and sanctuary invites comparison with Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70.

Some Christian interpretations understand the seventy weeks as reaching their fulfilment in Christ's redeeming work and the subsequent destruction of the Temple.

However, the precise relationship between these events and the numbered weeks must be examined carefully.

8. Messiah Shall Be Cut Off

Daniel continues:

> *"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."*
>
> — Daniel 9:26, KJV

This verse brings together two events of considerable importance. The first concerns the cutting off of Messiah. The second concerns the destruction of the city and sanctuary. Within a Christian interpretation, the reference to Messiah being

cut off naturally invites comparison with the death of Jesus Christ.

His crucifixion was the central act by which he offered himself as a sacrifice for sin.

The writer to the Hebrews declares:

> *"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God."*
>
> — Hebrews 10:12, KJV

The sacrifice of Christ accomplished what the repeated offerings under the Law of Moses could never accomplish.

Thus, the prophecy's reference to reconciliation for iniquity finds a profound theological correspondence with Christ's redemptive work.

But what of the destruction of the city and sanctuary? The most obvious historical event within the New Testament period is the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in AD 70.

The Roman armies captured the city and destroyed the sanctuary. If Daniel 9:26 refers to that event, the prophecy joins the work of Christ with the judgment that subsequently overtook Jerusalem.

The connection is important. However, scholarly interpretations differ substantially. Some understand Daniel 9 in relation to events under Antiochus IV Epiphanes during the second century BC.

Others connect the prophecy with Christ and Jerusalem's destruction.

Still others place parts of its fulfilment in a future period. The interpretation of the seventy weeks cannot therefore be established merely by observing that Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70.

The chronology and context must also be considered. Nevertheless, the Christian interpretation connecting the cutting off of Messiah with Christ's death and the destruction of the sanctuary with AD 70 provides a coherent historical framework.

It is especially significant for understanding Revelation if John was describing that same approaching judgment.

9. The Final Week and the Cessation of Sacrifice

Daniel 9:27 contains another important statement:

> *"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."*
>
> — Daniel 9:27, KJV

This verse has produced several different interpretations. The principal difficulty concerns the identity of the person who confirms the covenant and causes sacrifice to cease.

Some Christian interpreters understand the subject to be Jesus Christ.

On this view, Christ confirms the covenant through his ministry and sacrifice.

His death fulfils the purpose of the old covenant offerings, rendering them unnecessary as a means of obtaining forgiveness.

Other interpreters understand the subject to be a hostile ruler who brings desolation upon the sanctuary.

The difference is substantial. One interpretation proposes that the final week can be divided into two periods of approximately three and a half years.

The first is associated with Christ's earthly ministry. The second is associated with the Jewish–Roman War. On this interpretation, the two halves are separated by an interval extending from Christ's ministry to the events culminating in AD 70.

This proposal has theological appeal because it connects the work of Christ with the judgment upon Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, it presents a chronological difficulty. The text does not expressly identify an interval between the two halves of the week.

If such an interval is proposed, it must be justified through the wider prophetic context.

We should therefore avoid presenting the two periods as an established chronological fact.

A further distinction is necessary. Christ's sacrifice made the former sacrificial offerings unnecessary for the forgiveness of sins.

But the Temple sacrifices continued to be offered until the Jewish– Roman War.

Thus, the theological cessation of sacrifice through Christ's completed work must be distinguished from the historical interruption and termination of sacrifices at Jerusalem.

The two events are related within Christian theology, but they did not occur on the same day.

This distinction is essential if our explanation is to remain historically and doctrinally accurate.

10. The Three and a Half Times

Daniel 12 contains another remarkable chronological expression. The prophet hears a question concerning the duration of the predicted events.

The answer is given:

> *"And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished."*
>
> — Daniel 12:7, KJV

The expression "a time, times, and an half" is commonly understood as a period of three and a half times.

A similar expression appears in Daniel 7:25. It also appears in Revelation 12:14. Furthermore, Revelation uses two other expressions which correspond mathematically with a three-and-a-half-year period: forty-two months and 1,260 days.

The relationship may be expressed as follows.

Prophetic expression	Corresponding period	Principal references
A time, times, and half a time	Three and a half times	Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 12:14
Forty-two months	Three and a half years	Revelation 11:2; 13:5
1,260 days	Three and a half 360-day years	Revelation 11:3; 12:6

The equivalence assumes a conventional prophetic year of twelve thirty-day months.

The repeated appearance of these periods demonstrates a significant connection between Daniel and Revelation.

However, the meaning of the period remains disputed. Some interpreters understand it literally as approximately three and a half years.

Others regard it as a symbolic period representing a limited time of persecution.

Historicist interpreters have sometimes applied a day-year principle and understood the period as 1,260 years.

We must therefore distinguish the numerical correspondence from the interpretation of its historical fulfilment.

The connection between Daniel and Revelation is clear. The exact event or period intended must still be established.

11. The Scattering of the Power of the Holy People

Daniel 12:7 contains another statement of particular importance. The events are to reach their conclusion when the power of the holy people has been scattered.

This language deserves attention because it appears within a prophecy concerning Daniel's people.

Advocates of the early-date interpretation connect it with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish state in AD 70.

The Jewish–Roman War resulted in the defeat of the revolt, the destruction of the Temple, and the devastation of Jerusalem.

The Jewish people suffered immense loss of life, captivity, and displacement.

The destruction of the Temple also brought an end to its sacrificial worship.

These events therefore provide an important historical

correspondence with the scattering of national power.

The argument is especially compelling when placed beside Christ's warning in Luke 21.

Jesus declared:

> *"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."*
>
> — Luke 21:24, KJV

The correspondence between the passages deserves serious consideration.

Daniel speaks of the scattering of the power of the holy people. Jesus speaks of the inhabitants of Jerusalem being killed, carried captive, and subjected to Gentile domination.

Revelation speaks of the holy city being trodden underfoot by the Gentiles.

These descriptions can reasonably be understood within the same broad historical framework.

Nevertheless, a qualification is necessary. The expression "holy people" in Daniel may be interpreted differently according to the identity assigned to the persecuting power and the wider chronology of the prophecy.

Some understand it in relation to the suffering of faithful Jews under Antiochus IV.

Others relate it to later persecution and the deliverance of God's people.

Thus, identifying AD 70 as the definitive fulfilment requires argument from the complete context.

Still, the destruction of Jerusalem provides a substantial historical correspondence that deserves examination rather than dismissal.

12. Daniel, the Abomination of Desolation, and Christ's Prophecy

We now come to one of the clearest links between Daniel and the teaching of Jesus.

In Matthew 24, Jesus refers directly to Daniel. He declares:

> *"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)"*
>
> — Matthew 24:15, KJV

The following verse instructs those in Judea to flee into the mountains.

This places the warning within a recognisable geographical setting.

Jesus was speaking to his disciples concerning the Temple in Jerusalem.

He had already foretold its destruction. He now refers to Daniel's prophecy as providing an important indication of the approaching desolation.

Luke records the warning in more explicit historical language:

> *"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh."*
>
> — Luke 21:20, KJV

The parallel is significant. Matthew refers to the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel.

Luke refers to Jerusalem surrounded by armies. Both passages then warn those in Judea to flee. This provides substantial grounds for understanding the desolation in relation to the military judgment upon Jerusalem.

It is particularly important because Jesus expressly connects Daniel with events his disciples were to recognise.

He was not merely discussing the rise and fall of ancient empires. He was warning his hearers about an approaching catastrophe. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 provides a recognisable historical fulfilment of the prediction concerning the Temple.

However, differences remain among interpreters concerning the full scope of Matthew 24 and whether some portions refer to events beyond AD 70.

Those wider questions need not all be settled here. For our present purpose, the clear relationship between Daniel, Jesus' prophecy, and Jerusalem's destruction provides an important foundation for examining Revelation.

13. Revelation 11 and the Holy City

We may now return to a passage examined in Chapter 5. John records:

> *"But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."*
>
> — Revelation 11:2, KJV

This verse brings together several elements already encountered in Daniel and Luke.

There is a sanctuary. There is a holy city. There is Gentile domination. There is a limited period of oppression. And there is the expectation of divine intervention. In Daniel 9, the city and sanctuary are destined for destruction. In Luke 21, Jerusalem is to be surrounded by armies and trodden down by the Gentiles.

In Revelation 11, the holy city is given over to the Gentiles for forty-two months.

These correspondences suggest that the three passages may describe related aspects of the same historical judgment.

Moreover, Revelation 11:8 identifies the great city by referring to the place where the Lord was crucified.

This provides a substantial reason for understanding the city as Jerusalem.

If this identification is correct, the prophecy naturally fits the circumstances preceding AD 70.

The significance for the dating of Revelation is considerable. John would be describing the approaching fulfilment of an event already foretold by Daniel and expressly predicted by Jesus.

This would explain why Revelation was not to be sealed. The appointed judgment was near. Nevertheless, the possibility of symbolic Temple imagery or a retrospective vision must still be considered.

The relationship between the passages provides strong support for the early-date interpretation, but it does not remove every alternative explanation.

14. Revelation and the End of the Old Covenant Order

The destruction of Jerusalem was more than a political and military catastrophe.

It also had profound significance for the history of biblical worship.

The Temple had been the centre of the sacrificial system established under the Law of Moses.

Its priesthood and offerings belonged to the institutions of the old covenant.

But the New Testament teaches that Christ fulfilled the purpose of those sacrifices.

The writer to the Hebrews declares:

> *"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect."*
>
> — Hebrews 10:1, KJV

The repeated sacrifices could not accomplish the final removal of sin.

They pointed towards the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Hebrews continues:

> *"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."*
>
> — Hebrews 10:14, KJV

The distinction is essential. The sacrifice of Christ accomplished redemption. The destruction of the Temple did not complete an unfinished atonement.

Rather, it brought the former sacrificial system to its historical end.

The writer to the Hebrews had already described the old covenant as obsolete.

He declared:

> *"In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."*
>
> — Hebrews 8:13, KJV

From the standpoint of Christian theology, the old covenant system had been superseded by the new covenant established through Christ.

Yet Temple worship continued in Jerusalem until the events of the Jewish–Roman War.

The destruction in AD 70 therefore publicly removed the sanctuary in which the former sacrifices had continued.

This provides a significant theological explanation for the importance of Jerusalem's judgment.

If Revelation concerns that event, the book may be understood as announcing the historical vindication of Christ's authority and the judgment upon the order that had rejected him.

Such an interpretation fits the wider biblical movement from promise to fulfilment.

Daniel foretold the future of the holy city and sanctuary. Christ accomplished redemption and foretold Jerusalem's destruction.

John announced that the appointed time was near. This is a coherent interpretation of the relationship between the three.

However, its validity depends upon establishing the historical identity of the events described, not merely upon the theological significance assigned to AD 70.

15. Does Daniel 12 Require a Future Fulfilment Beyond AD 70?

An important objection must now be considered. Daniel 12 does not speak only of persecution and the scattering of the holy people.

It also speaks of resurrection. Daniel records: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

— Daniel 12:2, KJV

The passage presents a substantial challenge to interpretations that assign the entirety of Daniel 12 to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Some advocates of a completed first-century fulfilment understand the resurrection language as referring to covenantal transformation, vindication, or the spiritual deliverance of God's people.

Others maintain that Daniel 12:2 concerns the bodily resurrection and final judgment.

The latter interpretation has substantial support within Christian theology.

Jesus himself spoke of a resurrection in which those in the graves would hear his voice.

He declared:

> *"And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."*

— John 5:29, KJV

The similarity with Daniel 12:2 is evident. Both passages distinguish between resurrection to life and resurrection to judgment.

Therefore, we must be careful not to assume that the destruction of Jerusalem exhausts everything Daniel foretold.

This does not mean that Daniel 12 has no relevance to AD 70. The prophecy may contain more than one related theme. The time of unparalleled trouble and the scattering of the holy people may correspond with the events that overtook Jerusalem.

The resurrection language may possess a wider eschatological significance.

Different interpretations seek to explain how these themes belong together.

Our purpose in this study is to establish the date of Revelation. We do not need to settle the whole doctrine of resurrection in order to demonstrate that Daniel and Revelation are closely connected.

Indeed, our argument will be stronger if we avoid making the date of Revelation depend upon resolving every disputed interpretation of Daniel 12.

The more limited and defensible conclusion is that Daniel's prophecies concerning Jerusalem, desolation, and the suffering of God's people provide an important background to Revelation.

Whether every element of Daniel's final vision was fulfilled in AD 70 requires a separate and more extensive investigation.

The Resurrection of the Dead Ones and the Historic Confessions

The resurrection described in Daniel 12:2 raises an important theological question concerning the nature and timing of the resurrection.

The First London Baptist Confession of Faith (1646), the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), and the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689) teach the resurrection in bodily terms. They maintain that the bodies of those who have died will be raised.

The interpretation advanced here differs from these historic confessions.

In the New Testament, the Greek expression hoi nekroi (οἱ νεκροί) may be translated literally as "the dead ones." Likewise, the expression anastasis tōn nekrōn (ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν) means "resurrection of the dead ones."

This distinction is important when examining Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:52:

"For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

— 1 Corinthians 15:52, KJV

According to the fulfilled-resurrection interpretation presented here, the dead ones were those who had died before Christ's Parousia. Their resurrection occurred at the Parousia associated with AD 70, while believers who remained alive experienced the promised change.

On this understanding, the resurrection was not the raising of deceased physical bodies from their graves. It concerned the fulfilment of God's promises to those who had died and the transformation of those who were living at the appointed time.

This interpretation challenges the bodily-resurrection doctrine expressed in the historic confessions. Its advocates maintain that the confessions misunderstood both the nature and the timing of the resurrection.

Nevertheless, the interpretation remains disputed. Traditional Christian interpreters understand the same biblical passages as teaching a future bodily resurrection.

The precise nature of the resurrection therefore requires further examination of Daniel 12:2, John 5:28–29, and 1 Corinthians 15.

For the purposes of this study, the essential point is that the language of resurrection in Daniel 12 has been interpreted in different ways. Its disputed meaning should not be treated as an independent argument establishing that Revelation must have been written after AD 70.

16. Does the Contrast Between Daniel and John Establish the Early Date?

We are now able to evaluate the principal argument of this chapter. Daniel was told to seal his prophecy until the appointed time. John was told not to seal his prophecy because the time was at hand.

The contrast is deliberate and important. Yet does it prove that Revelation was written before AD 70? Not by itself. The statement that the time was near must be understood in relation to the events being revealed.

A prophecy written in AD 95 could announce events expected to occur shortly after that date.

Therefore, the command not to seal Revelation does not automatically identify AD 70 as its fulfilment.

The argument becomes stronger when combined with the historical interpretation developed in the preceding chapters.

If Revelation 11 concerns the Temple standing in Jerusalem, the prophecy points towards circumstances before its destruction.

If Revelation 17 identifies Nero as the sixth king, the vision belongs to the period before his death in AD 68.

If Revelation 13 identifies Nero Caesar through the number 666, the imperial circumstances of the first century become especially relevant.

If the principal judgments concern Jerusalem, the command not to seal Revelation provides a natural explanation of their nearness.

These arguments reinforce one another. The relationship with Daniel gives the prophecy its Old Testament background.

The words of Jesus identify the approaching judgment upon Jerusalem.

The historical circumstances of Nero and the Jewish–Roman War provide the setting in which that judgment unfolded.

The repeated declarations of nearness indicate that the events were of immediate concern to Revelation's first readers.

Thus, the contrast between Daniel and John is most persuasive when considered as part of a cumulative historical and biblical argument.

17. Why an Early Date Provides a Coherent Explanation

The early-date interpretation offers a recognisable sequence of events.

Daniel received prophecies concerning Israel, Jerusalem, successive kingdoms, persecution, and the appointed time of the end.

Jesus came as the promised Messiah and accomplished the work of redemption through his death and resurrection.

He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and declared that the judgment would come upon his own generation.

The apostles preached the gospel throughout the Roman world. Christian congregations were established in Asia and other provinces.

During Nero's reign, Christians experienced persecution, and the Jewish revolt began.

Roman armies advanced against Judea. Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. Within this historical framework, Revelation may be understood as a prophetic announcement of events approaching their fulfilment.

John's command not to seal the book would then be particularly appropriate.

The warnings were intended for Christians living at the time. The appointed judgment was approaching. The visions were therefore to be proclaimed rather than withheld. This interpretation brings together the language of Daniel, the prophecy of Jesus, the warnings of Revelation, and the historical circumstances of the first century.

Its strength lies in the consistency of these connections. Nevertheless, we must preserve an important distinction. A coherent interpretation is not necessarily the only possible interpretation.

The late-date position also seeks to explain the relationship between Daniel and Revelation, often understanding the latter as a prophecy concerning the continuing conflict between God's people and worldly powers.

Therefore, our argument must ultimately rest upon whether the early-date interpretation provides the better explanation of the complete evidence.

We should not claim that coherence alone constitutes proof.

18. The Principal Evidence Considered

The following comparison brings together the main biblical connections.

Daniel	Revelation	Relevance to the early date
Daniel 8:26 — the vision concerns many days	Revelation 1:1 — events must shortly come to pass	Contrasting time perspectives
Daniel 12:4, 9 — seal the book	Revelation 22:10 — do not seal the prophecy	The appointed time is presented as near
Daniel 7:25; 12:7 — time, times, and half a time	Revelation 11:2–3; 12:6, 14; 13:5 — forty-two months and 1,260 days	Corresponding prophetic periods may indicate a shared historical setting.
Daniel 7 — four kingdoms and a persecuting power	Revelation 13 and 17 — the beast and seven kings	Possible connection between Daniel's kingdoms and Roman imperial authority in the first century.
Daniel 12:1 — a time of extraordinary trouble	Revelation 7 and 11–13 — tribulation and persecution	Possible connection with the suffering of God's people during the first century, including the period preceding AD 70.
Daniel 9:26–27 — destruction of the city and sanctuary	Revelation 11:2 — the holy city trodden underfoot by the Gentiles	Possible connection with Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70.

These parallels demonstrate the extensive influence of Daniel upon Revelation.

They also show why the books must be interpreted together. However, each correspondence requires attention to its own context.

We should not assume that similar symbols always refer to the same historical event.

Nor should we assume that every prophecy in Daniel must have been fulfilled by the time Revelation was completed.

The central observation is that Revelation draws upon Daniel's prophetic world and announces that the appointed time has drawn near.

This forms an important part of the case for an early date.

19. Conclusion: From Prophecy to Approaching Fulfilment

The relationship between Daniel and Revelation provides substantial evidence for understanding John's prophecy within the historical and theological framework of the Old Testament.

Daniel was commanded to seal his visions because their fulfilment belonged to an appointed future time.

John was commanded not to seal Revelation because the time was at hand.

The contrast is striking. The two books share numerous symbols and themes, including kingdoms, beasts, persecution, the sanctuary, the holy city, and periods of three and a half times.

These connections strongly suggest that John deliberately drew upon Daniel's prophetic language.

Daniel's prophecy concerning the destruction of the city and sanctuary also invites comparison with Jesus' prediction that Jerusalem and its Temple would be destroyed.

Jesus expressly referred to Daniel when warning his disciples of the approaching desolation.

Luke described that judgment in terms of Jerusalem being

surrounded by armies and trodden down by the Gentiles.

John likewise described the holy city being given over to the Gentiles.

The historical destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 provides a recognisable setting for these prophecies.

If Revelation was written during the reign of Nero, the repeated declarations that the time was near would possess an immediate significance.

The Temple still stood. The Roman Empire ruled Judea. The Jewish–Roman War was approaching or already beginning. The judgment foretold by Jesus was about to overtake Jerusalem. Within such circumstances, the instruction not to seal Revelation becomes especially meaningful.

The prophetic message was to be proclaimed because the appointed time was described as near.

Nevertheless, we must distinguish the principal argument from some of the wider theological conclusions associated with it.

Revelation does not expressly identify its seven-sealed scroll as Daniel's sealed book.

The exact chronological arrangement of Daniel's seventy weeks remains disputed.

The three and a half times may possess symbolic as well as historical significance.

Daniel's resurrection prophecy also raises questions extending beyond the destruction of Jerusalem.

These difficulties should be acknowledged rather than ignored. They do not remove the importance of the connections between Daniel and Revelation.

Rather, they remind us that a sound interpretation must be based upon the complete testimony of Scripture.

We may therefore state the conclusion of this chapter as follows:

The deliberate contrast between Daniel's sealed prophecy and John's open Revelation strongly supports the understanding that John was announcing an approaching stage in the fulfilment of God's prophetic purposes. When this is connected with the biblical predictions concerning Jerusalem and the historical **events leading to AD 70, it provides substantial support for an early date of composition.**

The relationship between the two books is therefore an important element in our cumulative argument.

Daniel was told that the appointed time lay ahead. John was told that the time had drawn near. The question is whether the destruction of Jerusalem represents the historical judgment towards which these prophecies were pointing.

Our examination of Revelation 11 suggests that it may. We must now consider another passage which connects Christ's coming with the people responsible for his crucifixion.

John declares:

> *"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."*
>
> — Revelation 1:7, KJV

This statement draws upon the prophecies of Daniel and Zechariah.

It may also provide an important indication of the generation upon whom the predicted judgment was to fall.

That will be the subject of our next chapter.

References and Sources for Chapter 10

1. Daniel 7–12. The principal Old Testament passages concerning the four kingdoms, the sanctuary, the seventy weeks, the time of the end, and the sealing of the prophecy.

2. Revelation 5; 10–13; 17; 22. Passages concerning the sealed scroll, the open little book, the holy city, the beast, and the command not to seal Revelation.

3. Matthew 24; Luke 21. Jesus' prophecies concerning Jerusalem, the abomination of desolation, and the approaching destruction of the Temple.

4. "What Are the Seventy Weeks of Daniel?", Crossway. An explanation of the Christian interpretation connecting Daniel 9 with Christ's sacrifice and Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70. .

5. "In Search of the Seventy 'Weeks' of Daniel 9," Journal of Hebrew Scriptures, vol. 9 (2009). A scholarly examination of the different chronological interpretations of Daniel's seventy weeks.

6. Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, commentary on Daniel 9. Discusses the structure and competing interpretations of the seventy weeks..

7. John Gill, Exposition of the Old and New Testaments, Daniel 12:7 and Revelation 22:10. Gill's historicist interpretation provides an instructive comparison with the early-date interpretation.

8. Jon Paulien, "The 1260 Days in the Book of Revelation," Biblical Research Institute, Seventh-day Adventist Church. Examines the relationship between the prophetic periods in Daniel and Revelation from a historicist perspective. .

Chapter 11 — The Tribes of the Land and Those Who Pierced Christ

Does Revelation 1:7 Identify the Generation upon Whom the Judgment of Christ Was to Fall?

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, we examined the historical and biblical evidence for dating the Book of Revelation before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

We considered the Temple and holy city in Revelation 11, the succession of Roman emperors in Revelation 17, and the number of the beast in Revelation 13.

We also examined the repeated declarations that the events revealed to John were near at hand.

In Chapter 10, we considered the relationship between Daniel's sealed prophecy and John's open Revelation. We observed that Daniel was commanded to seal his book until the appointed time, whereas John was commanded not to seal his prophecy because the time was near.

We must now turn to a statement made at the very beginning of Revelation.

John declares:

> *"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."*
>
> — Revelation 1:7, KJV

This verse deserves particular attention because it introduces several themes which recur throughout Revelation.

It speaks of the coming of Jesus Christ, the people who pierced him, and the mourning of the tribes or kindreds of the earth.

The language is drawn principally from two Old Testament prophecies.

The first is Daniel 7, where the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven.

The second is Zechariah 12, where the inhabitants of Jerusalem look upon the one whom they have pierced and mourn for him.

A closely related statement appears in Matthew 24, where Jesus describes the coming of the Son of Man and the mourning of the tribes of the earth.

These connections raise an important question. Does Revelation 1:7 describe a judgment associated particularly with Jerusalem and the generation responsible for rejecting Christ?

Or does it describe an event involving every nation and every person upon earth at the final coming of Christ?

The answer has considerable importance for interpreting Revelation.

If John was describing the approaching judgment upon Jerusalem, the verse would fit naturally with a date before AD 70.

But if he was referring exclusively to a universal event at the end of human history, the chronological implications would be different.

Our task is therefore to examine the language carefully, beginning with the Old Testament prophecies upon which John draws.

1. The Importance of Revelation 1:7

Revelation 1:7 appears immediately after John's opening greeting and his declaration that Jesus Christ has made his people kings and priests unto God.

The verse is introduced by the word "Behold."

This expression calls attention to something of particular importance.

John then announces that Christ is coming with clouds. He declares that every eye shall see him, including those who pierced him.

Finally, he describes the mourning of all the kindreds of the earth. These statements are closely connected. John is not simply announcing that Christ will come. He identifies people who will be affected by that coming and describes their response.

This makes the verse important for understanding the historical subject of the prophecy.

If the people who pierced Christ are particularly in view, we must ask who they were and how Scripture identifies them.

If the tribes or kindreds are those described in Zechariah 12, we must ask whether they are the families of Israel.

And if Christ's coming with clouds draws upon Daniel 7, we must determine whether the language refers to his heavenly enthronement, his coming in judgment, his final visible appearing, or some combination of these themes.

The answers cannot be established by one English word alone. They require us to examine Scripture in its context.

2. The Prophecy of Zechariah

One of the clearest Old Testament sources for Revelation 1:7 is Zechariah 12.

The prophet declares:

> *"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."*
>
> — Zechariah 12:10, KJV

Several features deserve attention. First, the prophecy expressly names the house of David. Second, it identifies the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Third, it speaks of someone who has been pierced.

Fourth, it declares that those who look upon him will mourn. The historical and geographical setting is therefore particularly important.

Zechariah does not begin with an unidentified population scattered throughout the whole world.

He specifically names Jerusalem and the house of David. This provides the background for understanding the mourning described in the following verses.

The prophecy continues:

> *"In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon."*
>
> — Zechariah 12:11, KJV

The mourning is expressly associated with Jerusalem. This is important because John uses similar language in Revelation 1:7.

He speaks of those who pierced Christ and of kindreds mourning because of him.

The correspondence is too close to be disregarded. John is deliberately drawing upon Zechariah's prophecy. The question is how he applies that prophecy. Does he retain its particular reference to Jerusalem and the families of Israel, or does he extend its meaning to all nations?

We must first examine the remaining verses of Zechariah.

3. The Families of the Land

Zechariah continues:

> *"And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;*

The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;
All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart."

— Zechariah 12:12–14, KJV

These verses are particularly important for our investigation. The prophet does not merely state that people will mourn. He identifies families belonging to Israel.

The house of David is named. The house of Nathan is named. The house of Levi is named. The family of Shimei is also named. The prophecy then includes the remaining families. The reference to the house of David concerns the royal family. The house of Levi represents the priestly tribe. The other families belong to the same setting of Israelite lineage and family divisions.

Zechariah therefore describes mourning among the families of the land.

The geographical reference has already been established by the preceding verses.

The prophecy concerns Jerusalem and its inhabitants. This gives substantial support to the argument that John's reference to the kindreds or tribes of the earth draws upon the mourning of Israel described by Zechariah.

The point is not merely that both passages mention sorrow. Both speak of mourning associated with the one who was pierced. Both employ language concerning families or tribes. And Zechariah expressly locates that mourning within the people and land of Israel.

This provides a strong basis for considering a first-century Jewish application of Revelation 1:7.

Nevertheless, we must examine the Greek wording before reaching a conclusion.

4. The Greek Word Translated "Kindreds"

The King James Version of Revelation 1:7 uses the expression: "All kindreds of the earth." The Greek text reads: REVELATION 1:7 — GREEK TEXT πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς pasai hai phylai tēs gēs A literal rendering is: "All the tribes of the earth" or "all the tribes of the land." Two Greek words require particular attention.

The first is phylai, the plural of phylē, meaning a tribe or people descended from a common ancestry.

The second is gē, meaning earth, land, or ground. These words are important because their meaning depends upon the context.

The Greek word phylē frequently refers to the tribes of Israel. For example, Revelation 7:4 speaks of those sealed from the tribes of the children of Israel.

The same word may also describe peoples or nations more generally.

Consequently, it would be incorrect to claim that phylē always means one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Likewise, gē can refer to the whole earth or to a particular land. It can describe the ground upon which people walk, a geographical territory, or the inhabited earth.

Thus, the expression in Revelation 1:7 is capable of being understood in more than one way.

The words alone do not settle whether John meant all the tribes of Israel or all the peoples of the earth.

The decisive consideration is the context. And the most important contextual passage is Zechariah 12.

5. Does Earth Mean the Land of Israel?

The distinction between "earth" and "land" deserves careful examination.

In English, the word "earth" commonly suggests the whole world. However, the Greek word gē possesses a wider range of meanings. For example, Matthew records: "But thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda."

— Matthew 2:6, KJV

The word translated "land" is gē. It plainly refers to the territory of Judah, not the whole world. Similarly, Acts 7:3 records God's instruction to Abraham:

> *"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee."*
>
> — Acts 7:3, KJV

Again, the word refers to a particular land. Therefore, translating gē as "land" in Revelation 1:7 is linguistically possible.

The question is whether the context justifies that translation. Zechariah 12 provides a strong reason for considering it. The prophet expressly describes the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the families of the land mourning over the one who was pierced.

John appears to draw upon this precise imagery. It is therefore possible that his expression should be understood as referring particularly to the tribes of the land of Israel.

This interpretation is supported by the Old Testament background. However, there is an important objection. Revelation frequently uses the same word gē when speaking of the earth in a wider sense.

Furthermore, some scholars argue that John deliberately expands Zechariah's prophecy beyond Israel.

On this interpretation, the mourning which Zechariah described among the families of Jerusalem becomes a universal response to the revelation of Christ.

A scholarly examination of Revelation 1:7 by J. de Smidt, for example, recognises the Israelite setting of Zechariah while arguing that Revelation extends the application to the peoples of the earth.

In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi We must therefore distinguish between two propositions. The first is that Revelation 1:7 contains a deliberate allusion to Zechariah's prophecy concerning Jerusalem.

This is strongly supported. The second is that John intended the phrase exclusively to identify the tribes of Israel.

That conclusion is possible, but it remains disputed. The early-date argument must therefore be established through the combined language and historical context rather than by insisting that the word gē can only mean the land of Israel.

6. Those Who Pierced Christ

We now come to another important expression in Revelation 1:7: "And they also which pierced him."

The words immediately direct our attention to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

John does not simply announce that Christ will be seen. He gives particular prominence to those responsible for his death. The language is drawn from Zechariah 12:10, where the inhabitants of Jerusalem are told that they will look upon the one whom they have pierced.

This provides a strong reason for considering whether Revelation 1:7 is particularly concerned with the generation among whom Christ was crucified.

But who were those who pierced him? Historically, Jesus was crucified under the authority of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea.

The physical act of piercing his side was performed by a Roman soldier.

John records:

> *"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."*
>
> — John 19:34, KJV

A few verses later, John explicitly connects this event with Scripture:

> *"And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."*
>
> — John 19:37, KJV

The reference is to Zechariah 12:10. This is particularly important because the same apostolic tradition associates Christ's crucifixion with the prophecy later reflected in Revelation 1:7.

ESV Bible Nevertheless, the expression "those who pierced him" should not be restricted automatically to the Roman soldier who held the spear.

The New Testament also speaks of the responsibility of those who rejected Jesus and delivered him to be crucified.

We must therefore examine how the apostles described that responsibility.

7. Peter's Testimony on the Day of Pentecost

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter addressed the people gathered in Jerusalem.

Speaking of Jesus, he declared:

> *"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."*
>
> — Acts 2:23, KJV

Peter then announced:

> *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."*
>
> — Acts 2:36, KJV

These statements are important. Peter held his hearers responsible for their part in the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus.

Yet his declaration must be understood in its historical setting. He was addressing a particular first-century audience. He was not asserting that every Jewish person in every generation bore personal responsibility for Christ's death.

Indeed, Peter's purpose was to proclaim the gospel and call his hearers to repentance and faith.

The response was immediate:

> *"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"*
>
> — Acts 2:37, KJV

Peter called them to repent. Thousands received his message. This is important because the apostolic proclamation concerning Christ's death was not simply a declaration of judgment.

It was also an announcement of forgiveness and salvation through the risen Christ.

Nevertheless, Peter's testimony establishes that the expression "those who crucified him" could be applied to members of the first-century community in Jerusalem who had participated in his rejection.

This provides an important connection with Revelation 1:7. The prophecy could naturally have been understood as referring particularly to the generation addressed by the apostles.

8. The Apostolic Witness Continues

The same emphasis appears in Peter's subsequent preaching. In Acts 3, he declares: "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

> *And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses."*
>
> — Acts 3:14–15, KJV

Yet Peter immediately acknowledges their ignorance:

"And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."

— Acts 3:17, KJV

He then calls them to repentance. The same generation that had rejected Christ was being offered forgiveness through his name.

This brings together two important themes. Christ's death was accomplished according to God's redemptive purpose.

Those who participated in rejecting him were called to repentance. The refusal of that call would bring judgment, as Jesus himself had warned.

The apostolic preaching therefore provides a historical setting for understanding the language of Revelation 1:7.

Those who pierced Christ were not merely unidentified individuals living in some remote future.

They included identifiable people and authorities living during the apostolic generation.

9. Jesus Foretold Judgment Upon His Own Generation

We must now consider the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 23.

Speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, he declared:

"Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the

children of them which killed the prophets.
Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers."

— Matthew 23:31–32, KJV

He continued by foretelling further persecution of those whom he would send.

Then he announced: "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."

— Matthew 23:35, KJV

The following verse is particularly significant:

"Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."

— Matthew 23:36, KJV

Here Jesus expressly identifies the generation upon whom the announced judgment would fall.

The words "this generation" naturally refer to the generation he was addressing.

The judgment is then connected directly with Jerusalem. Jesus laments:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

— Matthew 23:37, KJV

He concludes:

"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

— Matthew 23:38, KJV

The connection is important. Jesus condemns the rejection of God's messengers. He announces judgment upon that generation. He then declares that Jerusalem's house will be left desolate. The following chapter begins with the prophecy of the Temple's destruction.

This provides a coherent historical sequence. The judgment announced in Matthew 23 is followed by the

prediction of Jerusalem's destruction in Matthew 24.

Advocates of the early-date interpretation therefore argue that Revelation 1:7 should be understood within this same prophetic setting.

The people responsible for rejecting and crucifying Christ would witness the vindication of his authority when judgment overtook Jerusalem.

That interpretation deserves serious consideration.

10. The Connection with Matthew 24:30

We now come to one of the most important parallels. Jesus declared:

> *"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."*
>
> — Matthew 24:30, KJV

Compare this with Revelation 1:7:

> *"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."*
>
> — Revelation 1:7, KJV

The similarity is striking. Both passages describe the coming of Christ with clouds. Both refer to the tribes of the earth. Both describe mourning. The language draws upon the same Old Testament prophecies. The following comparison illustrates the connection.

Matthew 24:30	**Revelation 1:7**
Son of Man coming in clouds	Christ coming with clouds
Tribes of the earth	Kindreds or tribes of the earth
Tribes mourn	Tribes wail because of him
Allusion to Daniel 7 and Zechariah 12	

The shared wording is substantial enough to indicate a close literary or traditional relationship between the passages.

Jerusalem Perspective The importance for the early-date interpretation is considerable. Matthew 24 begins with Jesus' prediction that the Temple will be destroyed.

He then describes approaching tribulation and judgment. In verse 34, he declares: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

— Matthew 24:34, KJV

If Matthew 24:30 concerns the vindication of Christ through Jerusalem's destruction, Revelation 1:7 may reasonably be understood as describing the same event.

The early-date interpretation therefore argues that John's opening announcement is connected with the judgment Jesus had already foretold.

However, the interpretation of Matthew 24:30 remains disputed. Some understand the passage as referring to Christ's final visible coming.

Others distinguish the destruction of Jerusalem from later events within the discourse.

The similarity of wording does not, by itself, establish that Matthew and Revelation refer exclusively to AD 70.

Nevertheless, it provides an important biblical basis for considering that interpretation.

11. The Coming of the Son of Man in Daniel 7

Both Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:7 draw upon Daniel 7. Daniel records: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

> And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."
>
> — Daniel 7:13–14, KJV

This passage is important because of the direction of the Son of Man's coming.

Daniel does not describe the Son of Man descending from heaven to earth.

He describes him coming to the Ancient of Days. The scene takes place within a heavenly vision. The Son of Man approaches the divine throne and receives dominion, glory, and an everlasting kingdom.

This is a vision of royal authority and heavenly vindication. Within Christian interpretation, the Son of Man is identified with Jesus Christ.

His resurrection and ascension establish his exaltation at God's right hand.

> *Peter declares: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."*
>
> — Acts 2:33, KJV

The apostolic proclamation is that Jesus, whom the authorities rejected, has been exalted as Lord and Christ.

This provides an important background to the coming of the Son of Man in Daniel 7.

The imagery concerns the manifestation of his authority and the establishment of his kingdom.

If the coming described in Matthew 24 and Revelation 1:7 draws upon this heavenly enthronement, it need not automatically describe Christ physically descending to earth at that moment.

It may concern the historical manifestation of the authority he has received.

The destruction of Jerusalem could then be understood as a public demonstration of Christ's vindication.

But an important distinction must be maintained. Daniel's description of the Son of Man approaching the Ancient of Days does not by itself prove that every New Testament reference to Christ coming with clouds concerns only his heavenly enthronement.

The New Testament also speaks of Christ's future appearing and the resurrection of the dead.

Therefore, the meaning of each passage must be established from its own context.

Nevertheless, Daniel 7 provides a substantial biblical foundation for understanding coming language in relation to royal authority, judgment, and vindication.

12. Coming with Clouds as a Sign of Divine Judgment

The Old Testament frequently uses cloud imagery to describe God's presence and intervention in history.

For example, Isaiah prophesied concerning Egypt:

> *"The burden of Egypt. Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it."*
>
> — Isaiah 19:1, KJV

Here the Lord is described as coming upon a cloud in judgment against Egypt.

The prophecy does not require that the inhabitants literally saw God riding upon a physical cloud.The imagery communicates divine authority and intervention. Similar language appears elsewhere in the prophets. Clouds, darkness, thunder, and cosmic disturbance frequently accompany descriptions of God's judgment upon nations.

This prophetic background is important when interpreting Revelation 1:7.

John's declaration that Christ comes with clouds may therefore have a judicial significance.

It may announce that the exalted Christ is about to manifest his authority through judgment.

If that judgment concerns Jerusalem, the imagery would accord with the language of the Old Testament prophets.

However, the symbolic use of cloud imagery does not establish that Revelation 1:7 cannot also refer to a visible appearing.

The question is whether the surrounding context identifies a particular historical judgment.

For the early-date interpretation, the connection with Zechariah 12, Matthew 24, and the generation responsible for Christ's crucifixion provides that context.

Thus, the coming with clouds may describe the vindication of Christ's authority through the judgment of Jerusalem.

This is a coherent interpretation, though not the only one defended by Christian scholars.

13. What Does It Mean That Every Eye Shall See Him?

We now come to an important objection. Revelation 1:7 states:

> *"And every eye shall see him." Some interpreters maintain that these words require a universal, bodily appearance of Jesus Christ before all humanity.*

According to this interpretation, the prophecy cannot refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 because every person on earth did not physically see Christ at that time.

This objection deserves serious consideration. The Greek expression is emphatic. John speaks of every eye seeing him. It would therefore be wrong simply to disregard the universal force of the language.

However, prophetic literature sometimes uses the language of seeing to describe recognition, understanding, or acknowledgement.

For example, Jesus told the high priest:

> *"Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."*
>
> — Matthew 26:64, KJV

The declaration was addressed to the high priest and those participating in Jesus' trial.

It announced that the one they were condemning would be vindicated and revealed as the exalted Son of Man.

Advocates of the early fulfilment interpretation argue that the high priest would witness the consequences of Christ's authority through the events that followed, including the judgment upon Jerusalem.

On this understanding, seeing does not necessarily require direct optical observation of Christ's bodily presence.

It may describe the recognition of his authority through historical judgment.

Nevertheless, this interpretation requires careful justification. The verb translated "see" ordinarily refers to seeing or perceiving. In Revelation 1:7, the expression "every eye" naturally suggests a very broad scope.

The early-date interpretation must therefore demonstrate from the context why the language should be understood prophetically rather than as a literal universal appearance.

It cannot simply redefine seeing to avoid a difficulty. The strongest argument rests upon the connection with Daniel 7 and Matthew 26:64, where the imagery concerns the vindication and heavenly authority of the Son of Man.

If Revelation 1:7 employs the same prophetic language, the verse may describe the manifestation of Christ's authority rather than requiring that every individual physically observe his bodily presence.

This remains a debated interpretation.

14. The Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven

Matthew 24:30 contains another expression that deserves attention:

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." The phrase can be understood in more than one way. Some interpret it as a sign appearing in the sky. Others understand it as the sign that the Son of Man is in heaven, exercising the authority described in Daniel 7.

The distinction matters. On the second interpretation, the destruction of Jerusalem would be a sign that the crucified and risen Christ had been vindicated and enthroned.

The authorities who rejected him would discover that his words concerning Jerusalem were true.

The destruction of the Temple would demonstrate that the judgment he foretold had come to pass.

This interpretation accords with the declaration Jesus made before the high priest.

It also fits the language of the Son of Man receiving dominion in Daniel 7.

However, the Greek wording of Matthew 24:30 is capable of different readings, and the interpretation cannot be settled merely by rearranging the English words.

The broader context must determine whether the sign is located in heaven or signifies the heavenly authority of Christ.

For our present purpose, the importance lies in the connection between Christ's vindication and the judgment of Jerusalem.

If Matthew 24:30 refers to that event, its close relationship with Revelation 1:7 provides substantial support for an early-date interpretation.

15. Did Those Who Pierced Christ Live to See the Judgment?

The historical chronology deserves attention. Jesus was crucified around AD 30–33. Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. The interval was approximately thirty-seven to forty years. Consequently, many who were alive during Christ's crucifixion could also have been alive when Jerusalem was destroyed.

This is important because Revelation 1:7 specifically identifies those who pierced him.

If the prophecy concerns the generation responsible for rejecting and crucifying Christ, the destruction of Jerusalem occurred within a historically plausible period for that generation to witness its consequences.

The argument is reinforced by Jesus' statement: "Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."

— Matthew 23:36, KJV

And again:

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

— Matthew 24:34, KJV

The historical correspondence is significant. The generation which witnessed Christ's ministry also witnessed the events leading to the destruction of Jerusalem.

However, we must not assume that every individual involved in Christ's crucifixion survived until AD 70.

The New Testament does not require such a conclusion. Nor should we claim that the Roman soldier who pierced Christ necessarily witnessed Jerusalem's destruction.

The stronger argument concerns the corporate and generational character of the prophecy.

Jesus addressed a generation which had rejected him and foretold judgment within its lifetime.

Revelation 1:7 may reasonably be understood as announcing the same vindication and judgment.

This provides a substantial connection between the prophecy and the first century.

16. Mourning in Repentance or Mourning in Judgment?

An important distinction must now be considered. In Zechariah 12, the mourning is associated with the pouring out of the spirit of grace and supplication.

The prophecy therefore has a strong element of repentance and restoration.

The people look upon the one they pierced and mourn as for an only son.

In Revelation 1:7, the mourning is presented in connection with the coming of Christ.

Some interpreters understand it as mourning in repentance. Others understand it as the lamentation of those facing judgment. The difference is important. If John is announcing the destruction of Jerusalem, the mourning may be understood as lamentation arising from the recognition that the crucified Christ has been vindicated.

But if the passage principally concerns the gracious turning of Israel to Christ, the mourning may possess a different emphasis.

It is possible that the language includes elements of both sorrow over sin and recognition of judgment.

However, the two should not be confused. Zechariah 12 explicitly speaks of grace and supplication. Revelation 1:7 does not repeat that particular expression. It speaks of the tribes wailing because of Christ's coming. Therefore, the meaning of the mourning must be determined from John's context.

The Old Testament background is indispensable, but we should not assume that every element of Zechariah's prophecy is applied in precisely the same way.

This distinction also affects the argument concerning the date of Revelation.

If John's emphasis is the judicial vindication of Christ before the generation that pierced him, the connection with AD 70 becomes particularly strong.

If the emphasis is a future universal recognition of Christ, the chronological conclusion is less direct.

The evidence must therefore be weighed carefully.

17. Does Revelation Apply Zechariah's Prophecy to All Nations?

We must now consider perhaps the strongest objection to restricting Revelation 1:7 to Israel.

The Book of Revelation has a universal scope. It repeatedly speaks of peoples, nations, tribes, and languages. For example, the redeemed are described as coming from every kindred, tongue, people, and nation.

The heavenly multitude in Revelation 7 includes people from all nations.

The judgments of Revelation also affect the kings and inhabitants of the earth.

This broader setting has led many interpreters to argue that Revelation 1:7 extends Zechariah's prophecy beyond Israel.

On this understanding, John takes the mourning originally described among Jerusalem's families and applies it to all humanity.

The expression "all the tribes of the earth" would therefore mean all peoples throughout the world.

This interpretation has substantial support in Christian

scholarship.

The early-date argument must take it seriously. The Greek word phylē does not refer exclusively to Israel. Nor does gē necessarily mean the land of Judea. The phrase can possess a universal meaning. Nevertheless, the immediate allusion to Zechariah 12 provides a reason for retaining the Israelite setting.

The mention of those who pierced Christ also gives the prophecy a particular historical reference.

It is therefore possible that John has a specific historical judgment in view while employing language with broader theological significance.

The question is whether the universal wording excludes the particular reference to Jerusalem.

It does not necessarily do so. A prophecy may address a particular historical event while revealing its significance for the wider world.

The judgment upon Jerusalem, if that is John's subject, would demonstrate the authority of Christ not only to Israel but also to the nations.

However, this does not mean that the universal interpretation has been disproved.

The relationship between the local Old Testament setting and the wider language of Revelation remains one of the principal questions requiring careful interpretation.

18. How Does Revelation 1:7 Relate to the Date of the Book?

We are now able to consider the chronological significance of the passage.

The argument for an early date proceeds through several connected observations.

First, Revelation 1:7 draws upon Zechariah 12, where the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the families of the land mourn over the one who was pierced.

Second, the New Testament identifies Jesus Christ as the one who was pierced.

Third, the apostles held particular first-century audiences and authorities responsible for their participation in Christ's rejection and crucifixion.

Fourth, Jesus expressly foretold judgment upon that generation. Fifth, Matthew 24:30 uses language closely resembling Revelation 1:7 within the discourse concerning Jerusalem and the Temple.

Sixth, Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, within the lifetime of many who had witnessed Christ's earthly ministry.

Taken together, these observations provide a substantial biblical argument for associating Revelation 1:7 with the events surrounding Jerusalem's destruction.

But we must distinguish the interpretation of the event from the date of the book.

Even if Revelation 1:7 refers to AD 70, it does not follow automatically that the book was written before that event.

A later author could describe a past historical event through prophetic imagery.

Therefore, the chronological argument depends upon the wider presentation of Revelation.

John announces that the events revealed must shortly come to pass.

He declares that the time is at hand. He is instructed not to seal the prophecy because the appointed time is near.

If Revelation 1:7 refers to Jerusalem's approaching judgment, these repeated time statements strongly support a date before AD 70.

The argument is therefore cumulative. Revelation 1:7 identifies the possible historical subject. The opening and closing time statements describe its nearness. The Temple and holy city in Revelation 11 provide further historical context.

The seven kings and number of the beast may connect the prophecy with Nero's reign.

Together, these passages provide a coherent case for early composition.

19. The Importance of the First-Century Audience

One further point deserves attention.

Revelation was written to actual Christian congregations in Asia. These Christians lived within the political world of the Roman Empire.

They knew the power of Rome and the difficulties of remaining faithful to Christ.

Many would also have been familiar with the conflict between the Christian proclamation and those authorities who rejected Jesus.

For them, the announcement that Christ was coming to vindicate his authority would have possessed immediate significance.

The apostles had proclaimed that Jesus, though crucified, had been raised from the dead and exalted to God's right hand.

Peter declared:

> *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."*
>
> — Acts 2:36, KJV

The rejection of Jesus did not overthrow God's purpose. Rather, the one who had been crucified was declared Lord and Christ.

If Revelation announced the approaching judgment of Jerusalem, it would confirm the truth of that apostolic proclamation.

The destruction of the Temple would demonstrate that the authority of the old sacrificial system had been superseded by Christ's completed work.

The judgment upon Jerusalem would also confirm the warnings Jesus had given during his earthly ministry.

This does not mean that the Jewish people as a whole were rejected from receiving salvation.

The New Testament repeatedly proclaims salvation through Christ to Jew and Gentile alike.

Indeed, the earliest Christian believers were themselves Jewish. The judgment foretold by Jesus concerned the historical generation and the authorities that rejected him, not an enduring condemnation of an ethnic people.

This distinction is essential to a sound understanding of the New Testament.

The early-date interpretation should be understood within that biblical and historical framework.

20. Weighing the Evidence

The principal evidence may now be summarised.

Biblical passage	Historical or prophetic significance
Zechariah 12:10–14	The inhabitants of Jerusalem and families of the land mourn over the one who was pierced
John 19:34–37	Identifies the pierced one with Jesus Christ
Acts 2:23, 36	Peter addresses first-century participants in Christ's rejection and crucifixion
Matthew 23:35–38	Jesus announces judgment upon the generation and laments Jerusalem
Matthew 24:30, 34	Combines the coming of the Son of Man, the mourning of the tribes, and a generational time statement
Daniel 7:13–14	Describes the Son of Man receiving heavenly dominion and an everlasting kingdom
Revelation 1:7	Combines the coming with clouds, the pierced Christ, and the mourning of the tribes
Revelation 1:1–3	Declares that the events of the prophecy are near

Zechariah supplies the imagery of mourning over the pierced one.

Daniel supplies the imagery of the Son of Man coming with clouds and receiving authority.

Jesus combines these themes in his prophecy concerning Jerusalem.

John employs the same imagery at the beginning of Revelation. This provides a strong biblical foundation for considering whether the judgment of Jerusalem is a principal subject of Revelation.

However, three questions remain disputed. Does "all the tribes of the earth" mean particularly the families of Israel, or does John extend the prophecy to all nations?

Does the coming with clouds describe Christ's judicial vindication in the first century or his final visible appearing?

And does the mourning primarily signify repentance, judgment, or both?

These questions require careful interpretation. They should not be dismissed merely because one explanation fits a preferred dating theory.

Nevertheless, the first-century interpretation possesses substantial biblical support.

21. Conclusion: The Generation That Pierced Christ

Revelation 1:7 is one of the most significant passages for understanding the historical setting of the Book of Revelation.

Its language is drawn from Daniel 7 and Zechariah 12. Daniel describes the Son of Man receiving heavenly authority and an everlasting kingdom.

Zechariah describes the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the families of the land mourning over the one who was pierced.

John brings these themes together in his declaration that Christ is coming with clouds and that those who pierced him will see him.

The New Testament identifies Jesus as the one who was pierced. It also records the responsibility of particular first-century audiences and authorities in rejecting and crucifying him.

Jesus expressly warned that judgment would fall upon the generation that rejected him and persecuted God's messengers.

He then foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. These connections provide substantial grounds for understanding Revelation 1:7 in relation to that approaching judgment.

The expression translated "all kindreds of the earth" can linguistically be understood as "all the tribes of the land."

Zechariah's original setting gives that interpretation particular relevance.

However, the words can also possess a wider meaning, and Revelation's universal language prevents us from treating the restriction to Israel as beyond dispute.

The strongest argument therefore rests upon the combined testimony of Scripture.

The pierced Christ, the mourning of the tribes, the coming with clouds, the warnings to Jerusalem, and the promise that judgment would overtake that generation form a coherent prophetic pattern.

If Revelation 1:7 concerns the vindication of Christ through the judgment upon Jerusalem, the destruction of the city in AD 70 provides a recognisable historical fulfilment.

The event occurred within approximately forty years of Christ's crucifixion.

It also occurred during the period when many members of the generation he addressed could still have been living.

This interpretation becomes particularly significant when considered alongside Revelation's repeated declarations that the appointed time was near.

The book begins by announcing that the events revealed must shortly come to pass.

It then presents Christ coming with clouds and being recognised by those who pierced him.

If this coming concerns Jerusalem's approaching judgment, the natural historical setting is the period before AD 70.

We may therefore conclude:

The close connection between Revelation 1:7, Zechariah 12, Daniel 7, and Matthew 24 provides a substantial biblical argument that John's opening prophecy concerns the vindication of the crucified Christ before the generation responsible for rejecting him. When combined with Revelation's repeated time statements, this supports the case for a date before Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70.

The passage does not independently establish that date beyond all dispute.

Its language may be understood more universally, and the nature

of Christ's coming remains a matter of theological interpretation.

Nevertheless, the first-century application cannot reasonably be dismissed.

It is grounded in the language of the Old Testament prophets, the teaching of Jesus, and the testimony of the apostles.

The argument for an early date therefore gains further support.

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3. Matthew 23:29–39; 24:1–34. Christ's warnings concerning Jerusalem, the coming judgment, and the generation that would witness those events.

4. John 19:34–37. John's identification of Jesus Christ as the one who was pierced, in fulfilment of Scripture.

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Chapter 12 — Babylon the Great — Rome or Jerusalem?

Does the Great Harlot of Revelation Represent Imperial Rome, or the Jerusalem upon Which Jesus Christ Pronounced Judgment?

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, we examined the historical and biblical evidence supporting the view that the Book of Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

We considered the Temple and holy city in Revelation 11, the succession of Roman emperors in Revelation 17, the number of the beast in Revelation 13, and the repeated declarations that the events revealed to John were near at hand.

We also examined the relationship between Daniel's prophecies and the Revelation given to John.

In Chapter 11, we considered the prophecy concerning those who pierced Christ and the mourning of the tribes of the land. We discovered that Revelation 1:7 draws upon Zechariah 12 and Daniel 7, and bears a striking resemblance to Christ's prophecy concerning Jerusalem in Matthew 24.

We must now consider another important question. Who is the woman described in Revelation chapters 17 and 18? John sees a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast. She is clothed in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold and precious stones, and holds a golden cup filled with abominations.

Upon her forehead is written a mysterious name:

> *"MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."*
>
> — Revelation 17:5, KJV

The woman is guilty of shedding the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus.

She is also identified as a great city. The angel announces that she will be destroyed, and the kings and merchants of the earth will mourn over her fall.

Throughout Christian history, many interpreters have identified

this city as imperial Rome.

The argument is understandable. Rome was the capital of the Empire, famous for its seven hills, its wealth, its political authority, and its persecution of Christians.

However, another interpretation deserves careful investigation. Some have maintained that Babylon represents Jerusalem — the city which rejected Christ, persecuted his messengers, and suffered destruction at the hands of the Roman armies in AD 70.

According to this interpretation, the woman represents Jerusalem in her unfaithfulness to God, while the beast represents the Roman imperial power through which her judgment was carried out.

This interpretation is particularly important for our investigation into the date of Revelation.

If Babylon represents Jerusalem and her destruction is presented as an approaching event, the prophecy would fit naturally within the period before AD 70.

If Babylon represents imperial Rome, however, the historical and chronological implications may be different.

The identification of Babylon must therefore be established from Scripture rather than assumed.

Our purpose is to examine the evidence carefully, giving proper consideration to both interpretations.

1. The Vision of the Great Harlot

John introduces the vision in Revelation 17: "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

— Revelation 17:1–2, KJV

The first thing to notice is that the vision concerns judgment. The angel announces that John is about to see the judgment of the great harlot.

The woman is therefore already guilty of conduct which has brought her under divine condemnation.

She is described as having committed fornication with the kings of the earth.

In prophetic language, fornication may represent unfaithfulness to God, idolatry, corrupt alliances, or participation in wicked practices.

The expression does not necessarily refer to literal sexual immorality.

This is especially important because the Old Testament prophets frequently used marriage and adultery to describe the covenant relationship between God and Israel.

Israel was expected to remain faithful to the Lord. When the nation turned to idols or trusted in ungodly alliances, the prophets sometimes described that conduct as adultery.

The question therefore arises whether John's use of the harlot image follows this Old Testament pattern.

If so, Jerusalem becomes a serious candidate for the identity of the woman.

But before reaching that conclusion, we must examine the wider description.

2. The Woman Sitting Upon the Beast

John continues:

> *"So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns."*

— Revelation 17:3, KJV

The woman and the beast are closely associated. However, the text presents them as distinguishable figures. The woman sits upon the beast. The beast possesses seven heads and ten horns. Later in the chapter, the beast and its horns turn against the woman and destroy her.

This distinction is important. If the beast represents Roman imperial power, does the woman necessarily represent Rome as well?

Not necessarily. It is possible for the woman to represent a city or religious order associated with Roman power while remaining distinct from the Empire itself.

Advocates of the Jerusalem interpretation consider this distinction particularly significant.

They argue that Jerusalem existed under Roman domination and that the Roman armies eventually destroyed her.

On this reading, the woman's destruction by the beast corresponds with the events of AD 70.

Nevertheless, the distinction does not establish the identification. A prophetic symbol may represent a capital city while the beast represents the imperial system centred upon that same city.

Thus, the woman could represent Rome as the seat of imperial luxury and corruption, while the beast represents Rome's political and military power.

The separation between woman and beast therefore allows the Jerusalem interpretation but does not prove it.

We must examine the other characteristics of the woman.

3. Why Is the Woman Called a Harlot?

One of the strongest arguments for identifying Babylon with Jerusalem comes from the Old Testament prophets.

God had entered into a covenant relationship with Israel. The prophets frequently described that relationship using the imagery of marriage.

When Israel broke the covenant, her unfaithfulness was sometimes described as adultery or harlotry.

This imagery appears repeatedly in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea.

It is therefore important to examine whether Revelation draws upon the same language.

The prophet Isaiah described Jerusalem in these words:

> *"How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers."*
>
> — Isaiah 1:21, KJV

This statement is particularly important. Isaiah expressly identifies a formerly faithful city which had become a harlot.

The city was Jerusalem. She had been distinguished by God's revelation and the worship established under his covenant.

Yet she had departed from righteousness and become guilty of bloodshed.

Notice the connection between harlotry and murder. Isaiah does not merely condemn false worship. He describes a city that had become corrupt and violent. This is significant because the woman in Revelation 17 is likewise characterised by harlotry and the shedding of blood.

John writes:

> *"And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration."*
>
> — Revelation 17:6, KJV

The correspondence deserves attention. Isaiah calls Jerusalem a harlot and condemns her murderous conduct.

John describes Babylon as a harlot intoxicated with the blood of God's people.

This provides a substantial Old Testament basis for understanding Babylon as an unfaithful covenant city.

However, the image of harlotry is not used exclusively of Jerusalem.

The prophets also apply it to foreign cities and nations. Therefore, the identification must rest upon more than this description alone.

4. Ezekiel's Description of Jerusalem

The prophet Ezekiel provides an even more detailed example of Jerusalem being described as an unfaithful woman.

In Ezekiel 16, the Lord speaks of his relationship with Jerusalem.

He describes how he had cared for her, clothed her, and established his covenant with her.

Yet Jerusalem became unfaithful. The Lord declares:

> *"But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was."*
>
> — Ezekiel 16:15, KJV

The chapter continues by describing Jerusalem's idolatry and her relationships with surrounding nations.

Later, Ezekiel declares:

> *"But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!"*
>
> — Ezekiel 16:32, KJV

The meaning is clear. Jerusalem is condemned for covenant unfaithfulness. She is represented as a wife who has forsaken her rightful husband. This provides an important theological background for Revelation 17.

The woman called Babylon is described as a harlot who has committed fornication with the kings of the earth.

If John is drawing upon Ezekiel's imagery, the woman may represent the covenant city which had turned away from God.

There is another important resemblance. In Ezekiel 16, Jerusalem is threatened with judgment through those with whom she had been involved.

The Lord declares:

> *"And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot."*
>
> — Ezekiel 16:41, KJV

Compare this with Revelation 17:16:

> *"And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall*
>
> *hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire."*
>
> — Revelation 17:16, KJV

The resemblance is striking. Both passages describe a harlot. Both speak of her being stripped and exposed. Both describe judgment involving destruction by fire. The imagery therefore provides a strong literary connection between Ezekiel's judgment upon Jerusalem and John's judgment upon Babylon.

It does not automatically establish that both passages refer to precisely the same city.

Nevertheless, it demonstrates that the identification of Babylon with Jerusalem is grounded in a recognisable Old Testament prophetic pattern.

5. The Harlotry of Other Nations

We must now consider an important objection. The prophets did not use the image of harlotry exclusively for Israel or Jerusalem.

Isaiah spoke of Tyre in such terms:

> *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot."*
>
> — Isaiah 23:15, KJV

Nahum also condemned Nineveh:

> *"Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts."*
>
> — Nahum 3:4, KJV

These passages demonstrate that a pagan city could also be represented as a harlot.

The language could condemn idolatry, commercial corruption, political seduction, and the exploitation of nations.

Consequently, it would be incorrect to argue that the woman in Revelation must be Jerusalem merely because she is called a harlot.

Rome could also be represented in this way. Indeed, Revelation 17 describes the woman exercising influence over the kings of the earth, while Revelation 18 emphasises her wealth and commerce.

These features can be understood as characteristics of imperial Rome.

Therefore, the harlot imagery gives Jerusalem a significant biblical claim but does not exclude Rome.

The decisive question must be whether the remaining identifying details point more clearly towards one city or the other.

6. Babylon Is Identified as the Great City

The angel eventually explains the identity of the woman:

> *"And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth."*
>
> — Revelation 17:18, KJV

This statement is of central importance. Whatever else the woman symbolises, she is identified with a great city.

The prophecy therefore directs us towards an identifiable centre of power or influence.

Advocates of the Roman interpretation consider this verse one of their strongest arguments.

During the first century, Rome was the capital of the Empire and exercised authority over numerous peoples and rulers.

It was the political centre of imperial administration. The expression "which reigneth over the kings of the earth" therefore fits Rome particularly well.

Jerusalem, by contrast, was under Roman authority. It did not exercise comparable political dominion over the rulers of the Empire.

This objection cannot be dismissed. If Revelation 17:18 refers directly to the political sovereignty of the city, Rome is the more obvious historical candidate.

Nevertheless, advocates of the Jerusalem interpretation offer another explanation.

They understand the language of kingship and dominion within the biblical significance of Jerusalem as the city of the great King, the place from which God's law and promises had been made known.

They also point to her position as the central city of the covenant people.

However, the passage does not expressly say that the woman's dominion is spiritual rather than political.

Thus, the Jerusalem interpretation faces a genuine difficulty here. We should acknowledge that Revelation 17:18 is among the strongest objections to identifying Babylon exclusively with Jerusalem.

A convincing defence of the early-date interpretation must explain this verse rather than pass over it.

7. The Great City Where Christ Was Crucified

There is, however, another passage which gives considerable support to the Jerusalem interpretation.

In Revelation 11, John describes the death of the two witnesses. He declares:

> *"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."*
>
> — Revelation 11:8, KJV

We examined this passage in Chapter 5. Its importance is that the city is identified by reference to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

The historical location of Christ's crucifixion was Jerusalem, or more precisely, outside its gate.

The writer to the Hebrews declares:

> *"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."*
>
> — Hebrews 13:12, KJV

Therefore, the most natural geographical identification of the great city in Revelation 11:8 is Jerusalem.

This becomes significant when we compare the language of Revelation 17 and 18.

The woman is called the great city. Babylon is repeatedly called the great city. If the same designation is intended to identify the same city throughout these chapters, Jerusalem becomes a strong candidate.

The argument is straightforward. Revelation 11 identifies the great city as the place where Christ was crucified.

Revelation 17 identifies the harlot as the great city. Revelation 18 describes the destruction of that great city. Could all three references concern Jerusalem? This is a serious interpretative possibility. Scholars who favour the Jerusalem identification have appealed particularly to this connection. The identification of Babylon with Jerusalem has also been examined by Giancarlo Biguzzi in his study of the question.However, a qualification is necessary. The expression "great city" is not necessarily a unique geographical name.

It can serve as a description applied to more than one city. For example, Revelation 16:19 refers to the great city and separately mentions great Babylon, a distinction whose interpretation is disputed.

Therefore, we cannot simply assume that every occurrence of "great city" in Revelation must refer to Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, Revelation 11:8 provides one of the strongest internal arguments for considering Jerusalem as the referent of Babylon.

The question must be resolved by examining the remaining characteristics of the city.

8. Jerusalem Spiritually Called Sodom and Egypt

Revelation 11:8 describes the great city as spiritually called Sodom and Egypt.

These names are not geographical identifications.

They describe the spiritual condition of the city. The identification with Sodom is particularly significant because the Old Testament prophets had already used this language concerning Jerusalem.

Isaiah begins:

> *"The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem."*
>
> — Isaiah 1:1, KJV

He then declares:

> *"Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah."*
>
> — Isaiah 1:10, KJV

The rulers being addressed belonged to Judah and Jerusalem. The name Sodom was used to expose their spiritual corruption. Jeremiah employed similar language:

> *"I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah."*
>
> — Jeremiah 23:14, KJV

These passages establish that Jerusalem could be described symbolically as Sodom.

This supplies an important interpretative precedent for Revelation 11.

The reference to Egypt may suggest bondage, oppression, rebellion, or the need for a new deliverance.

Some advocates of the early-date interpretation connect it with the transition from the old covenant order to the liberty of the new covenant.

Paul himself used the imagery of Israel's journey from Egypt when addressing the Corinthian church.

Nevertheless, Scripture does not expressly identify Jerusalem as

Egypt in the same way it identifies her as Sodom.

We should therefore treat the precise significance of Egypt as an interpretative question.

The combined imagery certainly describes a city under divine condemnation.

It also strengthens the case that Revelation draws extensively upon Old Testament judgments when describing Jerusalem.

9. The Blood of the Prophets and Saints

We now come to what may be the strongest argument for identifying Babylon with Jerusalem.

John writes:

> *"And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."*
>
> — Revelation 18:24, KJV

This statement is remarkable. Babylon is held responsible not merely for the persecution of Christians but also for the blood of prophets.

The reference immediately invites comparison with the words of Jesus.

In Luke 13, Christ declared:

> *"Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."*
>
> — Luke 13:33, KJV

He continued:

> *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee."*
>
> — Luke 13:34, KJV

The correspondence is important. Jesus specifically identifies Jerusalem as the city associated with the killing of God's prophets.

Revelation describes Babylon as guilty of the blood of prophets and saints.

The similarity becomes even more striking when we turn to Matthew 23.

10. The Blood of the Righteous Upon Jerusalem

Speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus declared:

> *"That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."*
>
> — Matthew 23:35, KJV

He then announced:

> *"Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."*
>
> — Matthew 23:36, KJV

This passage deserves careful consideration alongside Revelation 18:24.

Matthew records Christ announcing that responsibility for the blood of the righteous would come upon the generation he addressed.

Revelation describes Babylon as the city in which the blood of prophets and saints was found.

The correspondence involves more than a general reference to persecution.

Both passages use sweeping language concerning bloodshed. Both speak of God's servants. Both announce the coming of judgment. And in Matthew the judgment is expressly associated with Jerusalem and the generation then living.

The comparison is particularly important because the following verses identify Jerusalem as the city which killed the prophets.

John's description of Babylon therefore resembles the very charge Jesus brought against Jerusalem.

This is one of the principal reasons why interpreters have identified Babylon with the covenant city rather than imperial Rome.

The argument may be expressed as follows. Jesus accused Jerusalem's leaders of filling up the measure of their fathers' sins.

He announced that the blood of the righteous would be required of that generation.

He foretold the desolation of Jerusalem. John subsequently describes a great city guilty of shedding the blood of prophets and saints.

He announces that God will avenge their blood through her destruction.

If both passages concern the same guilt and judgment, Babylon would naturally represent Jerusalem.

This is a substantial biblical argument. However, we must also consider whether Revelation may be applying similar prophetic language to Rome, which persecuted Christians and exercised violent power over many nations.

The shared language strongly supports the Jerusalem interpretation, but its application is not beyond dispute.

11 The Martyrs Crying for Justice

Another important passage appears in Revelation 6. When the fifth seal is opened, John sees the souls of those who have been killed because of their testimony.

They cry:

> *"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"*
>
> — Revelation 6:10, KJV

The martyrs are awaiting divine vindication. They are assured that their suffering has not been forgotten. The same theme appears when Babylon is judged. John declares:

> *"Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her."*
>
> — Revelation 18:20, KJV

The connection is significant. In Revelation 6, the martyrs ask when God will avenge their blood.

In Revelation 18, heaven is commanded to rejoice because God has avenged the apostles and prophets upon Babylon.

This suggests that Babylon's destruction forms part of the answer to the martyrs' cry.

If the martyrs include those persecuted by the authorities of first-century Jerusalem, the judgment of AD 70 provides a possible fulfilment.

The same generation that rejected Christ and persecuted his messengers witnessed the destruction of the Temple and city.

However, Rome also persecuted Christians. The Roman imperial government executed believers, including, according to early Christian tradition, Peter and Paul.

Therefore, the avenging of Christian martyrs could also be associated with judgment upon Rome.

The important question is whether the reference to prophets, apostles, and the blood of the righteous is more specifically connected with Jerusalem.

The close verbal and thematic relationship with Matthew 23 and Luke 13 gives the Jerusalem interpretation considerable strength.

12. The Judgment of Babylon by Fire

Revelation 18 describes the destruction of Babylon in dramatic language.

John writes:

> *"Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."*
>
> — Revelation 18:8, KJV

The description of destruction by fire naturally invites comparison with the events of AD 70.

Josephus records that the Roman armies set fire to the Temple and that large areas of Jerusalem were destroyed.

The city suffered famine, warfare, slaughter, and devastation. These circumstances correspond broadly with the judgments described in Revelation.

Furthermore, Jesus had foretold that Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies and subjected to terrible suffering.

The historical parallel is therefore significant. Yet we must avoid overstating the evidence.

The destruction of cities by fire was a common feature of ancient warfare.

The Old Testament prophets also used burning imagery to describe divine judgment upon nations, including Babylon itself.

Therefore, the reference to fire does not independently identify Jerusalem.

The argument becomes stronger when combined with the prophetic language concerning the harlot, the blood of the prophets, and the great city where Christ was crucified.

Together, these details provide a recognisable biblical and historical pattern.

13. The Beast Turns Against the Woman

One of the most important statements in Revelation 17 describes the destruction of the woman by the beast and its horns.

John records:

> *"And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire."*
>
> — Revelation 17:16, KJV

This passage deserves special attention. The woman initially sits upon the beast. She is associated with its power. Yet the beast and its horns eventually turn against her and bring about her destruction.

Advocates of the Jerusalem interpretation consider this particularly significant.

During the first century, Jerusalem existed under Roman rule. The Jewish authorities had a complicated relationship with the Roman government.

At the trial of Jesus, the chief priests appealed to Caesar's authority. John records:

> *"But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar."*
>
> — John 19:15, KJV

This statement is remarkable. The chief priests, who represented the religious establishment in Jerusalem, appealed to the authority of the Roman emperor.

The contrast with their rejection of Jesus as king is central to John's account of the crucifixion.

Some interpreters see here an example of the unfaithful alliance symbolised by the woman sitting upon the beast.

However, the events must not be simplified. Judea's relationship with Rome involved periods of cooperation, tension, revolt, and open warfare.

The Jewish people were not united in their attitudes towards Roman rule.

Nor can every political action of the first-century religious authorities be described as a single organised alliance.

Nevertheless, the historical outcome is significant. The Roman imperial power which exercised authority over Judea ultimately destroyed Jerusalem.

If the beast represents Rome and the woman represents Jerusalem, Revelation 17:16 provides a striking correspondence with the events of AD 70.

The power upon which the city had been politically dependent became the instrument of her destruction.

This interpretation also resembles Ezekiel 16, where the unfaithful woman is judged through those with whom she had been involved.

The combination of the prophetic imagery and the historical events gives the Jerusalem interpretation substantial force.

But there is another possible explanation. If the woman represents Rome, the beast may represent imperial power turning against its own capital, perhaps through civil war, rebellion, or a future judgment.

In that case, the imagery would concern the collapse of Roman imperial civilisation rather than the destruction of Jerusalem.

The question therefore depends upon the relationship between the woman and the beast.

The Jerusalem interpretation offers a direct historical correspondence in AD 70.

The Roman interpretation must explain the hostility of the beast towards the city that embodies its own power.

However, because the beast and the woman are symbols, this difficulty does not make the Roman interpretation impossible.

14. The Seven Mountains — An Important Argument for Rome

We must now examine one of the strongest objections to the Jerusalem interpretation.

The angel tells John:

> *"And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth."*
>
> — Revelation 17:9, KJV

Rome was famously associated with seven hills. The city's geographical character was known in antiquity. For this reason, many interpreters have regarded Revelation 17:9 as an unmistakable reference to Rome.

This interpretation has substantial historical support. Victorinus of Pettau, one of the earliest surviving Christian commentators on Revelation, explicitly connected the seven mountains with the city of Rome.

The Roman identification subsequently became influential in Christian interpretation.

We must acknowledge the strength of this argument. John's original readers lived under Roman imperial authority. They would have known Rome as the centre of the Empire. The reference to a woman sitting upon seven mountains could naturally suggest the seven-hilled capital.

However, the passage continues by identifying the seven heads with seven kings.

This introduces a second meaning. The mountains are not necessarily intended as a geographical description alone.

In biblical prophecy, mountains can represent kingdoms or political powers.

Daniel uses similar symbolic language when describing the kingdom established by God.

Therefore, it is possible that the seven mountains represent a succession of kingdoms or rulers.

Nevertheless, the association of Rome with seven hills remains a strong argument.

It should not be dismissed by claiming that Jerusalem also had surrounding hills.

Such a claim would require evidence that Jerusalem was conventionally identified in the first century by an equivalent title.

The historical evidence for Rome's seven-hill identity is considerably stronger.

Consequently, Revelation 17:9 favours the Roman interpretation, although the additional explanation concerning kings prevents the geographical identification from settling the whole question.

15. The Commercial Wealth of Babylon

Revelation 18 contains an extensive description of Babylon's commercial wealth.

The merchants of the earth mourn because her destruction has ended their trade.

John lists gold, silver, precious stones, fine linen, purple, silk, costly wood, ivory, spices, wine, oil, wheat, cattle, horses, and other goods.

He also includes:

"And slaves, and souls of men."

— Revelation 18:13, KJV

The description presents Babylon as a great centre of wealth, luxury, and commercial exploitation.

This is particularly important for identifying the city. Rome was the capital of an enormous Empire. Its wealth was supported by tribute, taxation, trade, conquest, and the labour of enslaved people.

Luxury goods from distant regions flowed into its markets. Consequently, Revelation 18 corresponds naturally with the economic prominence of imperial Rome.

The Roman interpretation therefore possesses a substantial advantage in explaining the scale of the commercial lament.

Modern scholarship has emphasised this feature when arguing that Babylon represents Rome as the political and economic centre of imperial exploitation.

What about Jerusalem? Jerusalem possessed considerable religious and economic importance.

The Temple attracted pilgrims, offerings, sacrifices, and commercial activity.

The city was also connected with regional trade. Nevertheless, its commercial importance cannot reasonably be equated with that of imperial Rome.

The language of merchants from across the earth becoming wealthy through the city's luxury fits Rome more naturally if understood as a description of literal economic influence.

Advocates of the Jerusalem interpretation therefore argue that John is employing the language of the Old Testament prophets.

Ezekiel 27, for example, describes the commercial wealth and destruction of Tyre through an elaborate lament involving merchants, ships, and costly goods.

Much of Revelation 18 resembles this earlier prophecy. The argument is that John deliberately uses the language of great commercial cities to portray the judgment of Jerusalem.

This is possible because prophetic language frequently combines imagery drawn from earlier judgments.

However, the literary borrowing does not remove the historical difficulty.

If Babylon represents Jerusalem, the description of her worldwide commercial influence requires an explanation beyond the ordinary economic circumstances of the city.

This is one of the strongest objections to an exclusive Jerusalem identification.

16. The Merchants and Mariners Mourning Babylon's Fall

John describes the response to Babylon's destruction:

"And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more."

— Revelation 18:11, KJV

He also records:

"And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off."

— Revelation 18:17, KJV

These descriptions resemble the lament over Tyre in Ezekiel 27. Tyre was an important maritime trading city. The merchants and sailors mourned over the collapse of her commercial power.

John appears to employ this established prophetic imagery. However, the application presents an important interpretative choice.

If Babylon represents Rome, the maritime and commercial language corresponds broadly with Rome's economic dominance over the Mediterranean world.

If Babylon represents Jerusalem, the language must be understood more symbolically, or as an application of the earlier prophetic lament to Jerusalem's judgment.

This is not impossible. Jerusalem's destruction did have far-reaching consequences for Jewish communities throughout the Roman world.

Its Temple possessed religious and economic importance extending beyond Judea.

Nevertheless, the text's description of maritime commerce presents a more obvious correspondence with imperial Rome.

The evidence therefore cannot honestly be described as uniformly favouring Jerusalem.

The bloodguilt and covenantal imagery favour the Jerusalem interpretation.

The commercial and imperial imagery favour Rome. Our task is to determine which features are central to the identity of Babylon and how John combines them.

17. Was Rome Also Called Babylon?

Another important objection arises from the use of the name Babylon in early Christian and Jewish writings.

In 1 Peter, the apostle writes:

> *"The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son."*
>
> — 1 Peter 5:13, KJV

Many Christian interpreters understand Babylon here as a symbolic name for Rome.

The interpretation is connected with the early Christian tradition that Peter ministered and suffered martyrdom in Rome.

If Peter used Babylon as a symbolic name for Rome, it would provide an important precedent for understanding Revelation in the same way.

However, the interpretation of 1 Peter 5:13 is disputed. Some maintain that Peter was referring to the historical region of Babylon in Mesopotamia.

Others favour Rome. The verse itself does not expressly identify the location. Nevertheless, the Roman interpretation possesses considerable historical support and is widely accepted.

There is also evidence from Jewish writings that Babylon could function as a symbolic designation for Rome.

The Sibylline Oracles contain oracles against Rome which employ imagery associated with Babylon and the judgment of oppressive powers.

This demonstrates that a symbolic association between Rome and ancient Babylon was historically plausible.

The argument therefore cannot be dismissed. Babylon had been the great imperial power which destroyed Jerusalem and carried Judah into captivity.

Rome became the imperial power which conquered Judea and destroyed Jerusalem's Temple in AD 70.

The resemblance would have been especially meaningful to Jewish and Christian readers.

On this interpretation, John calls Rome Babylon because Rome had assumed the role of an oppressive empire standing against God's people.

This provides a powerful explanation of the name.

However, advocates of the Jerusalem interpretation understand the name differently.

They argue that Jerusalem had become spiritually like the ancient Babylon through her rebellion against God, persecution of his servants, and association with worldly power.

Both explanations are theologically possible. The question remains which one best accounts for the complete description in Revelation 17 and 18.

18. The Contrast Between Babylon and the New Jerusalem

There is another significant feature of Revelation which deserves consideration.

The destruction of Babylon is followed by the appearance of the New Jerusalem.

In Revelation 21, John declares:

> *"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."*
>
> — Revelation 21:2, KJV

The contrast between the two women is striking. Babylon is a harlot. The New Jerusalem is a bride. Babylon is corrupt and is judged. The New Jerusalem is holy and comes from God. Babylon is associated with immorality, persecution, and the worship of worldly power.

The New Jerusalem is associated with the presence of God and the marriage of the Lamb.

This contrast has considerable theological significance. Advocates of the Jerusalem interpretation understand the two women as representing two covenantal orders.

The first represents unfaithful Jerusalem, associated with the old covenant institutions that had rejected Christ.

The second represents the heavenly Jerusalem, the people of God gathered through the new covenant.

This interpretation finds support in Paul's teaching in Galatians. He writes:

> *"For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.*
>
> *But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."*
>
> — Galatians 4:25–26, KJV

Paul therefore distinguishes between the Jerusalem associated with the present order of bondage and the Jerusalem above.

This is an important biblical precedent. The writer to the Hebrews likewise declares that believers have come to the heavenly Jerusalem.

He writes:

> *"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels."*
>
> — Hebrews 12:22, KJV

These passages establish that the New Testament can use Jerusalem to describe both the earthly city and the heavenly community of God's redeemed people.

The contrast between the harlot and the bride in Revelation therefore provides substantial material for a covenantal interpretation.

However, the contrast does not necessarily require Babylon to be earthly Jerusalem.

If Babylon represents Rome, the two women could symbolise the corrupt imperial city and the holy city of God.

On this reading, Revelation contrasts human power, luxury, and idolatry with the redeemed community under Christ.

This interpretation also possesses considerable theological force. The distinction therefore supports the Jerusalem interpretation but cannot independently establish it.

19. Which City Was Destroyed in AD 70?

We must now consider the historical consequences of the two interpretations.

If Babylon represents Jerusalem, the destruction described in Revelation 17 and 18 has an identifiable first-century counterpart.

Jerusalem was destroyed by Roman armies in AD 70. The Temple was burned. The city suffered famine, violence, and devastation. The Roman imperial power which had ruled Judea became the instrument of its destruction.

These events correspond with several features of John's description. But what if Babylon represents Rome? Rome was not destroyed in AD 70. Nor was the city burned and permanently removed during Nero's reign or the years immediately following it.

The great fire of Rome occurred in AD 64, but it did not bring about the final destruction of the city or the termination of Roman imperial power.

Therefore, if Revelation 18 describes the completed and irreversible destruction of Rome, that judgment cannot be identified straightforwardly with an event occurring before AD 70.

This raises an important question. Does the prophecy describe an event that John expected soon but which extended beyond the first century?

Does it employ symbolic language concerning the downfall of Roman imperial power?

Or does the description more naturally refer to Jerusalem's destruction?

Advocates of the early-date interpretation favour the latter explanation.

They argue that the fall of Babylon corresponds with the judgment of Jerusalem, whose destruction was approaching when John received his visions.

However, it must be acknowledged that the fall of Rome could also be portrayed prophetically before it occurred.

The fact that Rome survived beyond AD 70 does not, by itself, prove that it cannot be Babylon.

A prophecy may describe a future judgment which remains unfulfilled during the lifetime of its first recipients.

Nevertheless, this explanation must be considered alongside Revelation's repeated declarations that the time was near at hand.

The early-date interpretation therefore gains strength if Babylon can first be securely identified with Jerusalem.

But the chronology cannot be used as the sole means of establishing that identity.

Otherwise, the argument would become circular. We must identify Babylon from the characteristics given in the text, then consider how that identification bears upon the date.

20. Can Babylon Represent More Than One Historical Reality?

An additional possibility deserves attention. Biblical prophecy frequently employs symbols which carry more than one level of significance.

For example, Daniel's beasts represent kingdoms, but their characteristics may also be associated with particular rulers.

The same symbol can describe a political institution and the person who embodies its authority.

Could Babylon likewise represent more than one historical reality?

Some interpreters understand Babylon as the embodiment of human civilisation organised in rebellion against God.

On this reading, historical cities such as ancient Babylon and imperial Rome exemplify a wider spiritual and political reality.

Jerusalem, when unfaithful to her covenant responsibilities, could also display characteristics of that rebellious order.

This interpretation may explain why John's description combines imagery associated with several Old Testament cities.

He draws upon prophecies against Babylon, Tyre, Nineveh, and Jerusalem.

The woman may therefore embody the characteristics of these cities rather than representing only one of them in every respect.

However, Revelation 17:18 identifies her as the great city. This suggests that John expected his readers to recognise a particular historical referent, even if the symbolism possesses a wider theological application.

We should therefore avoid allowing the broader symbolic interpretation to obscure the historical question.

The prophecy may use Babylon as a universal symbol, but the identity of the city primarily represented still requires investigation.

21. The Strongest Evidence for Each Interpretation

We are now in a position to compare the principal arguments.

Evidence	Jerusalem interpretation	Rome interpretation
The harlot imagery	Jerusalem is expressly called a harlot in Isaiah and Ezekiel	Pagan cities such as Tyre and Nineveh were also called harlots
The great city	Revelation 11:8 identifies the great city with Christ's crucifixion	Revelation 17:18 describes a city ruling over kings
Blood of prophets and saints	Closely resembles Matthew 23 and Luke 13	Rome persecuted Christians and exercised violent imperial power
Destruction by the beast	Rome destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70	May symbolise the collapse or self-destruction of imperial power
Seven mountains	Can be interpreted symbolically as kings or kingdoms	Rome was famously associated with seven hills
Commercial wealth	Can draw on Old Testament prophetic imagery	Strongly corresponds with Rome's imperial economy
Babylon as a name	May symbolise covenant unfaithfulness and judgment	Was used as a symbolic designation for Rome
Harlot and bride	Earthly Jerusalem contrasted with heavenly Jerusalem	Corrupt imperial city contrasted with God's holy city
Historical destruction	Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70	Rome was not destroyed in AD 70

This comparison shows that the evidence is not all of one kind. The strongest arguments for Jerusalem are theological and intertextual.

They arise from the language of the Old Testament prophets, Christ's judgment upon Jerusalem, and the identification of the great city in Revelation 11.

The strongest arguments for Rome are geographical, political, economic, and historical.

They arise from the seven hills, the city's dominion over kings, the worldwide commercial system, and the use of Babylon as a symbolic name for Rome.

This distinction matters.

We should not dismiss the evidence for Rome merely because Jerusalem supplies a compelling explanation of the covenantal imagery.

Nor should we dismiss Jerusalem merely because Rome was the dominant imperial city.

The interpretation must account for the entire vision.

22. Does the Jerusalem Interpretation Strengthen the Early Date?

We now return to the principal purpose of our study. We are investigating whether Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

If Babylon represents Jerusalem, the chronological implications are substantial.

The prophecy describes a city guilty of shedding the blood of God's servants.

It announces that judgment will fall upon her. It describes her destruction by a powerful beast. The city is burned with fire. The judgment brings divine vengeance upon the murderers of prophets and saints.

These features correspond with Christ's prophecy concerning Jerusalem.

Jesus accused the religious leaders of persecuting God's messengers.

He declared that the judgment would fall upon that generation. He foretold the desolation of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple.

The Roman armies accomplished that destruction in AD 70. If Revelation describes the same judgment as an approaching event, the book would naturally belong to the years before the city fell.

This interpretation would also explain the repeated declarations that the time was at hand.

However, the conclusion remains conditional. The identification of Babylon with Jerusalem is not established beyond reasonable dispute.

The evidence for Rome is substantial, especially Revelation 17:9 and 17:18.

Moreover, even if Babylon represents Jerusalem, a later symbolic retelling of the city's destruction remains possible.

Therefore, the Jerusalem interpretation strengthens the earlydate hypothesis but does not independently prove it.

The argument remains cumulative. The Temple in Revelation 11, the succession of kings in Revelation 17, the number of the beast in Revelation 13, and the repeated time statements must all be considered together.

23. The Judgment of Jerusalem and the Vindication of Christ

Before concluding, we should consider the theological significance of the proposed interpretation.

If Babylon represents Jerusalem, her destruction is not merely the defeat of a city by a foreign army.

It is understood as the historical judgment which Jesus had foretold.

The Temple had been the centre of the worship established under the Law of Moses.

Its sacrifices pointed towards the perfect offering of Jesus Christ. Through his death, Christ accomplished redemption. Through his resurrection and exaltation, he was declared Lord and Christ.

The apostles proclaimed that forgiveness of sins was now found through his name.

Yet the authorities who rejected him continued to oppose the apostolic message.

Jesus had foretold that the rejection of God's messengers would bring judgment upon that generation.

The destruction of Jerusalem therefore possessed profound significance within the history of redemption.

Nevertheless, an important doctrinal distinction must be preserved.

The destruction of Jerusalem did not accomplish the redemption that Christ had left unfinished.

His sacrifice was complete. The new covenant rested upon his blood, not upon the military actions of Rome.

Rather, the destruction of the Temple marked the historical termination of the former sacrificial system and demonstrated the fulfilment of Christ's prophetic warning.

This distinction is essential. It also guards against the mistaken idea that the Jewish people as a whole were permanently excluded from God's mercy.

The New Testament proclaims salvation through Christ to Jews and Gentiles alike.

The earliest Christian Church was itself composed largely of Jewish believers.

The judgment described by Jesus concerned the particular historical generation and the covenantal authorities that rejected him.

It must not be turned into a condemnation of an ethnic people. If Revelation concerns this judgment, its message is ultimately about the authority, righteousness, and faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

The city that rejected him was judged. The Lamb who was slain was vindicated. The people redeemed by his blood were called to remain faithful. And the heavenly Jerusalem stands as the symbol of God's dwelling with his redeemed people.

24. Conclusion: Is Babylon the Jerusalem of Christ's Generation?

The identity of Babylon the Great remains one of the most disputed questions in the interpretation of Revelation.

The traditional identification with imperial Rome possesses substantial historical and textual support.

Rome was the city of seven hills. It ruled over kings and nations. It accumulated extraordinary wealth through imperial commerce. It persecuted Christians. And it was known symbolically as Babylon in early Jewish and Christian interpretation.

These considerations cannot be lightly dismissed. Nevertheless, the identification with Jerusalem also rests upon important biblical evidence.

Isaiah expressly called Jerusalem a harlot. Ezekiel described her covenant unfaithfulness using language remarkably similar to Revelation 17.

Jesus identified Jerusalem as the city which killed the prophets. He declared that the blood of the righteous would be required of the generation he addressed.

Revelation 11 identifies the great city by reference to the place where Christ was crucified.

Revelation 18 describes Babylon as guilty of the blood of prophets and saints.

The beast eventually destroys the woman by fire, just as the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70.

These connections provide a substantial basis for the Jerusalem interpretation.

Of particular importance is the relationship between Matthew 23 and Revelation 18.

Jesus declared that the blood of the righteous would come upon that generation.

John described a city in which the blood of prophets and saints was found and upon which God would avenge their deaths.

If both passages concern the same historical judgment, Jerusalem is a natural identification.

The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 would then supply the historical fulfilment of the prophecy.

However, the geographical, political, and commercial evidence for Rome remains significant.

It would therefore be unwarranted to claim that the Jerusalem interpretation has been conclusively demonstrated.

Our conclusion should be stated more carefully. The identification of Babylon with Jerusalem provides a coherent biblical interpretation of Revelation 17 and 18, particularly when the harlot imagery, the blood of the prophets, and the destruction of the great city are compared with Christ's judgment upon Jerusalem. If this identification is correct, it gives substantial additional support to the composition of Revelation before AD 70.

This argument is especially important because it connects the judgments of Revelation with the prophetic teaching of Jesus.

The coming destruction of Jerusalem was not an unexpected event.

Christ had foretold it. He had identified the generation upon whom it would fall. He had announced that the Temple would be destroyed. And he had warned his disciples to recognise the approaching desolation.

If John was describing the same judgment, his prophecy would be directly relevant to the Christians of the first century.

The repeated declaration that the time was at hand would retain its ordinary historical force.

Thus, the Jerusalem interpretation of Babylon makes an important contribution to the cumulative case for the early date.

It does not stand alone. Its strength depends upon its agreement with the other evidence we have examined.

The question now arises whether another part of Revelation provides further confirmation that the judgments concern Israel's covenant history.

In Revelation 15, John describes the redeemed singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

The reference to Moses is especially significant because the song recorded in Deuteronomy 32 concerns Israel's unfaithfulness, God's judgment, and the vindication of his servants.

That is the subject of our next chapter.

References and Sources for Chapter 12

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3. Ezekiel 16 and 23. Jerusalem and Samaria portrayed through the imagery of covenant unfaithfulness and harlotry.

4. Matthew 23:29–39; Luke 13:33–35. Christ's condemnation of Jerusalem for killing the prophets and his announcement of judgment upon that generation.

5. Revelation 11:8; 17–18. The great city, the harlot, the beast, and the judgment of Babylon.

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11. Galatians 4:21–31; Hebrews 12:18–24; Revelation 21:1–4. Biblical passages contrasting earthly and heavenly Jerusalem.

12. 1 Peter 5:13. The reference to Babylon, commonly interpreted as a symbolic designation of Rome.

End of Chapter 12 The next chapter is Chapter 13 — The Song of Moses and the Judgment of Israel.

Our next chapter examines an important biblical connection: the song sung by the victorious saints in Revelation 15 and the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, with its warnings concerning Israel's covenant unfaithfulness.

Chapter 13 — The Song of Moses and the Judgment of Israel

Does the Song Sung by the Victorious Saints in Revelation 15 Point to the Covenant Judgments Foretold in Deuteronomy 32 and Their Fulfilment in the First Century?

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, we examined the identity of Babylon the Great in Revelation 17 and 18.

We considered the evidence for identifying Babylon with imperial Rome and the arguments for understanding her as Jerusalem, the city upon which Jesus Christ pronounced judgment.

We discovered that the description of Babylon as a harlot, together with her responsibility for the blood of prophets and saints, bears a striking resemblance to the charges brought against Jerusalem by the Old Testament prophets and by Jesus himself.

The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 provides a recognisable historical setting for these judgments.

However, we also acknowledged that the geographical, political, and commercial descriptions of Babylon provide substantial evidence for identifying her with Rome.

We must therefore continue our investigation by examining other passages which may help us understand the historical purpose of Revelation.

One such passage occurs in Revelation chapter 15. John describes a company of victorious saints standing beside a sea of glass mingled with fire. They have overcome the beast, its image, and the number of its name.

He then records that they sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

This is a remarkable statement. Why does John associate the victory of Christians over the beast with the song of Moses?

What does that song signify? And why does it appear immediately before the final series of divine judgments?

The answer requires us to return to the Old Testament. There are two particularly important songs associated with Moses.

The first appears in Exodus 15 and celebrates Israel's deliverance from Egypt.

The second appears in Deuteronomy 32 and concerns God's faithfulness, Israel's unfaithfulness, divine judgment, and the eventual vindication of God's servants.

Both songs have important connections with Revelation. However, the second deserves particular attention because it contains solemn warnings concerning the consequences of Israel breaking God's covenant.

If John intended his readers to recall Deuteronomy 32, the song may provide further evidence that the judgments of Revelation are connected with Israel's covenant history.

This could strengthen the argument that Revelation concerns the events culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

But we must distinguish between a biblical connection and a chronological conclusion.

The fact that John refers to Moses does not automatically establish that he is describing Jerusalem's destruction.

Our task is to examine the passages carefully and determine what the evidence supports.

1. The Victorious Saints Sing the Song of Moses

John writes: "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

> *And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."*
>
> — Revelation 15:2–3, KJV

The passage brings together several important subjects. There is a company of saints who have overcome the beast. They have remained faithful in the face of persecution. They stand in the presence of God. They possess harps and sing a song of victory. But their victory is described in unusual terms. They have overcome the beast, even though the beast had been permitted to make war against the saints.

Revelation 13:7 declares: "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them."

How, then, can those who were overcome by the beast be described as victorious?

The answer lies in the nature of Christian victory. The beast possessed the power to persecute and kill. But it could not overthrow the faith of those who remained faithful to Jesus Christ.

Their victory was not necessarily deliverance from physical suffering.

It was faithfulness to Christ even when confronted with death. This agrees with an earlier declaration:

> *"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."*
>
> — Revelation 12:11, KJV

The victory of the saints therefore rests upon the blood of Christ and their faithful testimony.

This explains why their song is also called the song of the Lamb. Their deliverance is not accomplished through their own strength. It is accomplished through Jesus Christ. But why is Moses mentioned?

2. The Two Songs Associated with Moses

The Old Testament contains two principal songs associated with Moses.

The first is found in Exodus 15. The second is found in Deuteronomy 32. Both are relevant to the imagery of Revelation. However, they emphasise different aspects of God's dealings with his people.

Exodus 15	Deuteronomy 32
Celebrates Israel's deliverance from Egypt	Warns Israel concerning covenant unfaithfulness
Describes the defeat of Pharaoh and his army	Describes judgments resulting from Israel's disobedience
Praises God as the victorious deliverer	Proclaims God's righteousness in judgment
Follows the crossing of the Red Sea	Is given as a witness against Israel
Looks towards God's dwelling among his people	Ends with the vindication of God's servants

The differences are important. Exodus 15 is principally a song of deliverance from an enemy. Deuteronomy 32 is a prophetic song which includes both judgment upon God's unfaithful people and the vindication of those who belong to him.

Revelation 15 contains elements resembling both. The saints stand beside a sea and celebrate victory over an oppressive power.

This recalls Israel's deliverance from Egypt. But the song also declares that God's judgments are righteous and that the nations will recognise his holiness.

This recalls the broader theological themes of Deuteronomy 32. Scholars disagree about which song John primarily intended. Some favour Exodus 15, while others recognise a connection with both songs.

We should therefore avoid assuming that the expression "song of Moses" refers exclusively to Deuteronomy 32.

Nevertheless, the relationship with Deuteronomy deserves careful investigation.

3. The Song Sung After the Red Sea

We begin with Exodus 15.

After the Israelites passed through the Red Sea and the Egyptian army was destroyed, Moses and the children of Israel sang:

> *"I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."*
>
> — Exodus 15:1, KJV

The song celebrates God's victory over an oppressive power. Israel had been held in bondage under Pharaoh. God delivered his people, brought them through the sea, and destroyed the power that pursued them.

Moses declared:

> *"The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name."*
>
> — Exodus 15:3, KJV

Later he proclaimed:

> *"Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"*
>
> — Exodus 15:11, KJV

The song concludes with the declaration:

> *"The LORD shall reign for ever and ever."*
>
> — Exodus 15:18, KJV

These themes are remarkably similar to those found in Revelation. God defeats an oppressive power. His people are delivered. They sing beside a sea. They celebrate his righteousness, holiness, and everlasting reign. The resemblance suggests that John deliberately portrays the victory of the saints through the imagery of a new exodus.

Just as Israel was delivered from Pharaoh, Christ's people are delivered from the power of the beast.

The reference to the sea in Revelation 15 may reinforce this connection.

However, John's sea is a sea of glass mingled with fire, not the literal Red Sea.

The imagery is therefore symbolic. The principal point is that the saints celebrate a deliverance accomplished by God.

Their song proclaims that the Lord is victorious over the powers that oppose his people.

This is the first important background to Revelation 15.

4. The Second Song of Moses — Deuteronomy 32

We now turn to the song which is of particular importance to our investigation.

Shortly before his death, Moses was instructed to teach the children of Israel a song.

The Lord declared:

> *"Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 31:19, KJV

This verse establishes the purpose of the song. It was to serve as a witness against Israel. The people were to learn it and remember its words. When they subsequently departed from the covenant, the song would testify that God had warned them beforehand.

The Lord continued:

> *"For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 31:29, KJV

This is a remarkable prophetic statement. Moses warned Israel that, following his death, the people would depart from God's commandments.

He also declared that evil would befall them in the latter days. The warning was not directed primarily towards the pagan nations.

It was addressed to Israel. The song was given as a continuing testimony concerning God's covenant dealings with his people.

This provides an important distinction between the songs in Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32.

The first celebrates God's judgment upon Egypt and Israel's deliverance.

The second warns Israel that the nation itself may come under divine judgment through covenant unfaithfulness.

It is this second theme which gives Deuteronomy 32 particular relevance to the judgments described in Revelation.

5. Heaven and Earth Called to Witness

The song begins:

> *"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 32:1, KJV

Moses calls heaven and earth to hear his words. This language has a particular significance within the covenantal setting.

The Lord had established his covenant with Israel and warned the people concerning the blessings of obedience and the consequences of disobedience.

Heaven and earth are summoned as witnesses to the solemn declaration.

The same pattern appears in Deuteronomy 30:19:

> *"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 30:19, KJV

The meaning is clear. Israel was accountable before God for the covenant obligations that had been made known to them.

The witnesses were called to testify that the nation had received God's commandments and warnings.

This is important when we consider the judgments in Revelation. John's visions describe divine judgments which are declared to be righteous and true.

The heavenly saints acknowledge that God's actions are just. In this respect, Revelation reflects the same principle established in the song of Moses.

God does not act unjustly. His judgments vindicate his righteousness. However, the covenantal setting of Deuteronomy must not be transferred automatically to every vision in Revelation.

The connection gives us a biblical pattern for understanding judgment, but the identity of those judged must still be established from the context.

6. The Righteousness of God Moses declares:

> *"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 32:4, KJV

This statement deserves special attention. The song begins by proclaiming the perfection and righteousness of God.

Whatever judgments follow, they are presented as expressions of his justice.

God is not unjust. He does not act through cruelty or corruption. His judgments are righteous because his character is righteous. Now compare the song in Revelation 15:

> *"Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."*
>
> — Revelation 15:3, KJV

The resemblance is significant. Moses declares that God's ways are judgment and that he is just and right.

The victorious saints declare that God's ways are just and true.

Both songs proclaim the righteousness of God in the exercise of his authority.

The wording is not an exact quotation from Deuteronomy 32, but the theological agreement is evident.

This supports the possibility that John intended his readers to remember the song of Moses.

Nevertheless, Revelation 15 also draws upon other biblical passages, including the Psalms and the prophets.

Scholars have therefore described the song as a composition drawing together several Old Testament themes rather than a direct reproduction of either song of Moses.

The connection with Deuteronomy is real, but it should be understood within this wider scriptural background.

7. Israel's Covenant Unfaithfulness

The song continues with an indictment of Israel. Moses declares:

> *"They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 32:5, KJV

The expression "perverse and crooked generation" deserves attention.

Moses was describing a people who had received extraordinary privileges from God but had departed from his commandments.

The language concerns moral and spiritual corruption. It does not imply that every individual Israelite was unfaithful. Indeed, Scripture repeatedly distinguishes between those who rebel against God and the faithful remnant who trust him.

Nevertheless, the national warning is severe. The people who had received God's covenant were capable of rejecting his word.

This provides an important background to the language used by Jesus.

In Matthew 17:17, Christ declared:

> *"O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?"*
>
> — Matthew 17:17, KJV

Peter likewise exhorted his hearers at Pentecost: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

— Acts 2:40, KJV

The word "untoward" in this passage means crooked or perverse. Thus, the language used concerning the generation addressed by Jesus and the apostles resembles the covenantal language of Deuteronomy.

The resemblance is important because Jesus also foretold judgment upon that generation.

The connection becomes more significant when we consider the manner in which Moses described the approaching consequences of Israel's disobedience.

8. The Song Foretells Israel's Provocation of God

Moses continues:

> *"They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 32:21, KJV

This verse is particularly important because the apostle Paul quotes it in Romans 10:19.

Paul applies the words within his discussion of Israel, the gospel, and the calling of the Gentiles.

He writes:

> *"But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you."*
>
> — Romans 10:19, KJV

This provides direct New Testament evidence that the apostle understood the song of Moses as relevant to the circumstances of his own ministry.

Paul was not simply quoting an ancient warning without present significance.

He was explaining the relationship between Israel's response to the gospel and the inclusion of the Gentiles among God's people.

This is particularly relevant to our investigation. It demonstrates that the covenant warnings of Deuteronomy 32 were already being applied during the apostolic period.

The song was not regarded merely as a record of events long past. Its language continued to explain God's dealings with Israel in the light of Christ.

This gives substantial support to the possibility that John also employed the song within a first-century covenantal setting.

Nevertheless, Paul's application of Deuteronomy 32:21 does not establish that every judgment in the song was fulfilled in AD 70.

It confirms that the song possessed significance for the apostolic proclamation and the calling of the Gentiles.

9. The Judgments Foretold in the Song

Deuteronomy 32 describes severe judgments resulting from covenant unfaithfulness.

Moses declares:

> *"For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 32:22, KJV

He continues:

> *"I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 32:23, KJV

The following verse describes famine, destruction, and pestilence:

> *"They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 32:24, KJV

These are solemn words. The judgments include hunger, destruction, violence, and threats from hostile powers.

Such language closely resembles the covenant curses recorded in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

Both passages warn Israel that continued rebellion would bring war, famine, disease, and national catastrophe.

The importance of these warnings lies in their covenantal setting. Israel had received God's law. The nation had been warned that disobedience would bring consequences.

When later prophets announced judgment, they frequently employed language drawn from these earlier covenant warnings.

This provides an important background for the judgments described in Revelation.

The seals, trumpets, and bowls include warfare, famine, pestilence, fire, and destruction.

The similarity may indicate that John is drawing upon the language of the covenant curses.

However, these images are not confined to judgments upon Israel. The prophets also employed them when announcing judgments against foreign nations.

Consequently, the presence of famine, fire, and pestilence in Revelation cannot independently establish that the judgments concern Jerusalem.

The covenantal connection is important, but the identification must rest upon the broader evidence.

10. The Historical Famine During Jerusalem's Siege

The judgments foretold in Deuteronomy invite comparison with the suffering experienced during the Roman siege of Jerusalem.

Josephus, who witnessed the Jewish–Roman War, describes terrible conditions within the city.

As the Roman forces surrounded Jerusalem, food supplies were exhausted.

Famine spread among the inhabitants.

Josephus records violence, desperation, and the breakdown of ordinary social relationships as hunger intensified.

His account includes one of the most horrifying episodes of the siege, involving a woman named Mary who killed and ate her child.

This episode closely recalls the covenant warning in Deuteronomy 28:53–57, where Moses foretold that famine during a siege could lead to the most extreme forms of desperation.

The correspondence is especially striking because Deuteronomy 28 expressly describes judgment through an enemy surrounding Israel's cities.

Moses declared:

> *"And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 28:52, KJV

The events of AD 70 provide a terrible historical example of the calamities described in the covenant warnings.

This is a substantial point in favour of connecting the judgment of Jerusalem with the warnings of Moses.

However, we must distinguish Deuteronomy 28 from Deuteronomy 32.

Both concern covenant judgment, but the detailed prediction of siege conditions appears especially clearly in Deuteronomy 28.

The early-date argument is therefore strengthened when these passages are examined together.

The destruction of Jerusalem may reasonably be understood as a historical manifestation of the covenant curses.

Nevertheless, this does not automatically prove that the judgments of Revelation 15 and 16 describe the siege.

That further identification must be established by examining John's language.

11. Did the Inhabitants of Jerusalem Gnaw Their Tongues?

Our original notes draw attention to Revelation 16:10–11. John describes the pouring out of the fifth bowl:

> *"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the*
>
> *beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,*

And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."

— Revelation 16:10–11, KJV

Some interpreters have connected this passage with the famine and suffering experienced during the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70.

However, the wording requires careful attention. John does not say that the people gnawed their tongues because of hunger.

He expressly says that they did so because of pain. He also refers to their sores. The passage therefore describes suffering associated with the judgment upon the kingdom of the beast.

It is not specifically a description of famine. Consequently, we should not claim that Josephus directly confirms this verse by describing people gnawing their tongues from hunger unless an exact passage supporting that claim can be identified.

The historical famine at Jerusalem is well attested. But the proposed connection with Revelation 16:10 remains interpretative.

This distinction is important for the reliability of our argument. The broader resemblance between the covenant judgments and the calamities of AD 70 is substantial.

We do not need to rely upon an uncertain quotation to establish it.

12. The Song Speaks of a Particular Generation

Another important passage appears in Deuteronomy 32:20. Moses records the Lord declaring:

"And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith."

— Deuteronomy 32:20, KJV

The word "froward" means stubborn, disobedient, or morally perverse.

The passage describes a generation characterised by unfaithfulness. The Lord declares that he will see what their end shall be. This language deserves attention when compared with the teaching of Jesus.

Christ repeatedly warned the generation to whom he ministered. He condemned unbelief, hypocrisy, and the persecution of God's messengers.

He also foretold that judgment would fall upon that generation. Matthew records:

"Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."

— Matthew 23:36, KJV

And again:

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

— Matthew 24:34, KJV

The resemblance between Moses' warning and Christ's declaration is significant.

Both concern covenant responsibility. Both describe unfaithfulness. Both speak of judgment upon a generation. But we must not confuse the generations in their original historical settings.

Deuteronomy 32 was given as a prophetic witness to Israel across its future history.

It does not explicitly state that the generation described must be the generation living in AD 70.

The connection with the first century arises from the way Jesus and the apostles applied the language of covenant unfaithfulness to their contemporaries.

The argument is therefore strongest when understood as a pattern of covenant judgment brought to a decisive historical expression in the events surrounding Jerusalem's destruction.

13. The Vengeance of God and the Vindication of His Servants

The latter portion of Deuteronomy 32 contains another important theme.

The Lord declares:

> *"To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 32:35, KJV

The passage speaks of divine vengeance and the approaching day of calamity.

The following verse introduces another aspect of God's purpose:

> *"For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 32:36, KJV

The Hebrew verb translated "repent himself" here conveys God's compassion or relenting towards his servants.

The relationship between judgment and vindication is important. The Lord judges unfaithfulness. But he also acts on behalf of those who belong to him. This same pattern appears in Revelation. The martyrs cry for justice:

> *"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"*
>
> — Revelation 6:10, KJV

Later, the judgment upon Babylon is announced:

> *"Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her."*
>
> — Revelation 18:20, KJV

The resemblance deserves careful attention. Deuteronomy 32 speaks of God's judgment and the vindication of his servants.

Revelation describes the suffering of the saints and the eventual judgment upon their persecutors.

Both present God as righteous in judgment. Both assure his servants that their suffering will not be forgotten. For the Jerusalem interpretation of Babylon, the connection becomes particularly important.

If Babylon is the city condemned by Jesus for shedding the blood of God's messengers, her destruction would represent the vindication of those who suffered through her opposition.

However, the same principle could also apply to God's judgment upon imperial Rome.

Therefore, the connection with Deuteronomy establishes the theological pattern of judgment and vindication, but does not independently identify the city or nation judged in Revelation.

14. The Song Concludes with God's Mercy and Vindication

The final verse of Moses' song brings together several important themes:

> *"Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people."*
>
> — Deuteronomy 32:43, KJV

This is especially relevant to Revelation 15. The song of Moses does not end merely with destruction. It announces God's vengeance upon his adversaries and his mercy towards his people.

It also calls upon the nations to rejoice. This is significant because the song in Revelation likewise joins God's righteous judgments with the response of the nations.

John records:

> *"Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."*
>
> — Revelation 15:4, KJV

The correspondence is substantial.

Both passages connect divine judgment with the vindication of God before the nations.

Both declare that the Lord acts righteously. Both present his judgments as worthy of praise. The relationship also shows why Revelation's Song of Moses cannot be reduced merely to an announcement of judgment upon Israel.

Deuteronomy 32 includes judgment upon Israel, but it also contains God's vengeance upon adversaries and his compassion towards his servants.

Revelation 15 likewise celebrates the victory of God's people over an oppressive power.

The emphasis therefore includes deliverance as well as judgment. This broader perspective is essential. The song of Moses is not simply a song against Israel. It is a proclamation of God's righteousness in all his covenant dealings.

15. The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb

We now come to an important theological question. Why does John describe the song as both the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb?

The wording suggests a relationship between the deliverance accomplished under Moses and the redemption accomplished through Jesus Christ.

Moses was the servant of God. Christ is the Lamb. Moses led Israel out of bondage. Christ delivers his people through his sacrificial death and resurrection.

Moses proclaimed God's righteous judgments. Christ is the one through whom God's final purposes of redemption and judgment are accomplished.

The comparison does not place Moses and Christ upon the same level of authority.

Moses was a servant. Christ is the Son and the victorious Lamb.

The writer to the Hebrews makes this distinction:

> *"And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;*
>
> *But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."*
>
> — Hebrews 3:5–6, KJV

The contrast is important. Moses bore witness to things that were to come. Christ is the fulfilment of God's redemptive promises. The Song of Moses and the Lamb therefore celebrates the continuity of God's purpose through both covenants.

The redemption accomplished through Christ fulfils what the earlier deliverance from Egypt anticipated.

The judgments of God are righteous under both dispensations. And the faithful people of God find their ultimate victory in the Lamb.

John may therefore be deliberately combining the imagery of the exodus with the covenant warnings of Deuteronomy.

The result is a hymn celebrating God's completed victory and the vindication of his servants.

This interpretation accords with the scholarly observation that Revelation 15 draws upon several Old Testament songs and passages rather than reproducing one of them word for word.

16. Paul's Interpretation of Israel's Wilderness History

There is another important New Testament passage which may help us understand John's use of Moses.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul reviews Israel's experiences during the exodus.

He refers to the cloud, the sea, the spiritual food, and the water from the rock.

He then recalls the judgments that fell upon those who rebelled. Some became idolaters. Others committed fornication. Others tempted the Lord or murmured against him.

Paul explains:

> *"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."*
>
> — 1 Corinthians 10:11, KJV

This statement is particularly significant. Paul applies Israel's wilderness history to the Christian congregations of his own day.

He declares that the earlier events were examples written for their instruction.

He also describes his readers as those upon whom the ends of the ages had come.

The Greek expression translated "ends of the world" uses aiōnōn, the plural of aiōn, meaning ages.

The phrase is therefore often rendered "the ends of the ages." This language does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of the physical universe.

It points to the decisive significance of the period inaugurated through Jesus Christ.

Paul understood his own generation as living at a climactic point in redemptive history.

The promises and warnings of the Old Testament had particular significance for Christians living in that period.

This provides a meaningful parallel with Revelation. John likewise draws upon Israel's earlier experiences to describe the circumstances of God's people.

The beast represents oppressive power. The saints overcome through faithfulness. The judgments recall earlier acts of divine judgment. The victorious people sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. This pattern supports the argument that Revelation should be read within the framework of the biblical history of redemption.

However, Paul's reference to the ends of the ages does not by itself establish that every prophetic expectation was completed in AD 70.

It demonstrates that the apostolic generation understood itself to be living in the period of decisive fulfilment brought about through Christ.

17. Was the First-Century Church Experiencing a New Exodus?

The connection between Exodus and Revelation raises another question.

Could the first-century Christian Church be understood as experiencing a new exodus?

Under Moses, Israel was delivered from bondage in Egypt. The people passed through the sea and entered a period of wilderness testing.

They were eventually brought towards the land promised to their fathers.

The New Testament presents Christ as accomplishing a greater redemption.

He delivers his people from sin and death. He establishes the new covenant through his blood. He gathers believers from Israel and the nations. The Christian Church is therefore frequently understood as the community of God's redeemed people.

This provides a basis for the new-exodus interpretation. However, we must distinguish several things. The redemption accomplished by Christ was not simply a departure from the Law of Moses as though the law itself had been an evil oppressor.

The law was holy and served God's appointed purpose. The bondage from which Christ delivers his people concerns sin, condemnation, and death.

The former covenant institutions also reached their fulfilment through his work.

From this perspective, the transition from the old covenant order to the new covenant may be described through exodus imagery.

But the destruction of Jerusalem was not the event which first accomplished that redemption.

Christ had already secured it through his death and resurrection. The events of AD 70 may therefore be understood as marking the historical termination of the Temple system, rather than as the cause of the Church's deliverance.

This distinction is particularly important in our study. If Revelation describes a new exodus, its central figure is Jesus Christ, the Lamb.

The destruction of Jerusalem may form part of the historical setting, but the victory of the redeemed rests entirely upon Christ.

18. The Bowl Judgments and the Plagues of Egypt

The connection with the exodus becomes even clearer when we examine Revelation 15 and 16.

Following the song of Moses and the Lamb, seven angels appear with seven plagues.

John writes:

> *"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God."*
>
> — Revelation 15:1, KJV

The language of plagues naturally recalls God's judgments upon Egypt.

In Exodus, the Lord judged Pharaoh and the Egyptians through a series of plagues.

These included water turned to blood, darkness, and other calamities.

Similar imagery appears in Revelation 16. The waters are affected. Darkness falls upon the kingdom of the beast. The judgments expose the powerlessness of those who oppose God.

This connection is important because Revelation presents the saints as overcoming the beast.

The pattern resembles Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh. The oppressive power is judged. God's people are vindicated. They sing the song of victory. This provides a strong reason for recognising Exodus 15 as an important background to Revelation 15.

However, the judgment language also recalls the covenant curses of Deuteronomy.

The symbolism may therefore combine two Old Testament patterns.

First, God's judgment upon the oppressor, as in Egypt. Second, God's judgment upon covenant unfaithfulness, as in Deuteronomy 32.

This dual background prevents us from making an overly narrow identification.

The bowl judgments cannot be shown to concern Jerusalem merely because the saints sing the song of Moses.

We must establish the identity of the beast, the objects of judgment, and the historical circumstances from the wider text.

19. The Relationship Between Deuteronomy 32 and Babylon's Judgment

The strongest case for connecting Deuteronomy 32 with the destruction of Jerusalem arises when Revelation 15 is read alongside Revelation 17 and 18.

In Deuteronomy 32, Israel is warned concerning covenant unfaithfulness.

The song declares God's righteousness and announces vengeance and vindication.

In Revelation 15, the saints celebrate God's righteous judgments. In Revelation 18, Babylon is condemned for the blood of prophets and saints.

Heaven is commanded to rejoice because God has avenged his servants upon her.

If Babylon represents Jerusalem, the connection becomes particularly significant.

Jesus had already condemned Jerusalem for killing the prophets. He declared that the blood of the righteous would be required of the generation he addressed.

He foretold the desolation of the city and the destruction of the Temple.

The Roman armies accomplished that destruction in AD 70. Within this interpretation, the Song of Moses provides an Old Testament framework for understanding the judgment.

The covenant warnings given through Moses were not empty threats.

God was faithful to his word. The judgment upon Jerusalem demonstrated the seriousness of rejecting his messengers and the Messiah whom he had sent.

But we must preserve an important qualification. Deuteronomy 32 also speaks of God's mercy towards his people and vengeance upon their adversaries.

It cannot simply be treated as a prophecy of Israel's destruction without reference to those other themes.

Furthermore, Revelation 15 does not expressly identify Jerusalem as the object of the approaching bowl judgments.

Therefore, the argument remains dependent upon the interpretation of Babylon and the beast developed in the preceding chapters.

The connection with Deuteronomy strengthens that interpretation if Jerusalem has already been identified.

It does not independently establish the identification.

20. Does the Song of Moses Require a Pre-AD 70 Date?

We now come to the central historical question. Does the reference to the Song of Moses prove that Revelation was written before Jerusalem's destruction?

The answer must be carefully stated. The connection with Deuteronomy 32 is significant because that song was given as a witness concerning Israel's covenant unfaithfulness and the judgments that could follow.

The New Testament itself applies aspects of the song to the circumstances of the apostolic period.

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:21 in his discussion of Israel and the Gentiles.

He also teaches that Israel's wilderness history was written for the instruction of believers living at the ends of the ages.

Revelation likewise presents the saints celebrating God's righteousness and victory through imagery drawn from Israel's earlier history.

These connections provide a substantial biblical basis for understanding the judgments of Revelation within the history of

God's covenant dealings.

However, the song does not expressly identify the date of Revelation.

Nor does it explicitly say that the bowl judgments describe Jerusalem in AD 70.

The exodus imagery can also apply to God's deliverance of Christians from Roman imperial persecution.

Indeed, if the beast represents Rome, the song may principally celebrate victory over that oppressive power.

Consequently, the Song of Moses cannot independently establish an early date.

Its importance lies in reinforcing the covenantal and historical interpretation of Revelation when considered alongside other evidence.

If the Temple in Revelation 11 is the historical Temple of Jerusalem, if Babylon is the city condemned by Christ for shedding the blood of the prophets, and if the judgments are described as approaching, the Song of Moses becomes especially relevant.

In that setting, the covenant warnings of Deuteronomy provide a coherent explanation of why the judgments were announced and why the saints celebrated God's righteousness.

The argument is therefore cumulative.

21. The Importance of the Original Readers

We must once again remember that Revelation was addressed to seven churches in Asia.

These were living Christian congregations within the firstcentury Roman world.

The believers were called to remain faithful despite persecution and false teaching.

They were warned against idolatry and compromise with worldly power.

They were encouraged by the promise that Christ would vindicate his servants.

The Song of Moses would have reminded readers familiar with Scripture that God had delivered his people before.

It would also have reminded them that God judges unfaithfulness and remains faithful to his promises.

The song of the Lamb would direct their attention to the greater redemption accomplished through Jesus Christ.

This combination was particularly appropriate for Christians facing the dangers described in Revelation.

They were not promised that faithfulness would necessarily preserve them from suffering or death.

They were promised victory through the Lamb. The historical significance of the imagery is therefore not limited to the identification of a particular nation or city.

It teaches that Christ's people belong to the victorious Lamb and that no earthly power can finally defeat God's redemptive purpose.

Nevertheless, the immediate setting of the prophecy remains important.

If John wrote before AD 70, the approaching judgment upon Jerusalem would have provided a powerful historical demonstration of the truth of Christ's warnings.

The Song of Moses would then possess a particularly appropriate covenantal significance.

22. Weighing the Evidence

We may now bring together the principal connections.

Old Testament passage	Revelation	Significance
Exodus 15:1–18	Revelation 15:2–4	God's people sing after victory over an oppressive power
Deuteronomy 31:19	Revelation 15:3	The Song of Moses carries covenantal significance
Deuteronomy 32:4	Revelation 15:3	God's ways are righteous and true
Deuteronomy 32:5, 20	Revelation's warnings of rebellion and judgment	The theme of unfaithfulness and divine judgment
Deuteronomy 32:21	Romans 10:19	Paul applies Moses' song to Israel and the calling of the Gentiles
Deuteronomy 32:22–25	Revelation 6, 8–9, 16	Shared imagery of calamity and divine judgment
Deuteronomy 32:35–36	Revelation 6:10; 18:20	Judgment and vindication of God's servants
Deuteronomy 32:43	Revelation 15:4	God's judgments and the response of the nations

These correspondences demonstrate the importance of the Mosaic background.

However, they also illustrate why careful interpretation is necessary.

Some connections are direct and substantial. Others consist of shared prophetic language. Some concern judgment upon Israel. Others concern victory over oppressive enemies. We should not treat every resemblance as proof of a single historical fulfilment.

The strongest conclusion is that Revelation 15 deliberately presents the victory of Christ's people within the scriptural pattern of deliverance, judgment, and vindication established through Moses.

This pattern is fully compatible with a first-century historical interpretation.

23. Conclusion: The Song of Moses and the End of an Age

The Song of Moses in Revelation 15 provides an important connection between the judgments described by John and the earlier history of God's dealings with Israel.

The exodus from Egypt demonstrated God's power to deliver his people and defeat their oppressors.

The song recorded in Deuteronomy 32 declared God's righteousness, warned Israel concerning covenant unfaithfulness, and foretold judgment and vindication.

Both songs provide significant background to Revelation. The saints who overcome the beast sing because God has delivered them through the Lamb.

They proclaim that his works are great and marvellous and that his ways are just and true.

Their song therefore celebrates the righteousness of God in both redemption and judgment.

The connection with Deuteronomy 32 is particularly important because the song was expressly given as a witness concerning Israel's future conduct.

It warned that unfaithfulness would bring judgment. It also promised that God would vindicate his servants and show mercy according to his purposes.

The New Testament demonstrates that these themes remained relevant during the apostolic period.

Paul applied the song to Israel and the calling of the Gentiles. Jesus warned that judgment would come upon the generation that rejected him and persecuted God's messengers.

The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 provides a recognisable historical fulfilment of Christ's warnings concerning the Temple and city.

If Revelation describes this approaching judgment, the Song of Moses supplies a fitting biblical framework.

The covenant warnings had not been forgotten. The judgment of God was righteous. The saints who remained faithful to Christ were vindicated. And the new covenant established through the blood of the Lamb stood as the fulfilment of God's redemptive purpose.

Nevertheless, we should not claim that the reference to Moses alone proves the early date.

The song in Revelation draws upon Exodus as well as Deuteronomy, and its language includes the worship of God by all nations.

It therefore possesses a significance wider than the destruction of Jerusalem alone.

The precise historical identification of the judgments depends upon the combined evidence of Revelation.

We may therefore state our conclusion as follows: The Song of Moses and the Lamb provides substantial biblical support for interpreting Revelation's judgments within the covenant history of Israel and the fulfilment accomplished through Jesus Christ. When combined with the evidence concerning Jerusalem, the beast, Babylon, and the repeated declarations of nearness, this connection strengthens the case that Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The argument is cumulative. The Song of Moses does not supply an exact date.

It helps us understand the nature of the judgments and why they are celebrated as righteous.

It also demonstrates that Revelation's imagery is deeply rooted in the Old Testament, particularly the events of the exodus and the covenant warnings given through Moses.

This is important because the Book of Revelation should not be interpreted as though its symbols were disconnected from the Scriptures already familiar to the apostolic Church.

John's visions belong to the unfolding history of God's redemption. The Lamb who was slain is victorious. Those who remain faithful to him share in his victory. And the judgments of God reveal his righteousness before the nations.

We have now examined the principal historical and biblical arguments concerning the date of the Book of Revelation.

References and Sources for Chapter 13

1. Exodus 15:1–18. The Song of Moses following Israel's deliverance from Egypt.

2. Deuteronomy 28; 31:19–30; 32:1–43. The covenant warnings and the second Song of Moses.

3. Revelation 6:9–11; 12:11; 15–16; 18:20–24. The martyrs, the victorious saints, the bowl judgments, and the vindication of God's servants.

4. Dennis T. Olson, "God for Us, God against Us: Singing the Pentateuch's Songs of Praise in Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32," Theology Today (2013). Examines the relationship between the two Mosaic songs, including deliverance, judgment, and the praise of God.

5. Ha Young Son, "The Exodus Theme in the Song of Moses and the Lamb in Revelation 15," Korean New Testament Studies, 24:3 (2017), pp. 671–712. Examines Revelation 15's connections with Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32.

6. Rudolph Scharneck, "The Song of Moses Which Is Not (Also) the Song of the Lamb: An Investigation into the Number of Songs at Play in Rev. 15," Journal of Early Christian History, vol. 9, no. 2 (2019), pp. 59–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/2222582X.2019.1653209. Argues that Revelation 15 refers to two songs: the Song of Moses associated with Exodus 15 and the Song of the Lamb presented in Revelation 15:3–4..

7. Ronald Bergey, "The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32.1–43) and Isaianic Prophecies: A Case of Early Intertextuality?" Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, vol. 28, no. 1 (2003), pp. 33–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/030908920302800102. Examines the linguistic, thematic and literary connections between Deuteronomy 32 and Isaiah 1, 5, 28 and 30, arguing that these prophecies draw upon the Song of Moses.

8.John Gill, An Exposition of the New Testament, commentary on Revelation 15:3. Gill identifies the Song of Moses primarily with Israel's deliverance from Egypt in Exodus 15, rather than Deuteronomy 32. He interprets the Song of the Lamb in relation to Christ's redeeming work and the deliverance of his people.

9.Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books V–VI, particularly Book V, chapters 10–13, and Book VI, chapters 3–5. Josephus provides a detailed historical account of the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70, including the famine, suffering of the inhabitants, and destruction of the Temple by Roman forces.

10. Romans 10:19; 1 Corinthians 10:1–11; Hebrews 3:5–6. New Testament passages applying the history and writings of Moses to the apostolic Church.

Chapter 14 — Weighing the Evidence — The Case for a Pre-AD 70 Date of Revelation

An Examination of the Historical Testimony, the Internal Evidence, and the Most Reasonable Conclusion

Introduction

We have now examined the principal evidence concerning the date of the Book of Revelation.

Our investigation began with the testimony of the early Christian writers, particularly Irenaeus, Eusebius, and those who associated John's exile to Patmos with the reign of the emperor Domitian.

We then considered the evidence contained within Revelation itself.

We examined the Temple and holy city in Revelation chapter 11, the seven kings in Revelation chapter 17, the number of the beast in Revelation chapter 13, and the circumstances of the seven churches of Asia.

We also considered the repeated declarations that the events revealed to John were near at hand.

Finally, we examined the relationship between Revelation and the Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel, Jerusalem, the covenant, and the coming judgments of God.

We must now bring this evidence together. Our purpose is not merely to collect arguments supporting an early date. We must determine which arguments carry the greatest weight, which depend upon disputed interpretations, and which provide only indirect or supporting evidence.

This distinction is essential. A conclusion may be attractive without being established. Several passages may agree with a particular interpretation without independently proving it.

Likewise, an ancient historical testimony may deserve considerable respect without settling every question beyond dispute.

Our investigation must therefore distinguish between what is possible, what is probable, and what can be established with confidence.

There are two principal dates under consideration. The traditional late date places Revelation towards the end of Domitian's reign, commonly around AD 95–96.

The early date places it during the reign of Nero, or within the unsettled period immediately following his death, before Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70.

Both positions have been defended by Christian scholars. The late date remains the more widely accepted position in contemporary scholarship, but the early date has serious defenders and cannot be dismissed as an interpretation without historical foundation.

The question is which date provides the better explanation of the complete evidence.

1. The Two Dates Under Consideration

It is helpful to begin with the historical framework.

EARLY DATE AD 64–70

Principally Nero's reign or the period immediately following his death

LATE DATE AD 95–96

Towards the end of Domitian's reign The difference between these dates is approximately twenty-five to thirty years.

That may not seem especially important when considering a book written almost two thousand years ago.

Yet the difference has considerable consequences. If Revelation was written before AD 70, the Temple in Jerusalem may still have been standing.

The Jewish–Roman War may have been approaching or already underway.

Nero may have been the reigning emperor. The destruction of Jerusalem could have been an impending judgment, foretold by Jesus and now revealed more fully to John.

But if Revelation was written in AD 95–96, those events were already in the past.

Nero had died. The Temple had been destroyed. Jerusalem had fallen. The Roman Empire had passed through the civil wars of AD 68– 69 and had entered a different political period.

Consequently, the interpretation of several passages changes according to the proposed date.

A Temple described in Revelation 11 may represent a historical building still standing, a symbolic sanctuary, or a future Temple.

The beast may represent Nero as the reigning emperor, Nero remembered after his death, or the Roman Empire more broadly.

Babylon may represent Jerusalem awaiting destruction, Rome as the imperial capital, or another symbolic reality.

The date therefore affects the historical setting in which the visions are interpreted.

However, we should not reverse the proper method of investigation.

We must not first decide that Revelation concerns AD 70 and then insist that it must have been written before that event.

The date should be established by examining the evidence independently wherever possible.

Only then should we consider the full implications for interpretation.

2. The Testimony of Irenaeus

The earliest surviving external testimony commonly used to support the late date comes from Irenaeus.

Writing towards the end of the second century, Irenaeus discussed the number of the beast in Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter 30.

He referred to the apocalyptic revelation and stated, in the usual English translation, that it had been seen towards the end of Domitian's reign.

The importance of this statement should not be underestimated. Irenaeus lived considerably closer to the apostolic period than we do.

He also claimed a connection with earlier Christian witnesses. His testimony therefore deserves serious historical consideration. As we examined in Chapter 2, the Greek verb commonly translated "was seen" is capable of grammatical discussion because the subject is not expressly repeated.

Some defenders of the early date have suggested that Irenaeus meant John himself was seen towards the end of Domitian's reign, rather than that the vision was received at that time.

This interpretation is grammatically possible. However, the immediate context concerns the apocalyptic vision and the identity of the beast.

The traditional interpretation that the vision was seen towards the end of Domitian's reign is therefore more natural.

It is also the interpretation adopted by Eusebius and the subsequent Christian tradition.

We should acknowledge this plainly. Irenaeus provides genuine evidence for the late date, and the conventional interpretation of his statement is the stronger grammatical reading.

But another question remains. How reliable was his chronological information? Irenaeus does not identify the particular witness from whom he obtained the date.

Nor does he explain the circumstances in which John received the vision.

He wrote approximately eighty-five years after the end of Domitian's reign.

Therefore, although his testimony is important, it is not a contemporary record of John's exile.

It is also necessary to distinguish the reliability of an ancient witness from the certainty of every statement he makes.

An early Christian writer may preserve valuable historical information while still being mistaken about a particular chronological detail.

We have seen that Irenaeus made other historical claims, including his statement concerning the age of Jesus, which have been disputed.

That observation does not invalidate his testimony concerning Revelation.

It reminds us only that his statement must be weighed rather than treated as incapable of error.

The proper conclusion is that Irenaeus gives the late date a substantial historical foundation, but his testimony does not make the question unanswerable.

3. Eusebius and the Later Christian Tradition

The historian Eusebius, writing in the early fourth century, associated John's exile to Patmos with the reign of Domitian.

In his Ecclesiastical History, Book III, Chapter 18, he discusses Domitian's persecution and reports the tradition that John was banished to Patmos.

He also quotes the statement of Irenaeus. This evidence must be evaluated carefully. Eusebius preserves an important historical tradition. However, because he expressly appeals to Irenaeus, his testimony cannot be treated as wholly independent confirmation of the date given by Irenaeus.

A later historian who quotes an earlier witness does not create a second independent witness merely by repeating the statement.

Nevertheless, it would also be incorrect to claim that the entire late-date tradition depends exclusively upon Irenaeus.

Victorinus of Pettau, writing before Eusebius, associated John's exile with Domitian.

He also interpreted the seven mountains of Revelation 17 as the seven hills of Rome.

In his commentary on Revelation 17, he explicitly connected the writing of the Apocalypse with Domitian's reign.

This is significant. Victorinus demonstrates that the Domitianic interpretation was established within early Christian commentary before Eusebius composed his history.

Later writers, including Jerome, likewise repeated the association between John and Domitian.

The cumulative external evidence therefore favours the late date. However, the degree of independence among these traditions is uncertain.

We cannot always determine whether later writers possessed separate historical information or were following an interpretation already established in Christian circles.

The conclusion should be carefully stated. The late date possesses an ancient and influential tradition. That tradition deserves respect. But its precise historical foundations are not fully recoverable.

4. The Evidence of Earlier Dating Traditions

In Chapter 4, we examined traditions that have been used to support an earlier date.

A heading preserved in certain Syriac versions of Revelation associates John's exile with Nero.

This provides evidence that a Neronian dating tradition existed. However, the heading cannot be treated as a first-century witness. Revelation was not included in the earliest standard Syriac Peshitta New Testament.

The surviving Syriac heading belongs to a later textual tradition, and the date at which its wording originated cannot be established with certainty.

Consequently, it does not possess the same evidential weight as an early, securely dated historical testimony.

We also considered Epiphanius, who associated John's exile with Claudius Caesar.

His testimony differs from the Domitianic tradition, but it presents its own chronological difficulties.

It cannot simply be converted into testimony for Nero by assuming that every reference to Claudius Caesar must mean Nero.

We examined other arguments drawn from the Muratorian Fragment and later commentators.

These provide interesting evidence concerning the history of interpretation, but they do not establish the date of Revelation decisively.

Our conclusion concerning the external evidence should therefore be candid.

The evidence supporting a Neronian date is less direct and less securely established than the principal testimony supporting the Domitianic date.

If the question were decided by surviving external testimony alone, the late date would have the advantage.

The case for an early date rests principally upon the evidence within Revelation itself.

That is where we must now concentrate.

5. The Temple in Revelation 11

One of the strongest arguments for the early date appears in Revelation 11.

John writes:

> *"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.*
>
> *But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."*
>
> — Revelation 11:1–2, KJV

This passage describes a Temple, an altar, worshippers, an outer court, and a holy city subjected to Gentile domination.

The historical Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. If John was describing that Temple as still standing, the passage would provide substantial evidence that Revelation was written before its destruction.

The connection with Luke 21 strengthens the argument. Jesus declared:

> *"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."*
>
> — Luke 21:24, KJV

Both passages describe the Gentiles trampling Jerusalem. Moreover, Revelation 11:8 identifies the great city by reference to the place where Jesus was crucified.

This provides a strong reason for understanding the holy city as Jerusalem.

The early-date argument is therefore substantial. Nevertheless, the passage contains symbolic elements. John is instructed to measure not only the sanctuary and altar but also the worshippers.

Elsewhere in Scripture, measuring may symbolise preservation, judgment, or divine ownership.

The Temple can also represent a spiritual reality. Paul describes the Church as the temple of God. Therefore, it would be incorrect to insist that Revelation 11 must describe the literal building still standing in Jerusalem.

A symbolic interpretation remains possible. Another possibility is that John received or incorporated an earlier prophetic vision concerning the Temple.

However, that explanation requires evidence of an earlier source, which is not supplied directly by the text.

Our conclusion is that Revelation 11 provides significant conditional evidence for a pre-AD 70 date.

Its chronological force is strong if the historical Temple is intended.

It is considerably weaker if the vision describes a symbolic or future sanctuary.

6. The Seven Kings in Revelation 17

The next major argument concerns the seven kings. John records:

> *"And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space."*
>
> — Revelation 17:10, KJV

This statement appears to contain a chronological indication. Five kings have fallen. One presently exists. Another is still to come and will reign for a short period. If the kings are Roman emperors and the succession begins with Julius Caesar, the sequence is as follows.

Position	Ruler	Reign
First	Julius Caesar	Dictatorship ending in 44 BC
Second	Augustus	27 BC–AD 14
Third	Tiberius	AD 14–37
Fourth	Caligula	AD 37–41
Fifth	Claudius	AD 41–54
Sixth	Nero	AD 54–68
Seventh	Galba	AD 68–69

On this reckoning, Nero is the sixth king. Galba is the seventh. Galba's reign lasted approximately seven months. This corresponds strikingly with John's statement that the seventh would continue only a short space.

If "one is" refers to the emperor reigning when John wrote, the passage points towards Nero's reign.

The conclusion would be that Revelation was written before Nero's death in June AD 68.

This is among the strongest possible chronological arguments for the early date.

However, it depends upon several assumptions. First, the seven kings must represent individual Roman emperors. Second, the succession must begin with Julius Caesar.

Third, the brief reigns of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius must be counted consistently.

Fourth, the statement "one is" must refer to the historical present of John rather than the time represented within the vision.

These questions cannot be ignored. If the count begins with Augustus, the sixth ruler becomes Galba rather than Nero.

If short-lived emperors are omitted, another sequence becomes possible.

Some interpreters understand the kings symbolically as kingdoms or forms of political power rather than a simple list of rulers.

Victorinus himself employed a different imperial reckoning to interpret the sixth king as Domitian.

The existence of alternative reckoning does not destroy the Nero interpretation.

It shows that the identification is not automatic. Nevertheless, the sequence beginning with Julius Caesar is historically intelligible and produces a notable correspondence with Galba's brief reign.

We may therefore conclude: If Revelation 17:10 gives the actual succession of Roman rulers beginning with Julius Caesar, the identification of Nero as the sixth king provides a strong argument for composition before AD 68.

The importance of this passage lies in its potential to supply a chronological marker from within the book itself.

7. The Number of the Beast — 666 and 616

In Chapter 7, we examined the number of the beast. John declares:

> *"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."*
>
> — Revelation 13:18, KJV

The number 666 can be produced from the name and title Nero Caesar when the Greek form Nerōn Kaisar is represented using a particular Hebrew spelling.

More significantly, the alternative reading 616 can be explained by omitting the final consonant found in the Greek form but absent from the shorter Latin name Nero.

The numerical values are:

Form	Hebrew transliteration	Total
Neron Caesar	רסק ורנ	666
Nero Caesar	רסק ורנ	616

It is also preserved in ancient manuscript witnesses. This makes the Nero interpretation more persuasive than a calculation producing only 666 through an arbitrary arrangement of letters.

Nevertheless, the numerical identification does not independently prove the date of Revelation.

Nero could have been represented symbolically after his death. The belief that Nero might return, or that later rulers resembled him, became important within the Roman world.

A writer living during Domitian's reign could therefore use Nero as a symbol of imperial opposition to Christianity.

This is an important distinction. The number may identify the beast without identifying the year in which John wrote.

However, when the number is considered alongside the seven kings, the case becomes stronger.

Revelation 13 may identify Nero by the numerical value of his name.

Revelation 17 may identify him as the sixth king who presently reigns.

The two passages would then reinforce the same historical conclusion.

Yet we should remember that their evidential value is not completely independent.

Both depend partly upon identifying the beast and the kings with the same Roman imperial setting.

The relationship strengthens the coherence of the early-date interpretation, but it must not be counted as though it were two unrelated historical testimonies.

8. The Repeated Declarations That the Time Was Near

We now turn to another major argument. Revelation repeatedly declares that the events revealed were near at hand.

The opening verse states:

> *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass."*
>
> — Revelation 1:1, KJV

The third verse continues:

> *"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."*
>
> — Revelation 1:3, KJV

At the conclusion, the angel tells John:

> *"And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand."*
>
> — Revelation 22:10, KJV

Christ repeatedly declares that he is coming quickly. These statements are important because they appear throughout the book.

The Greek expressions translated "shortly" and "at hand" naturally communicate promptness and nearness.

Some interpreters argue that the language refers primarily to the suddenness of the events when they eventually occur.

Others emphasise the prophetic certainty of God's purposes rather than a specific chronological interval.

These interpretations deserve consideration. Nevertheless, the repeated declaration that the appointed time is near creates a strong expectation that the prophecy was immediately relevant to its first-century recipients.

The time statements do not identify Jerusalem by themselves. But if Revelation concerns the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, they fit naturally with composition before AD 70.

If Revelation instead concerns events expected many centuries later, their meaning requires further explanation.

A late-date interpretation can still give these statements a meaningful application to the churches of Asia.

For example, the book could announce immediate spiritual and political conflicts while also describing judgments extending further into the future.

Therefore, the time statements do not independently establish the early date.

But they strongly favour taking the original historical audience and its immediate circumstances seriously.

9. Daniel's Sealed Prophecy and John's Open Revelation

In Chapter 10, we examined the contrast between Daniel and John.

Daniel was told:

> *"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end."*
>
> — Daniel 12:4, KJV

John received the opposite command:

> *"Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand."*
>
> — Revelation 22:10, KJV

The contrast is important. Daniel's prophecy was to be preserved until the appointed future period.

John's prophecy was to be disclosed because the time had drawn near.

This correspondence strongly supports the importance of the time perspective in Revelation.

However, it does not necessarily establish that every prophecy in Daniel was about to receive its complete fulfilment.

Nor does it prove that the seven-sealed scroll in Revelation 5 is the identical book Daniel was commanded to seal.

Those are additional interpretative proposals. The clearer conclusion is that Revelation deliberately recalls Daniel and announces the nearness of God's prophetic purposes.

If those purposes include the judgment of Jerusalem, the contrast supports an early date.

Its evidential value is therefore closely related to the broader identification of the events described.

10. The Seven Churches of Asia

The messages to the seven churches also provide historical evidence.

These congregations were established within the Roman province of Asia.

They experienced false teaching, persecution, moral compromise, and spiritual decline.

Some defenders of the late date argue that these conditions suggest churches which had existed for several decades.

However, the New Testament demonstrates that such problems arose rapidly during the apostolic period.

Paul warned the elders of Ephesus that false teachers would enter the church.

He rebuked the Galatians for turning away from the gospel. He addressed serious moral and doctrinal problems among the Corinthians.

Consequently, the conditions described in Revelation 2 and 3 do not require a date near AD 96.

The earthquake at Laodicea, generally dated to AD 60, also fails to establish a necessary late date.

Tacitus records that the city recovered through its own financial resources.

Therefore, Laodicea's wealth in Revelation 3:17 is compatible with a date within the AD 60s.

However, compatibility is not proof.

The same spiritual conditions could also have existed under Domitian.

The churches therefore supply no decisive chronological marker. Their importance lies mainly in answering the objection that they could not have reached their recorded condition during the apostolic period.

We may conclude that the seven churches present no insurmountable difficulty for the early date.

But neither do they independently establish it.

11. The Tribes of the Land and Those Who Pierced Christ

Revelation begins with the declaration:

> *"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."*
>
> — Revelation 1:7, KJV

In Chapter 11, we examined the relationship between this verse, Zechariah 12, and Matthew 24.

Zechariah describes the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the families of the land mourning over the one whom they pierced.

Jesus foretold that judgment would fall upon the generation which rejected him.

He also described the coming of the Son of Man with clouds and the mourning of the tribes of the earth.

These connections provide a substantial argument for associating Revelation 1:7 with the judgment of Jerusalem.

The Greek word translated "earth" can also mean "land." Consequently, the phrase "all kindreds of the earth" can reasonably be understood, in its Old Testament context, as referring particularly to the tribes of the land of Israel.

However, Revelation frequently uses similar language with a wider meaning.

Some interpreters therefore understand the verse as announcing the universal manifestation of Christ before all peoples.

This remains a serious alternative. Furthermore, the expression "every eye shall see him" naturally suggests a comprehensive revelation of Christ.

Those defending a first-century judicial interpretation must explain why this language should be understood through the prophetic imagery of divine judgment rather than exclusively as a future visible appearing.

The early-date interpretation has a substantial biblical foundation in Daniel 7, Zechariah 12, and Matthew 24.

Nevertheless, the verse does not establish the date independently. Its chronological force depends upon identifying the coming described with the judgment of Jerusalem.

12. Babylon the Great — Jerusalem or Rome?

Our investigation of Babylon produced one of the most important and difficult questions.

In Revelation 17 and 18, Babylon is described as a harlot and a great city guilty of shedding the blood of prophets and saints.

The description strongly recalls the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah called Jerusalem a harlot. Ezekiel described her covenant unfaithfulness in similar terms. Jesus condemned Jerusalem for killing God's prophets and declared that the blood of the righteous would be required of the generation he addressed.

Revelation 18:24 records:

> *"And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."*
>
> — Revelation 18:24, KJV

This bears a striking resemblance to Christ's warning in Matthew 23.

Moreover, Revelation 11:8 identifies the great city by reference to the place where Christ was crucified.

These observations provide substantial support for identifying Babylon with Jerusalem.

The destruction of the woman by the beast could then correspond with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

However, the evidence for Rome is equally important to the investigation.

The woman sits upon seven mountains.

Rome was famous for its seven hills. She is described as the great city exercising authority over the kings of the earth.

Rome possessed precisely that imperial prominence. Her extraordinary wealth and international trade also fit Rome more naturally than Jerusalem.

Furthermore, Babylon could function as a symbolic name for Rome in early Jewish and Christian literature.

These observations provide strong reasons for identifying Babylon with the Roman imperial capital.

Consequently, we should not claim that the Jerusalem identification has been established conclusively.

The evidence is mixed. The prophetic accusations concerning the murder of God's messengers strongly resemble Jerusalem.

The geographical, commercial, and political descriptions strongly resemble Rome.

The early-date interpretation therefore cannot rest entirely upon the claim that Babylon must be Jerusalem.

It is possible to defend an early date while understanding Babylon as Rome, provided the remaining chronology and symbolism are explained coherently.

This distinction is important. The date of Revelation and the identity of Babylon are related questions, but they are not identical questions.

13. The Song of Moses and the Judgment of Israel

In Chapter 13, we considered the Song of Moses and the Lamb in Revelation 15.

John describes the victorious saints declaring:

> *"Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."*
>
> — Revelation 15:3, KJV

The song recalls the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. It also echoes the declaration of God's righteousness found in Deuteronomy 32.

That chapter warns Israel concerning covenant unfaithfulness, divine judgment, and the vindication of God's servants.

The New Testament applies aspects of the song to the circumstances of the apostolic period.

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:21 when discussing Israel and the calling of the Gentiles.

These connections demonstrate that the covenant history of Israel provides an important background for Revelation.

They also make it reasonable to consider whether the judgments of Revelation concern the fulfilment of covenant warnings associated with Jerusalem's destruction.

However, the reference to Moses does not establish that conclusion by itself.

The Exodus song celebrates victory over Egypt, an oppressive foreign power.

Therefore, Revelation 15 may also describe the deliverance of Christians from Roman imperial persecution.

The song combines the themes of redemption, divine judgment, and vindication.

It does not identify the exact date of John's vision. Its value is therefore primarily theological and interpretative. It strengthens the covenantal understanding of Revelation but provides little independent chronological evidence.

14. Nero's Persecution and the Historical Setting

Another argument concerns Nero's treatment of Christians. Following the great fire of Rome in AD 64, Nero blamed Christians and subjected them to severe punishment.

The Roman historian Tacitus records the persecution in Annals, Book XV, Chapter 44.

This provides secure historical evidence that Christians suffered persecution during Nero's reign.

If Revelation was written within that period, its warnings concerning suffering and martyrdom would possess an immediate historical relevance.

Nero was also emperor when the Jewish revolt began in AD 66. He appointed Vespasian to conduct the Roman military campaign against the revolt.

The events which culminated in Jerusalem's destruction therefore began during his reign.

This provides a coherent setting for an early-date interpretation. However, we must distinguish what the historical evidence establishes.

Tacitus records persecution particularly in Rome. His account does not prove that Nero conducted a uniform empire-wide persecution extending to every church in Asia.

Local hostility towards Christians could arise independently of an emperor's direct orders.

Nor does Revelation expressly name Nero. Consequently, the persecution provides a plausible historical background rather than a decisive dating criterion.

The significance becomes greater when combined with the proposed identification of the sixth king and the beast's number.

Once again, the strength of the argument is cumulative.

15. Domitian and the Historical Setting of the Late Date

Fairness requires that we consider the historical setting of the late date with equal care.

Domitian reigned from AD 81 to 96. His government encouraged and benefited from the religious and political honours associated with the emperor.

The province of Asia possessed important centres of imperial worship.

Christians who refused to participate in religious practices involving pagan gods or imperial honours could face social, economic, and political difficulties.

Revelation repeatedly contrasts worship of the beast with faithfulness to God and the Lamb.

This provides an intelligible setting for the book during Domitian's reign.

However, we should not exaggerate the evidence concerning Domitian's persecution.

The existence of imperial worship does not prove that Domitian instituted a universal law requiring every Christian throughout the Empire to worship him or suffer execution.

Evidence for a systematic empire-wide persecution under Domitian is considerably less secure than the evidence concerning Nero's persecution at Rome.

Furthermore, imperial worship in Asia did not begin with Domitian.

It existed under earlier emperors. Therefore, the presence of imperial cult imagery in Revelation does not uniquely identify his reign.

Recent scholarship has also questioned the assumption that Revelation must have arisen in response to particular excesses of emperor worship under either Nero or Domitian.

Nevertheless, a late first-century setting remains historically plausible.

The churches of Asia were experiencing tensions with the surrounding pagan society, and Domitian's reign provides a credible context for those circumstances.

Thus, the historical background alone does not settle the question. Neither Nero's persecution nor Domitian's imperial administration supplies an unquestionable date.

The decisive evidence must come from the relationship between those historical circumstances and the details contained within Revelation.

16. Which Evidence Should Carry the Greatest Weight?

We must now ask how the various arguments should be weighed. Not all evidence carries the same value. An ancient writer explicitly identifying the reign in which a book was composed supplies a different kind of evidence from a symbolic vision that may be interpreted in several ways.

Likewise, a passage describing a Temple may be highly significant if the Temple is historical but less useful for dating if the sanctuary is symbolic.

We should therefore distinguish three categories. First, direct historical testimony. This consists of statements from ancient writers concerning when Revelation was received or written.

Irenaeus and Victorinus are particularly important.

Their testimony favours the Domitianic date. Second, possible internal chronological indications. These are passages which may identify particular historical circumstances, rulers, or events.

Revelation 11 and Revelation 17 are particularly important. If their historical interpretations are correct, they may provide stronger evidence for an early date than the broader symbolic parallels.

Third, supporting literary and theological evidence. This includes the language of nearness, the connection with Daniel, the Song of Moses, the judgments upon Jerusalem, and the imagery of covenant unfaithfulness.

These arguments can substantially strengthen a historical interpretation but often depend upon the identification of the events described.

This classification helps prevent an important mistake. We should not assume that ten supporting parallels necessarily outweigh one direct historical testimony.

The question is not how many arguments can be listed on each side.

It is how firmly each argument is established and how naturally the evidence fits the proposed date.

17. A Comparative Assessment of the Evidence

The following table summarises the principal conclusions reached in our investigation.

Evidence	Favours	Assessment
Irenaeus, Against Heresies V.30.3	Late date	Important early testimony; conventional interpretation favours Domitian
Eusebius	Late date	Supports the tradition but explicitly relies upon Irenaeus
Victorinus	Late date	Significant pre-Eusebian witness to the Domitianic interpretation
Syriac heading naming Nero	Early date	Evidence of an alternative tradition, but late and uncertain in origin
Temple in Revelation 11	Early date, conditionally	Strong if the historical Temple is intended; uncertain if symbolic
Seven kings in Revelation 17	Early date, conditionally	Potentially strong if Nero is the sixth king and "one is" is John's present
The numbers 666 and 616	Nero identification	Strong correspondence, but not independent proof of composition during Nero
The seven churches	Neither decisively	Their circumstances are compatible with both proposed dates
"Shortly" and "at hand"	Near fulfilment	Repeated and important, but do not independently identify AD 70
Daniel's sealed prophecy	Near fulfilment	Strong literary contrast; chronological application remains interpretative
Tohse who pierced Christ	Early date, conditionally	Significant connection with Jerusalem and Christ's generation
Babylon as Jerusalem	Early date, conditionally	Strong covenantal parallels, but substantial evidence also favours Rome
Song of Moses	Neither decisively	Supports the biblical framework of judgment and deliverance

Evidence	Favours	Assessment
Nero's persecution	Early date	Historically relevant but not a precise dating indication
Imperial worship in Asia	Both possible	Provides a plausible setting under either Nero or Domitian

The pattern is instructive. The strongest external evidence favours the late date. The strongest potentially chronological internal evidence favours the early date under particular historical interpretations.

The remaining evidence is primarily supporting rather than decisive.

Therefore, the central question becomes whether the internal interpretations are sufficiently well established to outweigh the ancient testimony concerning Domitian.

18. The Cumulative Case for a Date Before AD 70

The most persuasive form of the early-date argument is not built upon any single passage.

It depends upon the relationship between several passages. Consider the following sequence. John describes a Temple and holy city given over to the Gentiles. The historical Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. John describes seven kings, of whom five have fallen and one presently reigns.

If the succession begins with Julius Caesar, Nero is the sixth king. John gives the number 666, which corresponds with Nero Caesar in a historically plausible Hebrew representation of his name.

The ancient alternative reading 616 can be explained through the shorter Latin form.

John repeatedly declares that the appointed time is near. Jesus had already foretold the destruction of Jerusalem within the lifetime of his generation.

John's opening prophecy describes the coming of Christ and the mourning of those who pierced him.

The judgment upon Babylon recalls the condemnation of Jerusalem for the blood of prophets and saints.

These observations form a coherent historical interpretation. They point towards the years when Nero ruled, the Jewish revolt began, and Jerusalem's destruction approached.

This is the principal strength of the early-date position. It can place several difficult passages within a recognisable firstcentury setting.

Yet the coherence of the interpretation must not be confused with certainty.

The Temple could be symbolic. The seven kings could represent another sequence. Nero could be described retrospectively. The time statements could refer to the beginning of an extended prophetic process.

Babylon could be Rome. These alternatives are not invented merely to avoid an early date. They arise from real features of Revelation's language and symbolism.

Therefore, the cumulative argument is strongest when its underlying identifications are independently supported.

It would be weaker if every disputed passage were interpreted in favour of AD 70 simply because that date had already been preferred.

A persuasive study must avoid that circular method.

19. The Importance of the Words "One Is"

Of all the internal arguments, Revelation 17:10 deserves particular attention.

John writes:

> *"Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come."*
>
> — Revelation 17:10, KJV

Unlike a general description of judgment, this statement appears to distinguish past, present, and future.

If it refers to the actual historical present in which John received the vision, and if the kings are Roman emperors, it could provide a valuable chronological indication.

The early-date interpretation identifies the sixth king as Nero. This is especially significant because the seventh king, Galba, reigned for only a short time.

The correspondence is striking. However, there are two principal difficulties. The first concerns the starting point of the imperial succession. Julius Caesar was not emperor in precisely the same constitutional sense as Augustus and his successors, although ancient writers sometimes included him in the succession of Caesars.

The second concerns the perspective of the vision. Apocalyptic literature can present a scene from a particular point within the events being revealed.

Therefore, "one is" might refer to the time represented within the vision rather than John's own date of writing.

Nevertheless, the natural reading of the statement makes the present tense important.

The Nero interpretation therefore deserves considerable weight. In a final defence of the early date, Revelation 17:10 should be one of the principal passages examined in detail.

It is potentially more useful for establishing chronology than a general resemblance between Revelation and the covenant warnings of Deuteronomy.

20. The Importance of the Historical Temple

Revelation 11 is the other principal internal passage. Its strength lies in the possible description of an existing building and city shortly before their destruction.

If John was instructed to measure the historical Temple in Jerusalem, the passage would naturally belong before AD 70.

The reference to the Gentiles trampling the holy city corresponds with Christ's prophecy in Luke 21.

The identification of the great city with the place where Jesus was crucified strengthens the connection with Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, the symbolic character of Revelation requires caution.

Measuring can possess prophetic significance beyond the physical dimensions of a building.

The sanctuary may symbolise God's people or his heavenly dwelling.

Therefore, it is necessary to show why the specific historical circumstances of Jerusalem provide the most natural interpretation.

The early-date argument is strongest when the Temple passage is considered alongside Jesus' prediction of its destruction and the book's declarations that the appointed time was near.

The historical identification and the time statements then reinforce one another.

But the chronological conclusion depends upon the correctness of the historical identification.

21. Can the Late Date Explain the Internal Evidence?

A careful conclusion must examine whether the late date can provide a reasonable explanation of the principal internal arguments.

The answer is yes, although the explanations differ. The Temple may represent the heavenly sanctuary or the people of God.

The seven kings may symbolise imperial power, or the succession may be counted differently.

The number 666 may identify Nero as an earlier persecutor whose influence is represented in the beast.

The wounded head may draw upon the belief that Nero would return.

Babylon may represent Rome. The time statements may announce judgments beginning within the experience of the seven churches while also extending towards the final consummation.

These interpretations are not without difficulties. Some require the reader to understand passages symbolically which the early-date interpretation takes more historically.

But Revelation is an apocalyptic book, and symbolic language is part of its character.

Therefore, symbolism cannot be rejected merely because a historical reading would strengthen the early date.

The proper question is which interpretation best explains the language, structure, and Old Testament background of each passage.

The late date remains a serious scholarly position. It has ancient external support and offers coherent interpretations of many features of the book.

A responsible defence of the early date should acknowledge this rather than present the Domitianic position as though it lacked evidence.

22. What Conclusion Can Reasonably Be Reached?

We are now in a position to state the result of our investigation. The external historical testimony favours the Domitianic date. The significance of that testimony should be acknowledged, while recognising the questions surrounding its interpretation and reliability. Irenaeus provides an important early witness, and his statement is most naturally understood as dating the vision towards the end of Domitian's reign.

Victorinus supplies further evidence that this dating was established in early Christian interpretation.

Nevertheless, the internal evidence presents a substantial case for earlier composition.

The Temple in Revelation 11 may refer to the historical sanctuary before its destruction.

The seven kings in Revelation 17 may identify Nero as the emperor presently reigning.

The number 666, together with the alternative reading 616, strongly supports the possibility that Nero is intended.

The repeated declarations of nearness naturally direct attention towards events relevant to the original first-century readers.

The relationship with Daniel, the warnings of Jesus concerning Jerusalem, and the prophetic descriptions of judgment provide a coherent setting for the events culminating in AD 70.

Taken together, these observations justify serious consideration of a Neronian date.

But do they establish it as the most probable conclusion? That depends particularly upon the interpretation of Revelation 11 and 17.

If these passages describe the historical Temple still standing and Nero presently reigning, then a date before AD 68 follows naturally.

Under those conditions, the internal evidence provides a strong basis for preferring the early date despite the later historical testimony.

If, however, the Temple is symbolic and the kings do not supply a literal imperial chronology, the case is considerably weaker.

The other arguments then remain suggestive rather than decisive. We may therefore defend the early date as a coherent and historically serious interpretation, while acknowledging that the surviving evidence does not establish it beyond reasonable dispute.

This conclusion is stronger than simply asserting that Irenaeus was mistaken.

It recognises his testimony, evaluates the alternatives, and identifies the passages upon which the early-date argument principally depends.

23. The Preferred Interpretation of This Study

Having examined the evidence, the position advanced in this study is that a pre-AD 70 date deserves preference when Revelation is interpreted as an announcement of the approaching judgment upon Jerusalem and the vindication of Jesus Christ.

The proposed setting is the later portion of Nero's reign, particularly the years AD 64–68.

This date accords with the identification of Nero as the sixth king. It allows the historical Temple to remain standing. It places the Jewish–Roman War within the immediate prophetic horizon.

It also provides a natural historical setting for the repeated declarations that the appointed time was at hand.

However, this preference must be understood as a reasoned judgment rather than an established historical certainty.

The date cannot be narrowed securely to a particular year on the present evidence.

Nor can the existence of the late-date tradition be dismissed. Our conclusion rests upon the view that the combined internal evidence offers a persuasive explanation of the book's historical circumstances.

The most important evidence is chronological rather than merely thematic.

The Temple and the kings form the centre of the argument. The number of the beast supports the proposed imperial identification.

The time statements reinforce the expectation of approaching fulfilment.

The remaining prophetic parallels provide a wider biblical framework.

This is the order in which the evidence should be presented in any defence of the early date.

24. Why the Date Matters

We began this investigation by asking why the date of Revelation matters.

We may now return to that question. The answer concerns the relationship between prophecy and fulfilment.

If Revelation was written before AD 70, it may preserve an apostolic prophecy concerning the approaching destruction of Jerusalem.

The book would then possess a direct relationship with Christ's predictions in Matthew 24 and Luke 21.

The judgments would belong, at least substantially, to the closing years of the old covenant order.

The Roman Empire would provide the immediate political setting.

Nero would be a plausible identification of the beast. And the destruction of Jerusalem would become an important historical manifestation of the authority of the risen Christ.

This interpretation does not require that every aspect of Revelation be reduced to the events of AD 70.

Nor does it require denying the continuing reign of Christ, the future resurrection, or the final judgment.

Those are distinct theological questions requiring their own biblical examination.

The dating question concerns when John received and wrote the prophecy.

The fulfilment question concerns what the prophecy describes. The two subjects are closely connected but must not be treated as identical.

A Christian may accept an early date without accepting every form of preterist interpretation.

Likewise, a Christian may understand many of Revelation's judgments as referring to the first century while accepting a later date of composition.

These distinctions are important for fair and accurate scholarship.

25. Final Conclusion

We have considered the earliest surviving historical testimony, the traditions concerning John's exile, and the evidence contained within Revelation itself.

We have examined the Temple, the seven kings, the number of the beast, the seven churches, and the repeated declarations that the appointed time was near.

We have also traced Revelation's language through Daniel, Zechariah, the prophecies of Jesus, and the covenant warnings associated with Moses.

The evidence has not produced complete agreement among interpreters.

The traditional late date possesses substantial historical support. The early date possesses significant internal biblical arguments. Neither position should be defended by ignoring the evidence favouring the other.

Nevertheless, a serious case can be made for the composition of Revelation before Jerusalem's destruction.

Its strongest features are the possible identification of the historical Temple in Revelation 11 and Nero as the sixth king in Revelation 17.

These arguments are reinforced by the numerical identification of Nero Caesar and the book's repeated declarations of nearness.

Together, they provide a coherent historical setting for the prophecy during the closing years of Nero's reign.

The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 would then represent a major historical fulfilment of the judgments announced by Jesus and revealed to John.

Yet the purpose of Revelation is greater than establishing a date. John's opening words identify its true subject:

> *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass."*
>
> — Revelation 1:1, KJV

The book reveals the authority, victory, and glory of Jesus Christ. He is the faithful witness. He is the first begotten of the dead. He is the prince of the kings of the earth. He is the Lamb who was slain. He is the one who opens the sealed book and accomplishes the purposes of God.

The judgments described in Revelation must therefore be understood in relation to his sovereignty and redemptive work.

Whether those judgments concern Jerusalem, Rome, or the wider history of the Church, their ultimate significance lies in the vindication of Christ and the triumph of God's righteous purposes.

The early-date interpretation gives particular historical force to that message.

It understands Revelation as a prophecy delivered to the firstcentury churches concerning events which were approaching within their own world.

The destruction of Jerusalem would demonstrate the truth of Christ's warnings and the passing of the Temple system whose sacrifices had found their fulfilment in his perfect offering.

The Church would be called to persevere in faith, knowing that the crucified and risen Christ reigned over the powers of the earth.

We therefore conclude this investigation with the following judgment:

A pre-AD 70 date for Revelation is a defensible and persuasive interpretation of the book's internal historical evidence. Its strongest arguments arise from the Temple of Revelation 11, the seven kings of Revelation 17, and the repeated declarations that the appointed time was near. Although the external testimony favours the traditional Domitianic date, the cumulative internal evidence provides substantial grounds for preferring a composition during Nero's reign, particularly if the principal judgments concern Jerusalem's approaching destruction.

The conclusion remains open to further testing, especially through a detailed examination of the original Greek, early manuscript evidence, and the historical interpretation of Revelation 11 and 17.

But the early date deserves to be examined on the strength of its actual evidence rather than rejected simply because the later date became traditional.

Our investigation has sought to demonstrate precisely that.

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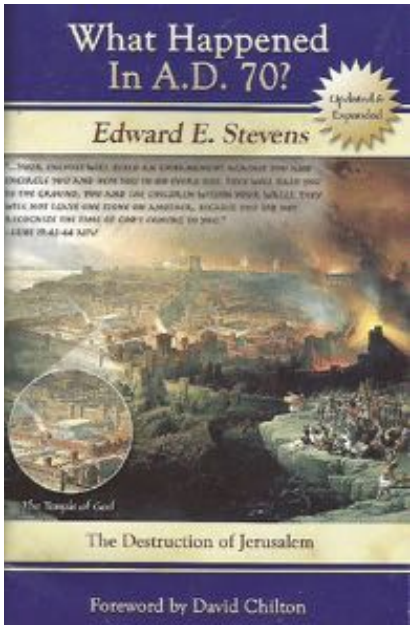
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These passages should be retained as the principal scriptural foundation for the final publication.

FURTHER READING

WHAT HAPPENED IN A.D. 70



Edward E. Stevens

This book introduces a view of Bible prophecy which many have found extremely helpful in their Bible study. It explains the end time riddles which have always bothered students of Bible prophecy. It is a **consistent view** which makes the book of Revelation much easier to understand. It establishes when the New Testament canon of scripture was completed, demolishes the liberal attack on the inspiration of the New Testament, and is more **conservative** on most other issues than traditional views. And there is **no compromise** of any essential Biblical doctrine of the Christian faith.

The key to understand any passage of scripture has always been a good grasp of the historical setting in which it was originally written (**audience relevance**). Two thousand yeas from now our history, culture, politics and language will have changed dramatically. Imagine someone then having to learn the ancient language of "American English" to read our USA newspapers! If they saw one of our political cartoons with a donkey and elephant, what would they think? How would they go about understanding it? Not only would they have to study the language, but also our culture, history, politics and economics. The same applies to Bible study. If we are really going to understand what all the "donkeys and elephants" (beasts, harlots, dragons, etc.) Symbolize in the book of Revelation, we will have to

seriously and carefully study the language, history, culture and politics of the First Century. Of course, the truths essential for salvation are couched in simple language that everyone can grasp. But there are numerous scriptures in the Bible which are "hard to understand" (cf. 2 Pet 3:16), and Bible prophecy is one of those things which must be approached with much more focus on the original historical art cultural context (audience relevance)

One of the main purposes of this book is to provide a closer look at the historical framework behind the New Testament. Many hove found it helpful to lay aside (at least temporarily) the legion of speculative opinions about the book of Revelation, and look at a more historical alternative, which is that **the book of Revelation was written to the first century church and had primary relevance to them.** It warned of events that were about to happen in their lifetime, and prepared them for the tribulation and other events associated with the End of the Jewish Age.

Atheists, skeptics, Jew, Muslims, and liberal critics of the bible use the supposed failure of those end times events to occur in the First Century to undermine the integrity of Christs and the inspired NT writings.

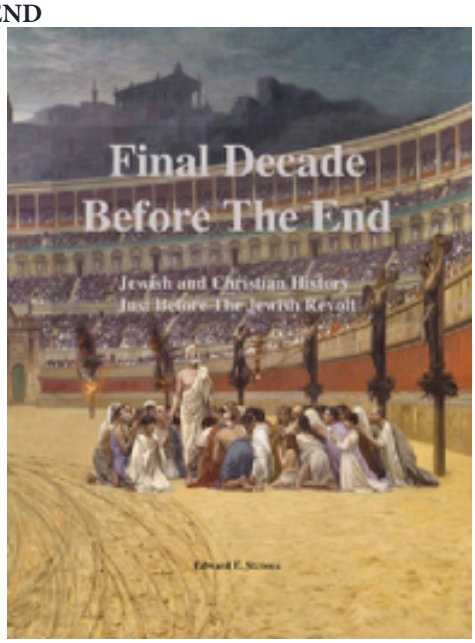
Non-Christian Jews laugh at this supposed non-occurrence, and use it as evidence that Jesus is not the Messiah. Their forefathers in the flesh rejected Jesus in His first coming because He did not fulfill the Old Testament prophecies in the materialistic and nationalistic way that they were expecting, even though Jesus told them that His Kingdom was not of this world, and that it would be within them instead. Yet it seems that many futurists today are expecting that same kind of materialistic and nationalistic kingdom to arrive at a future return of Christ Are they making the same mistake about the Second Coming that the Jews made about His first coming? Jesus repeatedly said His Kingdom is "not of this world" and that it would "not come with observation." It is a spiritual entity, and it has arrived We live in it. Both futurist Christians and non-Christian Jews need to realize this.

Christians are finally beginning to seek alternatives to the fatally flawed **futurist** interpretation. This book introduces the Preterist view.

"Preterist" simply means past in fulfillment It means that Christ has already fulfilled His promise to return and consummate redemption in Himself and His ongoing spiritual kingdom (the church). We should be like the noble-minded Bereans and "search the scriptures daily to see whether these things are true" You might want to have your Bible open alongside as you read.

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April 17,2010

FINAL DECADE BEFORE THE END



Edward E. Stevens

Ever since the booklet, **What Happened In AD 70?** Was published in 1980, there have been constant requests for more detailed information about the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish, Roman, and Christian history associated with it. Over the years since then I have studied Josephus, Yosippon, Hegesippus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Eusebius, the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, Pseudepigrapha, Church Fathers, Apocrypha, Dead Sea Scrolls and other Jewish/Christian writings, trying to determine exactly what happened, when it happened, and the effect it had upon the Church.

Then in 2002, after I began to promote J. S. Russell's view of a literal rapture, the demand for historical documentation of the fulfillment of all eschatological events dramatically increased. That forced me to dig much deeper. So in 2007 I put together a 21-page chronology of first century events. Two years later in 2009, we published a more substantial 73-page manuscript entitled, First Century Events in Chronological Order. That helped fill the void, but it did not go far enough. It only increased the appetite for a more detailed and documented historical reconstruction of first century events.

The book of Acts does not give a lot of details about the other Roman and Jewish events that were happening while Paul was on his various missionary journeys. For those events, we have to go to the other contemporary Jewish and Roman historians such as Josephus and Tacitus. The closer we get to AD 70, the more important all of those Jewish and Roman events become. They form an important backdrop behind the Christian events, and show how all the predictions made by Jesus were literally fulfilled. Every High Priest and Zealot leader that we encounter from AD 52 onwards are directly connected with the events of the Last Days. Things are heating up, not only for the Christians, but also for the Jews and the Romans.

Paul on his missionary journeys was clearly following a plan which was providentially arranged for him by Christ: (1) to plant new churches among all nations and not just Jews, (2) appoint elders and deacons in every church (Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 4:17), (3) write inspired epistles to guide them, (4) instruct his fellow workers to "teach these things to faithful men who would be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2), and (5) establish the Gentiles in the Church and make them one united body with the Jews (Eph 4). Everywhere Paul went, he followed this pattern. We see this clearly as we study the historical narrative in Acts and Paul's other epistles that were written during this time. These are essential patterns that the apostles evidently bound upon both Gentile and Jewish Christians, and which were intended to be the pattern for all future generations of the eternal Church (Eph 3:21; 2Tim 2:2).

We begin our study by looking at the most likely dates for Matthew (AD 31-38) and Mark (AD 38- 44), and then proceed to the first three epistles of Paul (Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians), which were written on his second missionary journey (AD 51-53). Including these five books in our study allows us to date all twenty-seven books of our New Testament, and show how the NT canon was formed and completed before the outbreak of the Jewish War in AD 66. The study of New Testament canonization in itself is a good reason for reading this work, without even looking at the historical fulfillment of all of the end time prophecies that we document here.

After looking at the dates for those first five books, we then move on into the third missionary journey of Apostle Paul which began in AD 54. It was during this final dozen years (from AD 54 until AD 66) when the birth pangs and signs of the end started increasing in both intensity and frequency, along with a quickening pace of NT books being written. We show how 19 of our 27 NT books (70 percent) were written during those last five years just before the Neronic persecution (AD 60-64). The Great Commission was finished, and the rest of the end time events predicted in the Olivet Discourse were fulfilled during that time of "tribulation" upon the church and the "days of vengeance" upon the unbelieving Jews (Luke 21:22).

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James Stuart Russell

James Stuart Russell's, 'High Praise For The Parousia', is an excellent work that looks at the New Testament teaching of the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the book of Revelation tells of those events leading up to and including his coming. Luke 23, verse 28. But Jesus turning into them said. 'Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for me, but weep for your selves and for your children. 29. For behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. 20 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains fall on us and to the hills cover us. 30. For if they do these things in the green tree what shall be done in the dry? The book of Revelation is a prophecy that Jesus gave to the Apostle John before the Neuronic persecution in 66 .A.D. He was told to write and inform the seven churches in Asia about those things that were shortly about to come to pass in his day. It relates to those things leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and immediately afterwards. It told of the judgment God, styled the Day of Vengeance, on the city called Babylon for her sins and breach of the first Covenant. This Babylon was the city of Jerusalem who's people and leaders had rejected the Lord Jesus Christ and turned their back on the Mosaic covenant. The day of vengeance was day when the cup of God's wrath that was poured out on her who was called Mystery Babylon, The Mother of Harlots and this was to bring an end of rule of the Mosaic Law, bringing it to its fulfillment as Jesus had said I come not to destroy the law but to furl the Law and to bring in the New Covenant order called the law of Christ. It is impossible to understand the book of Revelation if one takes for granted that the date of its writing was after the fall and destruction by Titus, in 70 A.D. Most scholars assume the book was written about 96 A.D. 16 years after the event and so it has become impossible for them to establish a correct interpretation of the book.

Ed Stevens

FOREWORD BY EDWARD E. STEVENS

The word "Parousia" (**par-oo-see-ah)** is not a household word, but students of end time prophecy know it is a reference to the Second Coming of Christ. It comes from two Greek words ("**para**" beside, and "**ousia**" state of being) and literally means "to be beside" (present with someone). It came to be a more specific reference to important people coming for an extended (but not long-term) visit to one of their subject territories (a "visitation"). It can refer either to the initial arrival or the afterward presence. It is used in the New Testament almost exclusively of Christ's Second Coming.

Russell examines every significant New Testament text about Christ's return, to see when it would occur and what it would be like. Since he believed the Second Coming occurred in the first century at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, his view is labeled "Preterist."

The word "Preterist" is another prophetic term with which many are unfamiliar. According to Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, a Preterist is "a theologian who believes the prophecies of the Apocalypse have already

been fulfilled." A Preterist is the opposite of a Futurist. Futurists teach that the three major end time events (parousia, resurrection, judgment) are still future in fulfillment, whereas Preterists teach these events have already been fulfilled. Some may wonder what difference it makes?

Everything crucial to Christianity is at risk. The Deity of Christ, the integrity of the apostles and prophets, and the inspiration of the New Testament is at stake. How so?

Jesus and the NT writers repeatedly make time- restricted predictions about His return and the other end time events. They do not merely suggest that Christ's Parousia might occur in their lifetime, they unequivocally affirm it.

Liberals, skeptics, and Jewish/Islamic critics use those "time statements" to discredit Jesus and the New Testament. Inspired men cannot make mistakes. Since Jesus and the NT writers predicted Christ's return to occur in their lifetime, and it supposedly didn't happen, they assume Jesus and the NT writers were mistaken.

Indeed, if we cannot trust their prophetic utterances, we cannot trust anything else they say. Christianity is totally discredited if those predictions failed to materialize exactly as they prophesied.

You might wonder what these "time texts" are? Matthew 16:27-28 is a good example. This book deals with every one of them. They were not mistaken when they predicted Christ's return in their lifetime. It really occurred, at AD 70.

Theologians who study end time prophecy consider Russell's book a classic defense of the Preterist view. It is this book, more than any other during the past 125 years, which has moved so many toward Preterism.

Many in the Reformed faith (e.g., R. C. Sproul, Sr., David Chilton, Gary DeMar, Ken Gentry, Gary North, Jim Jordan, et al) credit Russell's book as having a significant impact on their eschatological views. R. C. Sproul, Sr. says he looks favorably at Preterism because it is the only view of prophecy which effectively counters the liberal-skeptic-critic attack. He has written much to recommend Russell's book and encourage the spread of Preterism, even though he does not go as far as Russell does. In his Foreword to the 1999 Baker Books reprint of The Parousia (pp. ix-x), Sproul says:

Russell's work is valuable chiefly for his analysis of the time-frame references of New Testament prophecy and his understanding of the main reference to the parousia. ...Russell's book has forced me to take the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem far more seriously than before, to open my eyes to the radical significance of this event in redemptive history. It vindicates the apostolic hope and prediction of our Lord's close-at hand coming in judgment.... I can never read the New Testament again the same way I read it before reading The Parousia.

Until this book appeared in 1878, Preterism had little systemization. This book began that process, and remains one of the most consistent and comprehensive explanations of Preterism available. The Preterist view flourished in Germany and Britain. But America, still recovering from civil war, took little notice. In global terms, its impact is still marginal, but it has seen significant growth in the past ten years, and the Internet is one of the big factors stimulating that. What the Gutenberg printing press did for the Protestant reformation, the Internet did for the Preterist reformation.

The Internet is the perfect place to publish helpful material like this. One of the first books to be posted on Preterist websites was Russell's Parousia. Even though the electronic version has had many readers in the short five years it has been available, it has not diminished demand for printed copies. This book is destined to remain a Preterist classic.

Russell did a remarkable job of interpretation compared to previous centuries. He pointed the way in a number of areas that we are only just now beginning to develop further. He devoted over 170 pages to the book of Revelation. One of his best statements is there. He uses the "time" statements in the first three verses of Revelation to show how crucial the date of writing is to the interpretation of the book:

It may truly be said that the key has all the while hung by the door, plainly visible to every one who had eyes to see; yet men have tried to pick the lock, or force the door, or climb up some other way, rather than avail themselves of so simple and ready a way of admission as to use the key made and provided for them. (Parousia, p. 367)

Russell leaves no excuses for Futurism. His survey of all the "Parousia" (second coming) references is a tour de force in Preterist exegesis. This book was the first wave of what has become a whole storm of books defending the AD 70 fulfillment of end time prophecy.

Futurists and Partial Preterists for too long have hidden behind the excuse of wanting explicit "time indicators" before assigning a text to AD 70. Russell and modern Preterists have exhaustively shown that all NT end time texts have first century "audience relevance" written all over them, which functions as an implicit time indicator. The New Testament was not written to us originally. We are reading someone else's mail. The primary task of a Bible interpreter is to discover what the original author intended to communicate to his original audience, not just to ask what it "could" mean to us today.

THREE DIFFICULT TEXTS SIMPLIFIED

There are three scriptures which most partial preterists think are yet to be fulfilled: Acts 1:11, 1 Cor. 15:20-57, and 1 Thess. 4:13-18. Russell shows that an AD 70 fulfillment is the most consistent interpretation of these texts. However, he does not deal very much with Acts 1:11. As a result, many Futurists and Partial Preterists have used this text to teach another major return of Christ still in the future. Modern Preterists have now shown that these three texts contain implicit time indicators and contextual clues which connect them inseparably to the Parousia and final consummation in AD 70. For a fuller explanation of these three texts from a Preterist perspective, see the three books written by this author (Stevens Response To Gentry, Questions 5 About The Afterlife, and Expectations Demand A Rapture).

https://www.preteristarchive.com/Hyper/2002_ stevens_rapture.html

In those books, we deal especially with the typological imagery of Christ's ascension into the cloud- filled heavenly Holy of Holies to present His own blood to make final atonement, and His "second appearance" back out of the heavenly temple to announce atonement to His anxiously waiting saints. The Acts 1:11 reference to the return of Christ is easy to apply to AD 70 when we realize it is speaking of the reverse of the visible ascent of Christ in Theophany form. His descent would follow the same Theophany pattern as His ascent, meaning that it would be visible like His departure. He ascended visibly with clouds and angels in the presence of a few disciples, and the two angels (Acts 1:10-11) promised that He would descend visibly "in like manner" in that same Theophany pattern to only those disciples whom He wished to see it. Both the going away and the return were "cloud comings" (Theophanies) accompanied by angels. He left the same way He would return (in clouds with the angels) to appear to his anxiously waiting disciples ("How long, O Lord?" and "O, our Lord, come!"). They expected His return before all of that generation died. Some of them were promised to remain alive until His return, and that they would literally "see" it before they all died (Matt. 16:27-28 and John 21:22f).

Even some partial preterists (e.g. Kenneth Gentry in his book, Before Jerusalem Fell) have agreed that Rev. 1:7 (which mentions a "cloud coming" or Theophany which "every eye would see") was fulfilled in AD 70. Since most expositors connect Rev. 1:7 with Acts 1:11, it seems reasonable to assign both Rev. 1:7 and Acts 1:11 to the visible Theophany that was seen by the Jewish people just before the war in AD 66. Notice what R. C. Sproul, Sr. said about the angelic appearances in the sky in AD 66 and its connection to Rev. 1:7 – "...theop Old Testament prophets, when speaking of a real historical visitation of God in judgment upon cities and nations, used exactly this kind of language in a metaphorical way to describe that coming of divine judgment.... As some 19th century scholars...Jonathan Edwards...B. B. Warfield and others have suggested, what Jesus is talking about here on the Mount of Olives [Matt. 24:3] ...is the end of the Jewish age. And that the coming that he's talking about, and that he's warning these contemporaries about over and over again... that was coming on that generation...was the judgment of God that was coming on Jerusalem and the temple in the year 70 AD.... Was Jesus visible? Did "every eye see him" [Rev. 1:7] and all of that? No. Although, one of the weirdest passages you ever read in ancient history is the paragraph that is found in Josephus [Wars, Bk 6, Ch 5, Sect. 3]. I quote it in my book [The Last Days According to Jesus, p. 124]... After talking about some remarkable, astonishing celestial events that some people had reported, he said, "Besides these a few days after that feast, on the one-and-twentieth day of the month Artemisius ...before the setting of the sun, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds...." ...The overwhelming testimony of the contemporaries (and he was there as an eyewitness) was that people did see something in the clouds. And what is it they saw? They saw chariots. Is that the first time the chariot throne of God is seen in the clouds over Palestine? What took Elijah to heaven? What were the whirling merkabahs [chariots] Ezekiel beheld? Was not the basic symbol in the Old Testament of the movable judgment throne of

God, his chariots of fire? And here we have the testimony of many, many people saying they saw these chariots running about the clouds right before the end of Jerusalem. ...It lends credence to the further application of Jesus' predictions of what would come in this judgment of the nation of Israel and of the city of Jerusalem..." [R. C. Sproul, Sr. "Last Days Madness" speech, 1999 Ligonier Ministries National Conference in Orlando. Bracketed material inserted by the author of this Foreword.]

Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History, Bk 3, Ch 8, Section 5) quotes this same material from Josephus, and Tacitus (Histories, Book 5, "About The Jews") alludes to the same events. Sproul's comments stimulate several thoughts. If Rev. 1:7 was fulfilled by the appearance of angels and chariots in the sky at AD 66, and if Acts 1:11 is speaking of the same judgment coming (or cloud coming, Theophany) of Christ, then what text teaches a still future visible coming of Christ? If the angelic armies literally seen in the clouds at AD 66 were the fulfillment of "every eye shall see Him" (Rev. 1:7) as Sproul has allowed as a possibility, then it was also the fulfillment of Acts 1:11! In Matt 16:27-28, which R. C. Sproul, Sr. affirms is AD 70, it states that some of those disciples would not taste death until they saw Christ return. It therefore seems logical that the visible coming of Christ at AD 66-70 which is mentioned in Matt. 16:27-28 must be the same coming dealt with in both Rev. 1:7 and Acts 1:11.

The commander of the angelic hosts (Christ) was present with His angelic armies on that occasion (AD 66), just like Rev. 19:11-21 pictures for us. This was the visible return of Christ with His angels to judge His enemies and reward His saints, as both Rev. 1:7 and Acts 1:11 had predicted. Matt. 24:29-31 and Luke 21:25-28 also indicated there would be visible "signs" accompanying the return of Christ with His angels to raise the dead out of Hades, perform the judgment, and reward His faithful saints. This fulfills the "in like manner" terms of the Acts 1:11 text. Both Rev. 1:7 and Acts 1:11 fit the Matt. 16:27-28 "visibility" pattern.

It is also clear from the similarities between 1 Cor. 15 and 1 Thess. 4 that these two "parousia" texts are speaking of the same AD 70 return of Christ. Since both texts state that the resurrection will occur in connection with the "parousia" (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:15-17), and since the NT does not distinguish between two different parousia's separated by thousands of years, and since this parousia is said to occur in the lifetime of some who would "live and remain" until it occurred (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:15), then it is clear that these two texts were fulfilled in AD 70. This forces some adjustment in our concepts about the nature of fulfillment once we get the time of fulfillment straightened out. All three of these difficult second coming texts have been explained from a consistent AD 70 fulfillment. This leaves partial preterists nowhere to hide. We can thank Russell for pointing the way toward this approach to these three texts.

A LITERAL RAPTURE

Another area in which Russell greatly served the interests of future generations was the rapture. Four other scholars within a generation of Russell also taught the idea of a literal rapture in AD 70 (Milton S. Terry, E. Hampden-Cook, Richard Weymouth, and William S. Urmy). There are minor differences in the way each of these men described it, but all agreed there was a removal of some true Christians in connection with the return of Christ in AD 70. Modern advocates of a literal AD 70 rapture (such as Garrett Brown, Walt Hibbard, Arthur Melanson, Ian Harding, Ed Stevens, and others) go further to assert that all true Christians (and nothing but true Christians) alive at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem were "snatched away" to be with Christ in the spiritual realm. Russell suggested that only some Christians were caught up – a "partial rapture" with the sleepers or unwatchful Christians left on earth. But it seems from Jesus' sharp criticism of that group in Matthew 25 (and in the book of Revelation) that the sleepers or unwatchful were not true Christians. The tribulation and apostasy eliminated the insincere. By the time of the rapture the only watchful, awake, and "worthy ones" were the true Christians. There would have been few (if any) pretenders and "mere professing Christians." So in either view, the group of saints actually raptured is basically the same, whether we see it as only the watchful Christians, or as true Christians only.

The arguments we all use to establish the necessity of a literal rapture in AD 70 are exactly the same. The strongest arguments are the Biblical "expectation statements." Scripture alone is our standard, not scripture plus history, tradition or anything else. The only authoritative material that we can use to make any final decisions about what did or did not occur in AD 70 is the Bible. If it says the Parousia was going to occur in AD 70, that should be enough. We shouldn't have to be convinced by history or any external arguments. If the text of scripture says

something is going to occur within a certain time frame, then we are bound to believe it, regardless of whether we can find external historical or traditional support for it, and regardless of whether our credulity is stretched to the breaking point. The same thing happened in the field of archaeology in regard to the Hittites and Darius the Mede. The Bible was the only evidence we had for the existence of these people for a long time, yet that did not make advocates of sola scriptura doubt the veracity of the Bible. So for sincere believers, the question boils down to this: What did the NT writers believe, teach, and expect to see, hear, and experience at the Parousia? Did they expect to experience the Parousia in any conscious way? Did they expect to "know" it had occurred afterwards? Or did they expect it to happen totally in the invisible realm without being consciously aware of it in any way? It is these Biblical "expectation statements" that also need to be examined, not just the "time statements."

We Preterists have pressed Futurists with the "time statements," and rightly so, because they are "sola scriptura" arguments. They are Biblical statements that need to be dealt with. So are the "expectation statements." What the "time statements" do for Preterism in general, the "expectation statements" do for the rapture view in particular. The time statements nail down the "time" of the parousia and its related events, while the expectation statements reveal the content and "nature" of those events in the experience of the Church.

Just because the Parousia may not have been validated historically in the way some might have preferred, it never stopped us from seeing it as a fulfilled "fact." The "time statements" forced us to believe that it must have occurred, regardless of a lack of historical confirmation. Even if we are unable to find external historical proof for a literal rapture in AD 70, it does not invalidate the Bible's affirmation of it. Our concern is simply, "What does Scripture actually teach?"

Rapture advocates have been accused of teaching a rapture based only on external historical "arguments from silence." Not so! Scripture is the driving force. The expectation statements are Biblical arguments, just like the time statements. The time statements help establish the time of fulfillment, while the expectation statements help determine the nature of fulfillment. As you study the following list of Biblical passages, find the answers to these two questions: (1) What does Jesus say is actually going to be seen and experienced by His saints at the Parousia? (2) What do the NT writers and pre-70 Christians indicate that they were expecting to actually see and experience at the Parousia? (Matt. 16:27-28; 19:28; 24:31; John 14:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 2 Cor. 5:1-4; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; 2 Thess. 1:6- 10; 2:1; and 1 Jn. 3:2). These texts show clearly what the first century Church expected to experience at the Parousia.

Paul said that when Christ would come to cast His enemies "away from His presence" and gather His saints (2 Thess. 1:6–2:1), that the saints would "marvel at Him" in His presence and in the presence of all who have believed, and Christ would be glorified by their collective presence with Him "on that day." That doesn't sound like a very silent occasion to me. Did they fail to "recognize the time of His visitation" and remain silent (as if it had not occurred). They should have been celebrating and proclaiming the fulfillment of His Parousia (if they were still around). There is a strange silence here, at the very time when we would have expected anything but silence, when they said they would be marveling at Christ in His presence. Their silence does not match their expectations, unless they were doing those things in the heavenly realm (no longer on the earthly scene).

If all living Christians remained on earth after AD 70, why didn't some of those who saw these incredible events in AD 70 say something about it? Why the silence, if they were still around? Russell and the other four scholars mentioned above proposed the literal rapture to explain that silence. Silence is not a significant argument all by itself. But as Sherlock Holmes would agree in the case of the dog that didn't bark when a supposed outsider broke in, sometimes silence is significant, especially when the circumstances would force us to expect otherwise. Expectations demand our attention even in the case of silence, if the Bible clearly teaches us to expect something other than silence. And it does.

For more in depth studies of the rapture at the parousia in AD 66-70, see this author's book entitled, Expectations Demand A Rapture, and the excellent series of articles written by Ian Harding.

THE MILLENNIUM

Russell was uncomfortable with any view of the Millennium which ended at AD 70 (p. 514). He considered such a short duration of the millennium (40 years or less) to be "so violent and unnatural that we cannot hesitate

to reject it" (p. 514). He suggested the millennium only began at AD 70 with a limited "first" resurrection and judgment (of the righteous only), and is still ongoing in history and moving toward a yet future final resurrection and judgment of the rest of the dead (the wicked only – p. 518). It seemed to him that the Millennium was "introduced parenthetically" as an exception to the AD 70 time limits of the rest of the book (p. 514).

He noted that some people (such as myself) consider the idea of a Millennium after AD 70 as challenging the imminent time indicators throughout the book of Revelation. We would prefer a 40-year millennium (AD 30-70) which stays within those time limits.

Russell places a flashback to AD 70 at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:10), so that the white throne judgment in Rev. 20:11ff takes place in AD 70. Preterists who take the 40-year approach cannot disallow his flashback, since we insert one at the beginning of the millennium.

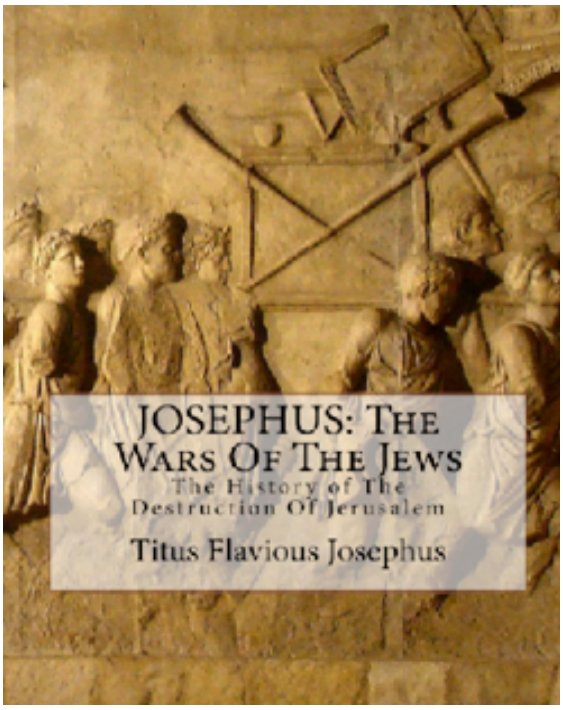
Russell's millennium interpretation deserves careful consideration. He acknowledged his understanding of it might not be perfect, and held out the hope that succeeding generations "will soon correct what is proved to be erroneous, and confirm what is shown to be right." (p. 535)

In conclusion, I have to repeat how impressed I am with Russell's exegetical work here. Many thousands of Bible students all over the world have been, and will continue to be, blessed by this book. We send this reprint forth with strong encouragement to seriously and objectively consider everything he has to say, and to "search the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so." (Acts 17:11)

Edward E. Stevens

Bradford, Pennsylvania July, 2003.

THE WARS OF THE JEWS



Flavius Josephus

The Wars of the Jews is one of the most important historical works ever written on the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple.

Written by Flavius Josephus, a Jewish priest, eyewitness, and historian of the first century, this remarkable work records the rise of the Jewish revolt against Rome, the internal strife that tore the nation apart, and the terrible siege that ended in the overthrow of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Josephus was no distant observer. He lived through the conflict, fought in its early stages, and later witnessed the dreadful events that followed. His account remains one of the chief historical sources for understanding the last days of the Second Temple, the power of Rome, and the tragedy that changed Jewish history forever.

This edition presents The Wars of the Jews in a clear and accessible form for modern readers, while preserving the force and substance of Josephus's original testimony. It is an essential volume for those interested in biblical history, Jewish history, Roman history, and the background to the New Testament world.

A vivid and sobering chronicle of war, judgment, political turmoil, and national destruction — told by the man who saw it happen.