

Supplement to XIII - When Do These Things Take Place?

Interpreting the events of Revelation depends on when it was written. There are 2 viable options:

94-96 AD (Late Date) Domitian was Caesar. Temple is destroyed by Titus of Rome. Jews were disbanded
 66-68 AD (Early Date) Nero was Caesar. Temple was still standing, Jews were still in power

One critical point, how could the people receiving the letter from John obey the whole prophesy if it was distant future?

Rev 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants **the things that must soon take place**. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. ³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, **for the time is near**.

22: 6 And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants **what must soon take place**.”

1:19 Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

Well educated people debate the meaning and intent of Rev 1:1-3 and 19. Two schools of thought:

Early Date	Late Date
Soon means in the next few years – literal	Soon means in the age to come – not literal
Much of Revelation’s language parallels Jesus warning in Matt. 24 and Luke 21. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because he knew the judgment to come	Revelation is a discussion of a future judgment that has not been experienced.
Nero is the “Beast”	Nero is a type of the Beast that will manifest later
Babylon is a reference to Rome	Babylon and Rome are types of all world governments
Many of the judgments mentioned were fulfilled in the Roman siege of 68-70 AD as chronicled by Josephus, a Jewish historian and eyewitness,	The judgments are symbolic of things to come
The second is in the future. The judgments on Jerusalem and the Jews are a foreshadowing of the judgment on all evil nations at the second coming.	The second coming is in the future.
Things you have seen: John’s life with Jesus	Things you have seen: Jewish age prior to Jesus
Things that are: Events current to AD66-70 with impending Roman destruction	Things that are: Church age after the resurrection
Things after: Future judgment and second coming	Things after: Future judgment and second coming

The language is not perfectly clear on precisely when things happen. Many look at v. 19 as a map to the book. Chapters 1-3 are one group of time, chapters 2-20 are a second, and chapters 21 & 22 are a third.

It seems Rev 1:1 and 22:6 serve as bookends to describe an immediate nature of at least some of the book.

Late Date support comes from a statement by Irenaeus in 180-190 AD. He wrote one sentence in his writings that many have interpreted to say John was still alive in the 90’s. Church tradition holds this date based on Irenaeus friendship with Polycarp who was a disciple of John.

Early Date support comes from internal evidence. John would have not described the temple in Revelation (11:1-2) if it were already destroyed. Historical evidence of the Roman siege matches the suffering described in Revelation. Interpretation of 17:9 points to Rome as city on 7 hills, and 7 kings indicate Nero as 6th. 666 is also associated with Nero as a symbolic reference.

A view of partial fulfillment in AD 70 along with foreshadowing of future persecution and deliverance is reasonable given the model of similarities with Babylonian captivity from Daniel.

Parallels to Matthew 24 and Luke 21 in the Idea of “Soon”

Many interpret these texts as the explanation of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, not the end of time. Looking at Revelation partially as a prophesy of Rome destroying Jerusalem makes much of these texts fit into the Revelation letter. Jesus portrayed a sense of immediacy in his language.

Luke 21	Matthew 24
5 And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, ⁶ “As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” 7 And they asked him, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?”	2 But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” ³ As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”
8 And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them. 9 And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once. ”	26 So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.
10 Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. 12 But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you , delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake. 13 This will be your opportunity to bear witness. 14 Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. 16 You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. 17 You will be hated by all for my name’s sake. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By your endurance you will gain your lives.	23 Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand.
20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, 22 for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. 23 Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. 24 They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.	15 “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, 18 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. 19 And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! 20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. 21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. 22 And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.
25 “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”	29 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.
	32 “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 34 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.