

THE GATE CHURCH HIGH DESERT  
RANDY HOWARD

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS AT 6:30PM  
JAN - APR, 2021



# BACK TO THE FUTURE

A STUDY OF REVELATIONS AND THE VICTORY OF CHRIST

## A PROPER APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING - THE BOOK OF REVELATION

### CHAPTER ONE

#### **Developing the Right Hermeneutic (*Interpretation of Scripture*)**

Literal, Figurative, Symbolic and Figurative Language  
Systems of Eschatology and the Approach to End Times  
Preterism, Futurism, Historicism and Idealism  
Amillennialism, Pre-Millennialism and Post Millennialism

### CHAPTER TWO

#### **Deciphering the Old Testament Prophecies (*Daniel, Zechariah*)**

Zechariah's Description of the Temple  
Daniel's Vision of the Four Kingdoms  
Daniel's Timeline of the Seventy Weeks

### CHAPTER THREE

#### **Discovering the First Century Relevance of Jesus' Prophecy (*Matthew 23-25*)**

The Temple Experience and a Walk in the Garden  
The Disciples Questions and a Curiosity for the Unknown  
The Future Unveiled and the Prophecies Unfold

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Detailing the Observations as Seen in the Visions of John (*Revelation*)**

The Purpose of the Book (Christ and His Church Victorious)

The Person of the Book (*Christ*)

*Jesus Christ the Lamb of God | Jesus Christ the Lord of All*

The Prophecy of the Book (Warnings, Judgments and Outcomes)

*Dating the Revelation: Crucial to Understanding the Book*

*Warnings to the Churches of Asia Minor*

*Judgments on the Jews, the Romans Empire and the Nations of Earth*

*Second Coming, the Kingdom of God and New Creation*

## **LESSON EIGHT:**

### **Deciphering the Old Testament Prophecies (*Daniel, Ezekiel*)**

Daniel's Vision of the Four Kingdoms

Daniel's Timeline of the Seventy Weeks

Description of the Temple

## **REVIEW**

### **Daniel's 2300 Days and the 70 weeks**

Some people such as John Pratt and Sir Isaac Newton have placed the crucifixion of Jesus at the end of Daniel's 70 weeks (490 years) prophecy. But as we have seen, Jesus was crucified in the middle of the final seven years (7 prophetic days - 7 years), which is 3.5 years earlier making their date of 33-34 A.D. more in favor 30-31 A.D. Here is the pertinent verse from the Amplified Bible.

*Daniel 9:27 "And he shall enter into a strong and firm covenant with the many for one week [seven years]. And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and offering to cease [for the remaining three and one-half years]; and upon the wing or pinnacle of abominations [shall come] one who makes desolate, until the full determined end is poured out on the desolator."*

Note the following statement from Pratt's own web site, *"Those familiar with my work know that in virtually every case, our Lord's prophecies are fulfilled not only to the year, but to the very day. Can this be the case with the 70 weeks prophecy?"* Pratt places the date of Artaxerxes decree on April 3, 458 B.C. and the crucifixion of our Messiah at the very end of the 490 years on Friday 1 April, 33 A.D. being two days off 490 years. But since Jesus was actually crucified 3.5 years prior to the end of the 490 years, we know this is incorrect. What Pratt and others have also overlooked is that the prophecy of Daniel's 70 weeks (490 years) is cut off from Daniel's 2300 day (2300 year) prophecy from the previous chapter.

Daniel 8:14 *"And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."*

Here the angel Gabriel tells Daniel that the sanctuary would be cleansed at the end of the 2300 years, which was the cleansing of the sins of the people from God's Temple. This is the fulfillment of Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement. Yom Kippur falls in the month of Tishri, which is around September, October on the Gregorian calendar. Most theologians would agree with Pratt in that Bible prophecies are very precise in time, and since the beginning of the 2300 year prophecy is also the beginning of Daniel's 70 weeks (490 years), then it also began from the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) around September, October and not April 3. Thus the date of 458 B.C. from Pratt and others who made the same mistake is wrong and would actually be 457 B.C. that does align with the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar.

## Who is the Israel of God Now?

Since the Jews were rejected as God's chosen nation, then who does the promise go to now and who are Jews and Israel today? Paul states in Galatians 6:16 that there is the Israel of God and in 1 Corinthians 10:18, Paul speaks of the Israel after the flesh. The Israel of the flesh are those that are Jews by birth and the Israel of God is anyone who belongs to Christ and is under the New Covenant. The majority of Christians fail to understand the simple truth that if we are Christ's then we are spiritual Jews and the Israel of God. The New Covenant was only made with the House of Israel and so those choosing to reject this very clear and plain truth cannot be under the New Covenant. Note in the following passage that Paul speaks of two Israels and declares that the literal seed of Abraham is no longer the Israel of God today.

*Romans 9:6-8 "Not as though the word of God has taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: 7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall your seed be called. 8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."*

Paul further clarifies that the *children of the flesh* (Jews by birth) are *not* the children of God but the children of the promise are. So who are the children of the promise now? Galatians 3:28-29 explains this in a manner that cannot possibly be misunderstood and Romans 2:28-29 is also very clear.

Galatians 3:28-29 *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

Romans 2:28-29 *"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."*

When the Jewish council rejected God's message from Stephen (Acts 6:8-7:60) and stoned him, this ended the 490 years God gave Israel to end their rebellion and sin against Him. (Daniel 9:24) When Daniel's 70 weeks concluded, the following points of scripture came into effect. He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly and so if we are Christ's then we are Abraham's seed and thus children of Israel and heirs according to the promise. So when the Bible speaks of the Jews after this time, it is referring to spiritual Jews and the Israel of God. This is anyone who belongs to Christ.

To understand this further, we must consider what the Bible teaches about the Temple.

### **Does the Jewish temple need to be rebuilt before Jesus returns?**

With the constant turmoil always threatening stability in the Middle East, many Bible commentators are speculating louder than ever about whether the Jewish temple will

be rebuilt in the months and years to come. For many, such an event will signal the start of the final events of earth's history.

However, in the same way many Christians misplace the focus from spiritual Israel to the literal Jewish nation, they are also confused on the subject of the temple. Let's go to 1 Chronicles 17:11, 12:

*"It shall come to pass ... that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever."*

This prophecy given to King David says his offspring will build the temple. Later, in 1 Chronicles 28:6, God reaffirms,

*"Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts."*

But this text is also one of the clearest examples of a dual prophecy found in Scripture. Dual prophecies have both a physical and spiritual fulfillment. Indeed, Solomon, the son of David, built the physical temple. But this prophecy also applies spiritually to Jesus, the true "Son of David," who is to build a temple and kingdom that will last forever.

Jesus' prophesied that the pride of the Jewish nation, the temple, would be destroyed. In Mark 14:58, Jesus says,

*"I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands."*

Of course, Jesus is speaking of rebuilding a temple—not of stone and nails, but of living stones (1 Peter 2:5). Yet many refused to grasp this teaching (John 2:20, 21). They even mocked Jesus on the cross regarding His prophecy (Matthew 27:40).

Yet when Jesus died, the veil in the earthly temple ripped in two from the top to bottom, signifying that the temple no longer held meaning. A temple for sacrifice today would be as useless as it was then, and it would not be the house of God.

The New Testament is replete with the idea that the temple is the body of Jesus. Ephesians 2:19–22 says,

*"Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (1 Peter 2:5)*

Even after God provides all this clear evidence that His temple is a spiritual one, many Christians are waiting for the Jews to receive a construction permit to rebuild a physical Temple on the site where a Muslim mosque now sits. However, there is no prophecy, promise, or commandment in the Bible that says the physical temple would ever be rebuilt after the Romans destroyed it nearly 2,000 years ago.

Through a series of Old Testament temple and ritual allusions, Paul points to *the new temple of God*:

*“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (II Corinthians 6:16–7:1)*

While some would say this is a spiritualization of Scripture, it is actually the opposite. In Christ is *realization*. It is not so much that Christ fulfills what the temple means; rather Christ is the meaning for which the temple existed.

## SUMMARY OF DANIEL'S PROPHECY AND THE TEMPLE

### Daniel's Prophecy - 7, 62, 1

70<sup>th</sup> Week – Begins with Jesus at 30 Years Old, Ends with the Stoning of Stephen with the Gospel to the Jews first then to the Gentiles through Paul and Peter!

#### EARLY CHURCH FATHER'S VIEWS OF DANIEL'S PROPHECY

The following are resources as compiled by Bishop George Kouri, an author and the pastor of *The King's Church* in Jacksonville, Florida. He references the stated beliefs of Barnabas, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Athanasius, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus concerning "the last days", "the end of the age," and Daniel's 70th Week (Daniel 9). This is not exhaustive, and there's no doubt that leaders in church history have held quite a variety of views about these and related topics in the field of eschatology. When researching their beliefs, though, it's easy to see that many did not view the Biblical "last days" as being about the (alleged) end of world history, but rather as the last days of the old covenant age. Here are just a few examples, as provided by George Kouri (all emphasis in the original):

#### BARNABAS:

Written anonymously around 100 AD, the "Epistle of Barnabas" is *the earliest extra-Canonical source* we have. Although not included in the Canon of the New Testament, it is an incredibly early documentation of the early Church's beliefs about the last days.

The Apostle John was probably alive when it was written. And although the authorship is disputed, we will refer to Barnabas as the author.

The Epistle of Barnabas sets forth the common view held by the early Church that the seventieth week of Daniel ended with the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, as Messiah's Day dawned and Christ's Church was born. Barnabas writes, "For it is written, 'And it shall come to pass, when the week is completed, the temple of God shall be built...in the name of the Lord.' I find...that a temple does exist. Having received the forgiveness of sins...in our habitation God dwells in us....This is the spiritual temple built for the Lord." (EOB, 16:6)

Barnabas uses the expression "*the week*," but does not mention Daniel. Yet scholars agree from the context that this is definitely a reference to Daniel's 70th week. And it is assumed by many scholars that the prophecy of Daniel's seventy weeks was so well known and so widely expounded in the early Church that it needed no further explanation. The early Church did not avoid Daniel's prophecy.

This early Christian writer connects Daniel's vision of seventy weeks with the prophecy of Haggai 2:7-9 and the building of a "*spiritual temple*," the Church. The author of the Epistle of Barnabas obviously believed that Daniel's 70th week was fulfilled with Christ's first advent. This was when the Old Temple was destroyed and the new "*spiritual temple*" was initially established. Writing in 100 AD he clearly believed the 70th week of Daniel was already completed.

It seems clear from this passage in the Epistle of Barnabas that less than a century after Christ's passion (remember that according to Daniel the Messiah would be cut off in the middle of the 70th week), it was the widespread belief of the Church that the 70th week of Daniel was completed. It is certain that Barnabas placed the end of the 70th week no later than 70 AD. His mention of the building of the Church (which was able to grow largely unimpeded after 70AD) makes it probable that Barnabas saw 67 to 70 AD and the destruction of Herod's Temple as the end of the Jewish or Old Covenant Age and the dawning of Messiah's Day. As David B. Currie writes in his book, *Rapture, The End-Times Error That Leaves The Bible Behind*, "*He (Barnabas) assumes his readers will agree that the events of 'the week' led to the building of the Church*" (Page 422).

#### CLEMENT OF ALEXANDREA

Within a century of Barnabas, Clement became bishop of Alexandria until his death in 215 AD. Clement taught that the blessings of the New Covenant required the end of biblical Judaism within the 70 weeks of Daniel. Clement writes of the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 AD in the prophetic language of Daniel's seventy weeks, "*Vespasian rose to the supreme power (Emperor of Rome) and destroyed Jerusalem, and desolated the holy place*" (STO, XXI, 142-143).

Clement of Alexandria believed the Jewish Age, the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel and the great tribulation were behind, not ahead of the Church.

## ORIGEN (185-254 AD)

A student of Clement of Alexandria, Origen agreed that the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 AD marked the end of the Jewish Age and the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy regarding the 70 weeks. Origen writes, "*The weeks of years up to the time of Christ the leader that Daniel the prophet predicted were fulfilled*" (TPR, IV:1:5).

Like Clement, Origen also believed the Jewish Age, the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel and the great tribulation were behind the Church, not ahead of it.

## TERTULLIAN

In 203 AD Tertullian wrote his famous treatise *Against The Jews*. This early Church father also taught that Daniel's 70th week had been fulfilled in 70 AD: "*Vespasian vanquished the Jews...and so by the date of his storming Jerusalem, the Jews had completed the seventy weeks foretold by Daniel*" (AAJ, VII; CID).

Contrary to modern postponement preachers and teachers, Tertullian believed the Jewish age, the abomination of desolation, and the great tribulation was behind, not ahead of the Church.

## ATHANASIUS

Athanasius was bishop of Alexandria from 326 to 373 AD. Like the early Church fathers before him, he also taught that the 70 weeks of Daniel culminated and the Jewish Age ended in 70 AD: "Jerusalem is to stand till His coming (Daniel's reference to Messiah's appearing in His First Advent), and thenceforth, prophet and vision cease in Israel (the end of the Old Covenant or Jewish Age). This is why Jerusalem stood till then...that they might be exercised in the types as a preparation for the reality...but from that time forth all prophecy is sealed and the city and Temple taken" (INC, XXXIX:3-XV:8).

Athanasius clearly reflects the view of the entire early Church: once the Messiah had come, the role of the Temple in Jerusalem would be ended. "Things to be done which belonged to Jerusalem beneath...were fulfilled, and those which belonged to the shadows had passed away" (FEL, IV:3-4).

This important early Church father clearly believed that the Jewish age ended in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

## IRENÆUS AND HIPPOLYTUS

Irenaeus was a contemporary of Clement of Alexandria whose widely held view we dealt with above. Irenaeus and his pupil Hippolytus are the only two writers from the early Church period who believed in a still-future fulfillment of Daniel's 70th week. They both placed the 70th week at the end of the gospel age and so are the

first interpreters to postulate a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks (AG, V). *Both predicted a specific date for the second coming that has long since come and gone.*

But their belief in a future 70th week was never widely accepted! St. Jerome specifically pointed out that the number of years in their system did not coincide with the historical events they purported to cover. He wrote, "If by any chance those of future generations should not see these predictions of his (Irenaeus) fulfilled at the time he (Irenaeus) set, then they will be forced to seek for some other solution and to convict the teacher himself (Irenaeus) of erroneous interpretation" (CID).

David B. Currie points out in his scholarly work, "As a point of history, the views of Irenaeus did give seed to premillennialism. But the early fathers of the Church strongly and universally denounced this concept. The early Church understood the presumptuous-parenthesis theory that rapturists employ...but they resoundingly rejected it" (David B. Currie, Rapture, page 425).

The prevailing view of the early Church fathers was that Daniel's vision of the 70 weeks was fulfilled in 70 AD. The final or 70th week began with the baptism of Jesus and his presentation to Israel by John the Baptist. The Messiah was cut off in the middle of the 70th week when Jesus was crucified. The abomination of desolation and the great tribulation spoken of by Daniel were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans in 70 AD.

These events marked the end of the Jewish age and the dawning of Messiah's Day.

## THE DATING OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

### ❖ Two Dates in Question

- There are two dates that are commonly mentioned for the writing of the Book of Revelation:
  - An early date - still during the lifetime of Caesar Nero, about the middle of the 60's AD; and
  - A late date - about 95/96 AD during the time of Caesar Domitian.

The question about the date of the writing of the Book of Revelation is important for an accurate understanding of those events that are mentioned and spoken of in the book. A correct understanding must take into consideration when a statement was made, only then can the time frames and time related elements of the mentioned events be correctly understood. It is remarkable that the proponents of each position often accuse the other that their whole interpretation is based on the dating of the writing of the book and therefore would fall apart if the book were written at a different time. Such arguments are only partly correct.

Certainly, as I have already mentioned, the knowledge of the date of writing is important to correctly understand the statements made in the book; if that premise is wrong, the interpretation will be wrong as well.

Now, the most important points for determining the time of writing of the Book of Revelation are the statements and the information in the book, which provide time elements and hints that either directly tell time factors or else imply or indicate time elements. Considering the truth that the Book of Revelation was revealed by God and that the prophet John correctly wrote down the truths he was shown, we can see that the time related information in the book (internal to the book) is the most important criteria for dating the writing of the book. Such information gained from the contents of the book is often called "Internal evidence", and such internal evidence has a higher priority and carry more weight than the so called "external evidence", that is, information about the matter in other sources and other works. The scholars are not really united on this matter, and in the course of certain theological views, the latter date is preferred today by the majority.

The interpretations based on the acceptance of the late date as correct usually place the events recorded in the book of Revelation in the still future and thus they consider the prophecies in Revelation as unfulfilled. Rather important for the acceptance of the late date (approx. 96 AD) is a quote from a writing of the church father Irenaeus where he mentions John in the context of the persecutions of Christians by Caesar Domitian.

Based on this source, the writing of Revelation is then placed in the time of Domitian because of the mention that John was on the Island of Patmos because of the word of God. I would like to set forth in this study some of the often used arguments for both dates. In addition, I will mention some points that

I would consider to be important. Other than that, you have the privilege to consider the matter and to come to your own conclusions concerning this topic.

- Sources and Evidence
  - External Sources and Evidence

I have listed some external sources. The sources listed are repeatedly used by representatives of both positions as a support for their respective interpretations.

Irenaeus - Hints to a Late Date?

The proponents of a late date determine their conclusion mostly from a statement by church father Irenaeus (AD 130 to AD 202), which was quoted by the church historian Eusebius in AD 325, where he writes:

*"We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen not very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign."*

## Irenaeus' Ambiguous Statement

If John had seen these visions toward the end of the reign of Caesar Domitian, the years 95/96 AD would be good candidates for the time of writing.

Domitian died in 96 AD after having reigned 14 years as Caesar and Roman emperor. However, there are a number of things about this quote from Irenaeus that are not as clear and somewhat ambiguous. A question remains about "who" or "what" was seen. Was John seen still at that time? Or did John see the vision that then was recorded in the Book of Revelation at that time? A difficulty is that the statement comes to us as a third party quote of what someone else quoted that someone else supposedly said about two centuries earlier. We read what Eusebius had heard or knew from some source about Irenaeus, but the statement by Irenaeus is actually a "second hand" report, in that he makes reference to Polycarp. It was not Irenaeus himself, but Polycarp, who according to Irenaeus' recollection saw "that" sometime toward the end of Domitian's reign. It is not clear from this statement what Polycarp was referring to as "that was seen", for he could be referring to John and the visions John saw, he could be referring to the name of the Antichrist, he could also be referring to the book without it being clear if he actually meant that the book was written then or that it already existed. This quote is not as clear as some want to make it, when they base their dating of the writing of the Book of Revelation on this source.

## Irenaeus' Ancient Statement

Irenaeus mentioned in another one of his works concerning the number of the name of the antichrist that this number is found in all ancient and approved or recognized copies/writings. This mention of "ancient copies" is interesting because Domitian's reign ended only shortly before Irenaeus' own time and if the book were written in about 95/96 AD, there would hardly have been any "ancient" copies of the book in his day. This mention in Irenaeus' 5th book of his writings seems to point to an earlier date of writing of the Book of Revelation, at least a few more decades removed from his own time so that he could speak of "ancient [older]" copies being in existence.

In this connection, Edersheim brings up a point that is more important for our interpretation than the issue of Revelation's human authorship (for ultimately [see 1:1] it is Jesus Christ's Revelation). St. John's intimate acquaintance with the minute details of Temple worship suggests that the Book of Revelation and the Fourth Gospel must have been written before the Temple services had actually ceased. Although some scholars have uncritically accepted the statement of St. Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202) that the prophecy appeared "toward the end of Domitian's reign" (around A.D. 96), there is considerable room for doubt about his precise meaning (he may have meant that the Apostle John himself "was seen" by others). The language of St. Irenaeus is somewhat ambiguous; and, regardless of what he was talking about, he could have been mistaken. St. Irenaeus, incidentally, is the only source for this late dating of Revelation; all other sources are simply quoting from him. It is thus rather

disingenuous for commentators to claim as Swete does that "Early Christian tradition is almost unanimous in assigning the Apocalypse to the last years of Domitian. Certainly, there are other early writers whose statements indicate that St. John wrote the Revelation much earlier, under Nero's persecution.

A good deal of the modern presumption in favor of a Domitianic date is based on the belief that a great, sustained period of persecution and slaughter of Christians was carried on under his rule. This belief, as cherished as it is, does not seem to be based on any hard evidence at all. While there is no doubt that Domitian was a cruel and wicked tyrant (I come to bury a myth about Caesar, not to praise him), until the fifth century there is no mention in any historian of a supposedly widespread persecution of Christians by his government. It is true that he did temporarily banish some Christians; but these were eventually recalled. Robinson remarks: "When this limited and selective purge, in which no Christian was for certain put to death, is compared with the massacre of Christians under Nero in what two early and entirely independent witnesses speak of as 'immense multitudes,' it is astonishing that commentators should have been led by Irenaeus, who himself does not even mention a persecution, to prefer a Domitianic context for the book of Revelation.'

Our safest course, therefore, must be to study the Revelation itself to see what internal evidence it presents regarding its date. As we will see throughout the commentary, the Book of Revelation is primarily a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. This fact alone places St. John's

authorship somewhere before September of A.D. 70. Further, as we shall see, St. John speaks of Nero Caesar as still on the throne –and Nero died in June 68.

*H. B. Swete, Commentary on Revelation (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, [1911 1977]), p. xcix. See the detailed discussion in Moses Stuart, Commentary on the Apocalypse (Andover: Allen, Merrill and Wardwell, 1845), Vol. I, pp. 263-84; see , also James M. MacDonald, The Life and Writings of St. John (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1877), pp. 151-77.*

Robinson has in mind the statements of the Christian pastor St. Clement (1 Clement 6) and the heathen historian Tacitus (Annals XV.44). Robinson, p. 233; cf. pp. 236ff. 4

- Author and Date

More important than any of this, however, we have a priori teaching from Scripture itself that all special revelation ended by A.D. 70. The angel Gabriel told Daniel that the “seventy weeks” were to end with the destruction of Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24-27); and that period would also serve to “seal up the vision and prophecy” (Dan. 9:24). In other words, special revelation would stop – be “sealed up” – by the time Jerusalem was destroyed. The Canon of Holy Scripture was entirely completed before Jerusalem fell. St. Athanasius interpreted Gabriel’s words in the same way:

*“When did prophet and vision cease from Israel? Was it not when Christ came, the Holy One of holies? It is, in fact, a sign and notable proof of the coming of the Word that Jerusalem no longer stands, neither is prophet raised up nor vision revealed among them. And it is natural*

*that it should be so, for when He that was signified had come, what need was there any longer of any to signify Him? And when the Truth had come, what further need was there of the shadow? On His account only they prophesied continually, until such time as Essential Righteousness had come, Who was made the ransom for the sins of all. For the same reason Jerusalem stood until the same time, in order that there men might premeditate the types before the Truth was known. So, of course, once the Holy One of holies had come, both vision and prophecy were sealed. And the kingdom of Jerusalem ceased at the same time, because kings were to be anointed among them only until the Holy of holies had been anointed . . .”*

While he does not base his case on theological considerations, an excerpt from J. A. T. Robinson’s thesis in *Re-dating the New Testament* states,

*“The plain fact is, as I say, that there is no longer any king or prophet nor Jerusalem nor sacrifice nor vision among them; yet the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of God, and the Gentiles, forsaking atheism, are now taking refuge with the God.”*

He arrives at this conclusion through a careful study of both the internal and external evidence regarding each New Testament book. Support from archeological findings for an early New Testament is presented in David Estrada and William White Jr., *“The First New Testament”* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1978). See also Ernest L. Martin, *“The Original Bible Restored”* (Pasadena: Foundation for Biblical Research, 1984), for his interesting thesis that the New Testament was canonized by St. Peter and St. John.

St. Athanasius, the “patron saint of postmillennialism,” thus applies the “millennial” promise of Isaiah 11:9 to the triumphs of the New Covenant era.

- Introduction of the New Covenant

The death, resurrection and ascension of Christ marked the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New; the apostles were commissioned to deliver Christ’s message in the form of the New Testament; and when they were finished, God sent the Edomites and the Roman armies to destroy utterly the last remaining symbols of the Old Covenant: the Temple and the Holy City. This fact alone is sufficient to establish the writing of the Revelation as taking place before A.D. 70. The book itself gives abundant testimony regarding its date; but, even more, the nature of the New Testament as God’s Final Word tells us this. Christ’s death at the hands of the apostate children of Israel sealed their fate: The Kingdom would be taken from them (Matt. 21:33-43).

While wrath built up “to the utmost” (1 Thess. 2:16), God stayed His hand of judgment until the writing of the New Covenant document was accomplished. With that done, He dramatically terminated the kingdom of Israel, wiping out the persecuting generation (Matt. 23:34-36; 24:34; Luke 11:49-51). Jerusalem’s destruction was the last blast of the trumpet, signaling that the “mystery of God” was finished (Rev. 10:7). There would be no further canonical writings once Israel was gone.

- Aramaic Peshitta Preface - Hints to an Early Date

The Aramaic Peshitta Bible is the Scriptures written in the Semitic language and accepted as the Eastern Scriptures.

The preface comment to the Book of Revelation in the Aramaic Peshitta version has a comment that would place the writing of the Book of Revelation to the early date, a time prior to 70 AD. The title page of the Book of Revelation contains the following statement:

*"The revelation that God gave the Evangelist John on the island of Patmos where he had been banned by Nero Caesar."*

The emperor Nero however died in 68 AD, and according to Roman rules those banned by a Caesar would be released after the Caesar's death. Thus, John would have been released from Patmos in 68 AD (or shortly thereafter) and the time when he received this revelation and wrote it down would have been prior to 70 AD. John himself mentions in the book that he was at Patmos when he received this revelation.

- Internal Evidence and Sources

There are a number of points arising from the internal evidence, that is, from information given in the book itself, which all indicate the early date as not only probable but the only possible date for what is stated in the Book.

- Warnings to Seven Churches in Asia

The Book of Revelation specifically mentions that this revelation was of special relevance to the seven churches in Asia and that John wrote it and had it sent to those churches by messengers (cp Rev 1:4). It is important to note that during Paul's ministry in the 50's AD, there had been nine churches established in Asia. At about 60/61 AD there was a large earthquake in which, as we can read in secular sources, the cities of Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea were totally destroyed. Laodicea was the only city of these three which was rebuilt soon afterwards, which then left seven cities with churches in Asia. The period of time where there were only seven churches in Asia was only during the few years from the early 60's AD to the time prior to the Jewish war. In order for the book to even be of benefit to the Christians in Asia, it must have been written prior to 66/67 AD, before Vespasian was coming through this area with his armies as they were getting in position for the war against the Jews. Once the war started, the Romans plundered and persecuted the Christians as well as the Jews wherever they came through. An interesting detail from the message to the church at Philadelphia (cp Rev 3:7ff) also sheds some light on the possible time of writing. The believers at Philadelphia are warned by Christ in this revelation that an "hour of temptation" was imminent and "about to come upon all the world [the Roman empire]" and that they should hold fast and remain faithful as he [Christ] was coming soon. This is important and significant in that it is addressed to believers of a church in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and in that the first persecution of Christians all over the Roman Empire took place under Nero Caesar in 64 AD. If this warning to the believers in Asia about an

imminent temptation and the encouragement to hold fast related to this persecution, then the book seems to have been written even prior to 64 AD.

### John's Later Activities

Another internal evidence in the book itself is connected to a reference about certain activities that John was still to experience in his life afterwards. In Rev 10:11, John is told that he "*must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings*". Now, if John would have received this revelation in 96AD and written it at that time, then these words which he was told did not come to pass, seeing that he was a very old man at that time and hardly able to walk and travel. But, if John did receive this revelation and write it down during the time of Nero approx 65-66 AD, then he could fulfill what he was told. He would have been able to prophesy and to teach during the reigns of Caesar's Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus and also Domitian (spanning the time from 68-96 AD).

### Destruction of City and Temple at the End of the Age

There are a number of references in the book of Revelation with symbols that have reference to the temple, and in addition Rev 11:1-2 makes reference to the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. This event was also foretold by Jesus when he prophesied about the judgment on Jerusalem which was to come by the Son of man at the end of the age. There is a parallel record in Zech. 14:2 about this "*day of the Lord*" with its destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and Zech. 13:7 places this shortly after the shepherd would have dispersed his sheep (Jesus did quote from this section in Mt 26,31). Rev 11:2 is also a parallel to Mai 4, where a day

of the Lord is spoken about when the Lord would separate and burn the chaff (the evil ones). This also parallels what Jesus mentions in parables about the burning of the chaff, the burning of apostate Israel, "at the end of the world [age]" (Mt 13:40,49). Now, when is or was "the end of the age"? Other records in the NT scriptures provide some insight as they mention certain things which happen in connection with the end of the age. The writer of Hebrews speaks of Jesus as "*now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*" (Heb 9:26). We can see from this passage that "the end of the world [age]" is the time when the Messiah Jesus through his sacrifice put away sin; in other words, the "end of the age" was the time during which Jesus lived and fulfilled his ministry almost 2000 years ago.

### The Coming of the Lord is Placed as "Near"

In Rev 1, the coming of the Lord is introduced and it is carried through the whole book to Rev 22, where we read about "*Surely, I come quickly [soon]!*" In Rev 1:7 the coming of the Lord in the clouds is mentioned, in addition we learn that those who pierced him would see him, as would be the case with all the tribes of the land, etc. Rev 1:7 is a reference to Zee 12:10, the words which Jesus also used when he was speaking to Caiaphas the high priest (cp Mt 26:64). The descriptions of Jesus about his coming in Mt 16:27-28; 23:34-39 and 24:30-31 are parallel to the record in Dan 9:24-27. Jesus was very clear about his coming being imminent and still happening during "*this generation*", that is, during the lifetime of some of his contemporaries, while some of his apostles and disciples would still be alive. Christ would come to judge the wicked and to execute the judgment on apostate Israel who persecuted Him and His disciples. This would not be a judgment that would occur at some very distant time in

the future; instead, Jesus was rather emphatic about it being "soon", and "about to come". For example, in Mt 16:27, Jesus used the words "*For the Son of man SHALL COME ...*" Grammatically, this looks in English like a simple future, describing an event that could be at any time (near or distant) in the future. However, the Greek uses the word 'mello' in connection with the word "come", and the expression should be translated as "*For the Son of man IS ABOUT TO COME ...*" (For the meaning of 'mello', compare Thayer, Greek and English Lexicon, p. 396). Jesus declares that He "*is about to come*", and this immanency He emphasizes by stating in the next verse, that some of those who heard him that day would not die and actually see the Son of man coming in His kingdom! In other words, they would still be alive when Christ would come!

Conclusion:

As we consider these points given in the NT scriptures, and as we accept that what is stated is indeed true, there are really two possibilities: (1) Jesus did already come, as he Himself prophesied, or (2) there are some of those disciples who heard Jesus that day who are still alive somewhere on earth and who are approx 2000 years old by now. The coming of the Lord was one of the various judgments of God and is parallel to the judgments of the LORD mentioned in Gen 3, when Adam and Eve were judged for transgressing God's command. It is parallel to the coming of the LORD to judge Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 18; it is parallel to the coming of the LORD upon Egypt at the time of the exodus of Israel from Egypt (also Exodus 2:8, Jeremiah 5:25; 10:5-11; Joel 2:1; Zephaniah 1:1-18; 14:5). The coming of Christ in Rev 1:7 is a mention of that coming when the Son of man would judge the enemies of his

assembly and His coming to execute judgment on apostate Israel, it marks the events prophesied to happen at the end of the age. From both external and internal evidence of the Book of Revelation, an early date is the only option that will harmonize well with the content of the book. Although the later date of 96 AD is widely accepted in many Christian circles and groups today (even though this theory basically only rests on one statement in one external source), the evidence in the book of Revelation itself points rather clearly to an earlier date of 65-66 AD for the time of writing, the time when John was banned to the Isle of Patmos during the persecution by Caesar Nero.