

A Partial-Preterist Perspective of the Destruction of the Jerusalem
Temple in 70 AD

By Adam Maarschalk

Mentor: Mike Rusten

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A. INTRODUCTION

Search the average church website in America for teaching articles related to 70 AD, and no results are likely to turn up. A search for articles related to a future temple, though, one which is allegedly to be rebuilt in modern Jerusalem, is more likely to produce results. Taking the internet out of the equation, Church history reveals that this would not have been the case prior to the 1830s. This was the pivotal decade when John Nelson Darby laid the framework for dispensationalism, that system of belief which not only divides history into successive ages but holds to a sharp distinction between Israel and the Church. Dispensationalism was further popularized when the Scofield Reference Bible was published in 1909. As prophecy students were baited with the prospects of a future “third temple,” the story behind the previous one was pushed out of view, perhaps intentionally.

If it weren’t for the censorship of the history of Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 AD, the faith of many Christian believers in America today could be enriched by the knowledge of those events and their significance. The events leading up to and surrounding this event are full of rich implications, especially as they involve the disbanding of the Old Covenant and related practices, beliefs, superstitions, and man-made traditions. A case can be made that the period of time between Christ’s resurrection and the destruction of the temple in 70 AD was a period of transition, and that this event brought about a culmination of the Old Covenant dissolving in favor of the New Covenant. Hebrews 8:13 seems to indicate this when it uses the present perfect tense to say, *“In speaking of a new covenant, He makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”*

What happened in 70 AD is not pleasant to consider, as will be seen, but it was accomplished through God’s very hand of judgment. It was not simply a satanic plot to exterminate the Jews, as is often taught by dispensationalists. These events were of such importance that Luke was moved to say, *“These are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written”* (Luke 21:22). After 70 AD it was abundantly clear that a life immersed in Jesus was the true way of life, not Old Covenant Judaism. The events of that year were an outstanding fulfillment of many prophecies given by the prophets, apostles, and by Jesus Himself, and it’s a curious reality that this is not more often pointed out in Christian teaching today.

B. Partial-Preterism Explained

Admittedly, the events which took place around 70 AD hold more importance among Preterists than they do for Dispensationalists. This is because Preterism views this point in history as marking the fulfillment of a great deal of Biblical prophecy, while Dispensationalism holds that most Biblical prophecy remains yet to be fulfilled, including Daniel’s 70th Week, a 7-year tribulation period, and the salvation of national Israel. There are fundamental differences of opinion, then, in these two systems of thought regarding large portions of Biblical text. In this work, Partial-Preterism,

rather than Full Preterism, will be advocated and it will be through this lens that the events of 70 AD will be viewed.* According to Wikipedia (2009),

Partial preterism is a form of Christian eschatology that places the events of most of the Book of Revelation as occurring during the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD...yet still affirms an orthodox future bodily return of Christ to earth at an unknown day and hour. Partial preterism sees Matthew 24, Matthew 25:31-46¹, the Book of Daniel and most of the Book of Revelation (besides its last 2 or 3 chapters) as speaking about events no later than the first century AD, and about a *coming* of Christ in judgement, not the (second, final and bodily) coming of Christ and Last judgement.

Most Partial Preterists also believe the term *Last Days* refers not to the last days of planet Earth or the last days of humankind, but rather to the last days of the Mosaic Covenant which God had exclusively with national Israel... As God came in judgment upon various nations in the Old Testament, Christ also came in judgment against those in Israel who rejected him. The "last days," however, are to be distinguished from *the* "last day," which is considered still future and entails the *Second Coming* of Jesus, the *Resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous dead* physically from the grave in like-manner to Jesus' physical resurrection, the *Final Judgment*, and the creation of a literal (rather than covenantal) *New Heavens* and a *New Earth*.... Thus partial preterists are in agreement and conformity with the historic ecumenical creeds of the Church and articulate the doctrine of the resurrection held by the early Church Fathers... Because of the widespread acceptance of Dispensational Futurism amongst American evangelicals, Partial Preterism is often considered unorthodox by many... Partial Preterism is distinct from Full Preterism, which holds that 'all' biblical prophecy was fulfilled in the past.

Todd Dennis, founder of the comprehensive and highly resourceful Preterist Archive (www.preteristarchive.com), himself a Partial-Preterist, defines Preterism this way: "Preterism places the prophecies of intense evil and foreboding gloom in the first century, focusing on the events surrounding the forty-two-month long *Neronian persecution*, the forty-two-month long *Jewish war with Rome*, and the *destruction of the temple*. The word 'preterist' is based on the Latin 'praeteritus,' meaning 'gone by' or 'past'" (Todd Dennis [25], 2009).

Notable proponents of Partial-Preterism include John Wesley, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, R. C. Sproul, David Chilton, Kenneth Gentry, Gary DeMar, and Hank Hanegraaff. In his book, *The Last Days According to Jesus*, R.C. Sproul (1998) clarifies that the Partial-Preterist position does not teach that the Second Coming took place in 70 AD, only that *certain* Biblical texts which are assumed by some to refer to the Second Coming in fact refer instead to a different type of coming. He says, "While partial preterists acknowledge that in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70 there was a parousia, or coming of Christ, they maintain that it was not *the* parousia" (page 158). Sproul outlines the differences between the two comings in this way:

A.D. 70	STILL FUTURE
A coming (parousia) of Christ	The Coming (parousia) of Christ
A day of the Lord	The Day of the Lord
A judgment	The (final) Judgment
The end of the Jewish Age	The end of history
	The Resurrection of the dead
	The Rapture of the living

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), in his work titled "Miscellany #1199, directly tied Christ's predictions of His coming as recorded in the gospels to the events of 66-70 AD:

Tis evident that when Christ speaks of his coming; his being revealed; his coming in his Kingdom; or his Kingdom's coming; He has respect to his appearing in those great works of his Power Justice and Grace, which should be in the Destruction of Jerusalem and other extraordinary Providences which should attend it [So in Luke 17:20 – 18:8].

As this idea of Christ's coming in 70 AD is likely revolutionary for anyone immersed in Dispensationalist thought, it will be given more attention in the section where Christ's words in the Olivet Discourse are examined. Jonathan Edwards, though, in his work titled "History of Redemption," called this event the "final end to the Old Testament world," and added that "the dissolution of the Jewish state was often spoken of in the Old Testament as the end

¹ The inclusion of Matthew 25:31-46 here, implying a past fulfillment of this text, is debatable. An interesting article relating this judgment event as already fulfilled, but from a Full Preterist viewpoint, can be seen here: <http://web.archive.org/web/20051218184900/www.preterism.us/judgement.htm>

of the world.” According to Edwards, this was an “instance of removing those things which [were] ready to vanish away, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain,” a reference to Hebrews 8:13 and 12:27-28.

Edwards’ position was that the Old Covenant was rendered obsolete because of Christ’s work on the cross, yet it was still “becoming” obsolete at the time Hebrews was written because the worship life that centered on Jerusalem and the temple was still alive (though meaningless) as long as the temple stood (Dennis Todd, 2009 [1]). These things did vanish away in 70 AD, and it became abundantly clear to anyone with eyes to see that all types and shadows had been replaced by the reality, Christ Himself. Judaism has never been the same since that time. With this interpretation John Piper (1996), the pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, agrees. He states that it “is almost impossible to exaggerate the importance of what happened in A.D. 70 in Jerusalem. It was an event that, for Jews and Christians, was critical in defining their faith for the next 2000 years.”

*Since writing this paper, the author has become more friendly toward what is known as Full Preterism.

C. The Book of Revelation: Early or Late Authorship?

In the Dispensational Futurist view, the events leading up to Jerusalem’s downfall in 70 AD are foretold mainly in (a sizeable portion of) Luke 21, and are briefly mentioned at the very beginning of Matthew 24 and Mark 13. The book of Revelation doesn’t even enter the discussion regarding 70 AD, in the Dispensationalist view, because it is said to have been written about 25 years later and must therefore be speaking about events beyond the first century. However, there is not as much historical consensus on this idea as one might be led to think. In fact, according to the Preterist view, which preceded the Dispensational view in Church history by many centuries, the book of Revelation speaks in great detail about Jerusalem’s impending destruction in 70 AD.

I. External Evidence for an Early Date

Naturally, in order for this to be true, it must be established that the book of Revelation was written prior to 70 AD. Otherwise this book could not foretell Jerusalem’s destruction. An early date is not possible, Dispensationalists say, because of the testimony of Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp, who is said to have been a disciple of the apostle John. The following statement made by Irenaeus (120-202 AD), and quoted later by Eusebius (263-339) and others, is often seen as the foundation for the “late date” theory which holds that the book of Revelation was written in 95-96 AD:

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 no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign (Grant Jeffrey, 2001).

At face value, it could appear that Irenaeus said John received his vision during the time of Domitian, who reigned from 81-96 AD and was the last emperor of the Flavian Dynasty. However, a number of objections have been made against this conclusion. Among these are the following, articulated by Richard Joseph Krejcir (2009 [1]), who at first set out to prove through research that Revelation was written around 95 AD but changed his stance as he viewed the evidence: [1] This is a second-hand quote, a paraphrase of a statement originally made by Polycarp. [2] It is not entirely clear what Polycarp meant when he said “that was seen.” (The original manuscript of Irenaeus’ work, in ancient Latin, no longer exists in any legible condition, and those who first translated it complained at the time about the poor condition of the manuscript evidence of his work. Some translators contended that the phrase should have been translated “he was seen,” meaning that Irenaeus was referring to John, rather than his apocalyptic vision, being seen during Domitian’s reign.) [3] The writings of Irenaeus suffer from credibility and textual issues. For example, in the same publication from which this quote comes, Irenaeus stated that Jesus ministered for more than 15 years and was crucified at the age of 50.

Kurt Simmons (2009 [1]) cites the following opinion given by Robert Young, the author of Young’s Analytical Concordance, in his commentary on Revelation written around 1885:

It was written in Patmos about A.D. 68, whither John had been banished by Domitius Nero, as stated in the title of the Syriac version of the book; and with this concurs the express statement of Irenaeus in A.D. 175, who says it happened in the reign of Domitianou - i.e., Domitius (Nero). Sulpicius, Orosius, etc., stupidly mistaking Dimitianou for Domitianikos, supposed Irenaeus to refer to Domitian, A.D. 95, and most succeeding writers have fallen into the same blunder. The internal testimony is wholly in favor of the early date.

Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. (1998) records the following quote from the Muratorian Canon (written around 170 AD): “[T]he blessed Apostle Paul, following the rule of his predecessor John, writes to no more than seven churches by

name...John too, indeed, in the Apocalypse, although he writes to only seven churches, yet addresses all” (pp. 93-94). By calling John the predecessor of Paul, and saying that Paul followed John’s rule, the writer of this canon clearly taught that John wrote to the seven churches (Revelation 2-3) before Paul finished writing all of his epistles. The ‘Monarchian Prologues,’ dating back to 250-350 AD, make the same claim. It’s universally agreed that Paul died in 67 or 68 AD.

Other sources during the first several centuries after Christ also refer to an earlier date for the writing of Revelation, even explicitly. Krejcir (2009 [2]) cites statements from three sources: [1] The ‘Muratorian Fragment,’ dating back to 170-190 A.D., overtly states that the book of Revelation was written during the reign of Nero (who reigned from 54-68 AD). [2] The ancient ‘Syriac version’ of the New Testament, dated in the sixth century or earlier, echoes this statement that “Revelation was written during the reign of Nero.” [3] “The ‘Aramaic Peshitta’ version [which had become the standard Aramaic/Syriac translation by the early 5th century] has a remark that places its date prior to 70 A.D.”

Tertullian, an early church father who lived from 145-220 AD, seems to place John’s banishment to Patmos at the same time as the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, who we know were killed during the reign of Nero prior to his own death in 68 AD. In his writing, “Exclusion of Heretics,” speaking of the history of Rome, he had this to say (Dennis Todd [6], 2009): “...on which the Apostles poured out all their doctrine, with their blood: where Peter had a like Passion with the Lord; where Paul bath for his crown the same death with John; where the Apostle John was plunged into boiling oil, and suffered nothing, and was afterwards banished to an island.”

Jerome (340-420 AD) and others confirmed in their writings that it was Nero who had John plunged into boiling oil. So based on their testimony, and taken together with this quote from Tertullian, it was also Nero who had John banished to Patmos.² Eusebius (263-339 AD), whose own writings echoed Irenaeus’ controversial statement, wrote that both Nero and Domitian were known for banishing individuals to various islands, but that Domitian showed more mercy and restraint. Quoting from Tertullian, Eusebius said, “Domitian also, who possessed a share of Nero's cruelty, attempted once to do the same thing that the latter [Nero] did. But because he had, I suppose, some intelligence, he very soon ceased, and even recalled those whom he had banished” (Dennis Todd [4], 2009). L.L. Thompson (1990) writes that any campaign of terror during Domitian’s reign was rather selective and (unlike in Nero’s time) was generally aimed at influential members and even members of his family suspected of political conspiracy, rather than toward Christians (p. 95). As far as these testimonies are reliable, then, John found himself on Patmos during the reign of Nero (54-68 AD).

A number of late-date proponents (i.e. those who believe Revelation was written around 96 AD) admit that it’s very difficult to find evidence that Christians were undergoing any significant persecution from Rome in that decade. Therefore, it’s not easy to imagine why John would have been banished to Patmos at that time, something that only Rome could do. George Eldon Ladd (1987), a prominent New Testament scholar who teaches that Revelation was written during Domitian’s reign, nevertheless had this to say (p. 37): “The problem with this theory is that there is no evidence that during the last decade of the first century there occurred any open and systematic persecution of the church.” Kenneth Gentry (2002, p. 63) records similar statements from the following late-date authors: Michael Grant (1973), Leon Morris (1969), Reginald Fuller (1971), Donald B. Guthrie (1990), D.A. Carson (1992), Douglas Moo (1992), G.K. Beale (1992).

Andreas, writing in the year 500 AD, said regarding Revelation 6:12-13, “There are not wanting [i.e. it is not hard to find] those who apply this passage to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.” A few centuries later, Arethas of Caesarea (850-944 AD), a Byzantine scholar and deacon in Constantinople, said the following in his commentary on Revelation 7:1 and 7:4: “Here, then, were manifestly shown to the Evangelist what things were to befall the Jews in their war against the Romans, in the way of avenging the sufferings inflicted upon Christ; When the Evangelist received these oracles, the destruction in which the Jews were involved was not yet inflicted by the Romans” (Dennis Todd [5], 2009). So Arethas, being only one example of this viewpoint in his time, clearly believed that John wrote Revelation before 70 AD and that what it contained was a prophecy of those events.

Clement of Alexandria, an early church father who lived from 150-220 AD, wrote of John’s release from Patmos, from where he went to Ephesus to appoint bishops and other leaders. Clement places John on the island of Patmos during the reign of one known as “the tyrant,” but it continues to be debated to whom Clement gave this title:

And to give you confidence, when you have thus truly repented, that there remains for you a trustworthy hope of salvation, hear a story that is no mere story, but a true account of John the apostle that has been handed down and preserved in memory. When after the death of the tyrant he removed from the island of Patmos to Ephesus, he used to journey by request to the neighboring districts of the Gentiles, in some places to appoint bishops, in others to regulate whole churches, in others to set among the clergy some one man, it may be, of those indicated by the Spirit (*Who is the Rich Man that shall be Saved?*).

Grant Jeffrey (2001), a Dispensationalist author, seizes upon this quote as proof that Revelation was written in 96 AD. He notes that the tyrant in view here could either be Nero or Domitian, but assumes that it must be Domitian because

² Of course, the possibility exists that John was banished twice to the island of Patmos, i.e. during Nero’s reign and again during the reign of Domitian.

Clement elsewhere described John as “old and infirm” at some point beyond his days on Patmos, and therefore he must have been more than 90 years old and a contemporary of Domitian. If “the tyrant” was instead Nero, says Jeffrey, then John could hardly have been described as old, because he would have been only about 60 years old. However, this is nothing more than Jeffrey’s own opinion regarding what it means to be “old,” especially when also noting that the apostle Paul once referred to himself as “Paul, an old man” (Philemon 1:9). Paul was likely around 60 years old when he made this statement, and he was in a much better position than Jeffrey to say what it meant to be “old” in the first century AD. Based on multiple testimonies, John did indeed live until nearly the age of 100, but there is nothing to say that John couldn’t have lived and ministered for more than 30 years after his release from Patmos rather than just 2-3 years, unless clearly proven otherwise.

Clement also wrote that after John’s release from Patmos, he once mounted a horse and chased down a backslidden believer, apprehending him and leading him back to the faith. Jeffrey might do well to ask whether John was more likely able to do this at the age of 60 or at the age of 90. Jerome (342-420), a contemporary of Augustine, said that John was seen in 96 AD “and was so aged and weak and infirm that he was with difficulty carried to the church, and could speak only a few words to the people” (Simmons, 2009). It’s not clear what source Jerome was citing, but if this testimony is true it’s hard to imagine John writing the book of Revelation in that same year, let alone appointing multiple bishops throughout Ephesus and overtaking someone on horseback.

Regarding the title “the tyrant,” it is true that this term was applied on more than one occasion to Domitian. However, the same is true for Nero, who certainly fit the title with his reputation as a ruthless, self-centered dictator whose brutality seemed to know no bounds. Apollonius of Tyana (15-98 AD), a Greek philosopher who outlived both Nero and Domitian, clearly found Nero to be much more of a tyrant than Domitian was (Robinson, 1976):

In my travels, which have been wider than ever man yet accomplished, I have seen many, many wild beasts of Arabia and India; but this beast, that is commonly called a Tyrant, I know not how many heads it has, nor if it be crooked of claw, and armed with horrible fangs. ...And of wild beasts you cannot say that they were ever known to eat their own mothers, but Nero has gorged himself on this diet.

II. Internal Evidence for an Early Date

The reality is that if an early date for the book of Revelation is valid, this leaves room for the possibility that many of the events in this book were also fulfilled during the siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, and the Roman/Jewish War of 66-73 AD. Even more telling than the external evidence (e.g. quotes from early church fathers and historians), though, is the internal evidence from the text when it is compared with other passages of Scripture and also with what historically happened during the Roman/Jewish War.

Kenneth Gentry (1998), a former Dispensationalist, discovered in his reading of “The Jewish War” by Josephus a number of accounts which seem to reflect the descriptions of the plagues and judgments in Revelation. For example:

Regarding the blood flow to the “horses’ bridles” [Revelation 14:20], Josephus’ comments on the battle scenes during the Jewish War are enlightening. At one point a naval battle produced a “lake all bloody and full of dead bodies” (Wars 3:10:9). Later he reported that “the whole of the country through which they had fled was filled with slaughter, and [the] Jordan [River] could not be passed over, by reason of the dead bodies that were in it, but because the lake Asphaltitis was also full of dead bodies” (Wars 4-7:6). Surely such carnage and bloodshed are suggested by John’s imagery (p. 245).

John also refers to a time period of 42 months in Revelation 11:2-3, which is significant in light of history. John is told, “*Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months...*” During the Roman/Jewish War, as will be seen, it did take Rome 3.5 years, or 42 months, to overcome Jerusalem and trample it. This occurred from the time Nero dispatched his general Vespasian to advance on Jerusalem in early spring 67 AD until Jerusalem and the temple were demolished and laid level by the end of September 70 AD.

John’s words echoed the words of Jesus given earlier. In Luke 21:24, Jesus, clearly speaking about Jerusalem’s pending destruction (Luke 21:5-7), said, “*Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*” Dispensationalists interpret the phrase “*times of the Gentiles*” to be the entire Church Age. However, is it not possible that the “*times of the Gentiles*” is what John wrote about in Rev. 11:2-3?

In this Revelation 11 passage, John is told to measure a temple which apparently still existed. If he wrote this in 95-96 AD, the temple would have met its destruction 25 years before, and one could wonder why John did not raise a question when given this command or even mention the recent destruction of the temple at all in his book. Its absence after 70 AD was no small thing, not only because of its most central significance to Judaism, but also because of its

magnificence and physical stature. After a grand renovation project at the hands of Herod around 20 BC, it was widely acknowledged as one of the most beautiful structures in the world.³

On the other hand, if the temple John measured is still future, as Dispensationalists teach, on what grounds could a future physical temple be referred to as “*the temple of God*”? Such a temple would be blasphemous in light of Christ’s work on the cross which has created a new, non-physical temple (e.g. Ephesians 2:13-20). The reinstatement of sacrifices would be an even greater insult (See Hebrews 7:11-10:18).

The description of the woman in Revelation 17 offers further internal evidence for an early date. This woman, who rode the beast, was said to be “*drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*” (verse 6). She is a great city (verse 18), and is hated by the beast and the 10 kings who desolate her and burn her with fire (verses 16-17). More specifically, it is said that “*in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on the earth*” (18:24), and the “*saints and apostles and prophets*” were told to rejoice over her destruction (18:20).

Who was responsible for shedding all the blood of the prophets and the saints, according to Jesus, and who would receive judgment as a result? The answer can be found in Matthew 23:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! See, your house is left to you desolate (Matthew 23:29-38, emphasis added).

Is it a coincidence that the word “desolate” is used here, just as it is used in Revelation 17:16; 18:17, 19, not to mention Daniel 9:27 and Luke 21:20? No, Jerusalem was the prophetic “Babylon the Great” in the book of Revelation. The generation which heard Jesus speak these things also saw them happen, just as He said they would, in 70 AD. The third bowl judgment, rivers and springs of water becoming blood (Revelation 16:4), also is directly linked to those who had shed righteous blood (verses 5-6): “*And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, ‘Just are You, O Holy One, who is and who was, for You brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!’*” As we will see later, Josephus and others recorded that the rivers and springs of Jerusalem and its surroundings were filled with blood during the Roman/Jewish War. Again, Jesus said that it was the generation that would crucify Him that would be held responsible for the blood of saints and prophets (cf. Matthew 21:33-45), not a generation in the 21st century or beyond, and that Jerusalem would experience this wrath.

Jerusalem receives specific mention in Revelation 11:8, where she is clearly identified by the description “*the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where [the] Lord was crucified.*” It’s worth noting that “Revelation 11:8 suggests that Jerusalem’s streets were intact at the time of John’s writing” (Kenneth Gentry, 1998, p. 236) because the dead bodies of the two witnesses were to lie there for several days. If John wrote this in 95 or 96 AD, Jerusalem would have been a wasteland. As Kathleen M. Kenyon remarked, “It was two centuries or more [after 70 AD] before human activity began once more to make its mark in the whole area of ancient Jerusalem.”⁴ It’s also significant in Revelation 11:8 that Jerusalem is called “the great city.” This is the same title given to Babylon the Great on at least six occasions (17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21).

To be called “Sodom,” of course, is not a compliment. When Isaiah was instructed to prophesy against Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah 1:1), he called the Israelites by the same name because of their apostasy. It would make sense for John to speak of apostate Jerusalem, once known as the holy city, as Sodom, Babylon, and a harlot. Todd Dennis writes, “The image of the unfaithful wife, the harlot, was often used of Israel in the OT. Israel is repeatedly called the wife of God (Jer. 2:2, 3:14, Is. 54:5). But she was an unfaithful wife (Jer. 3:20, Hos. 1:2, Ez. 6:9, Ez. 16, Is. 50:1) behaving as a prostitute (Jer. 3:1-2). In the context of Jerusalem’s designation as a prostitute, Is. 1:21 is especially noteworthy: ‘*See how the faithful city has become a harlot*’” (Todd Dennis [25], 2009). Rome in John’s day or a secular city/state in our day could not be said to fornicate against God in the way that Jerusalem was able to. Kenneth Gentry (1998, p. 241) also writes that

³ The use of the phrase “temple of God” quite possibly indicates that the Church is also being referred to here (cf. Eph. 2:11-22; II Cor. 6:16; I Cor. 3:16, 6:19). Therefore it may be that John was (symbolically) measuring the Church which would be trampled (persecuted) for 42 months (see Rev. 13:5-7). Given the similarity between this passage and Luke 21:24, the physical temple was also probably being alluded to. It may be that both ideas were being spoken of in this case.

⁴ Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Jerusalem: Excavating 3000 Years of History*, 1967, p. 185.

there “is an obvious contrast between the Harlot and the chaste bride (cp. Rev. 17:2-5 with Rev. 21:1ff.) that suggests a contrast with the Jerusalem below and the Jerusalem above (Rev. 21:2; cp. Gal. 4:24ff; Heb. 12:18ff).”

Dennis adds that the description of the harlot’s attire (purple, scarlet, gold, jewels, and pearls) was nearly identical to the ephod worn by the high priest (Revelation 17:4; cf. Exodus 28:5-21). The golden cup she held was likely symbolic of the temple vessels, the greatest part of which were gold and silver, according to the Jewish historian Josephus (Wars 5.4.4). On Aaron’s forehead was the inscription “*Holy to the Lord*” (Exodus 28:36). The harlot’s forehead, on the other hand, bore the title “*Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations*” (Rev. 17:5).

More compelling evidence for an early date is found in John’s reference to seven kings in Revelation 17:9-10, which states, “*This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while.*” This description of the seven kings lines up well with historical data showing the emperors who reigned in the Roman Empire up until the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, which is as follows:

Order of Emperors	Name of Emperor	Length of Reign	Notes/Details
#1	Julius Caesar	October 49 BC – March 44 BC	“Perpetual Dictator”
#2	Augustus	January 27 BC – August 14 AD	-time of Jesus’ birth
#3	Tiberius	August 14 AD – March 37 AD	-time of Jesus’ ascension
#4	Caligula	March 37 AD – January 41 AD	Murdered
#5	Claudius	January 41 AD – October 54 AD	Assassinated
#6	Nero	October 54 AD – June 68 AD	Committed suicide
#7	Galba	June 68 AD – January 69 AD	Murdered
#8	Otho	January 69 AD – April 69 AD	Committed suicide
#9	Vitellius	April 69 AD – December 69AD	Murdered
#10	Vespasian	December 69 AD – June 79 AD	Destroyed Jerusalem

Some historians do not consider Julius Caesar to be one of the emperors, and rather designate him as one who played a key role in transforming the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire. Flavius Josephus (37-100 AD), however, was one who did, and the above list reflects his own list in his writing titled *Antiquities of the Jews* (Books 18 and 19). Numerous Roman historians contemporary to Josephus agree. Among these were Dio Cassius and Suetonius (70-135 AD), who wrote *Lives of the Twelve Caesars and De Vita Caesarum*. Julius Caesar was appointed as “perpetual dictator” in 42 BC, so his inclusion in such a list would not have been strange.

According to the above list, then, Nero was the “king” of whom John said “*one is*” (i.e. “he is reigning now”), and Galba was the one who had “not yet come.” Galba reigned only six months, making him a good candidate to be the one who “*must remain only a little while.*” This would place John’s authorship of Revelation sometime before Nero’s death in June 68 AD (and after November 64 AD because, as already noted, John was in Patmos as a result of imperial persecution, and no such persecution existed before Nero initiated his).

Numerous church fathers and leaders during the first several centuries identified Nero as the beast of the book of Revelation, or speculated that it was he. These include Tertullian, Augustine, Clement of Alexandria, and Jerome who stated the following in his commentary on Daniel 11:27-30:

As for the Antichrist, there is no question but what he is going to fight against the holy covenant, and that when he first makes war against the king of Egypt, he shall straightway be frightened off by the assistance of the Romans. But these events were typically prefigured under Antiochus Epiphanes, so that this abominable king who persecuted God’s people foreshadows the Antichrist, who is to persecute the people of Christ. And so there are many of our viewpoint who think that Domitius Nero was the Antichrist because of his outstanding savagery and depravity (Todd Dennis [7], 2009).

C. Marvin Pate and Calvin B. Haines Jr. (1995) point to historical details from the reign of Nero to show how he fit the Biblical description of the beast introduced in Revelation 13 (pp. 41-42, emphasis added):

The blasphemous worship demanded by the beast distinctly reminds one of the imperial cult of the first century, and the war the beast wages on the saints cannot help but recall the intense persecutions Nero, and later Domitian, inflicted on Christians because they did not worship Caesar. **Nero’s persecution of Christians from November AD 64 [when he blamed the Christians for the massive fire he started] to June AD 68 could account, in part, for the forty-two months (or 3 ½ years) of oppression mentioned in Rev. 13:5.** The reference in Revelation 13:11-15 to the beast of the land securing worship for the beast from the sea (Rome was across the sea from the place of the writing of the Apocalypse, Asia Minor) reminds one of the local priests of the imperial cult in Asia Minor whose task was to compel the people to offer a sacrifice to Caesar and proclaim him Lord. Megalomaniac that he was, **Nero had coins minted in which he was called “almighty God” and “Savior.”** Nero’s portrait also appears on coins as the god Apollo playing a lyre. While earlier emperors were proclaimed deities upon their deaths, Nero abandons all reserve and demanded divine honors while still alive (as did also

Caligula before him, AD 37-41). **Those who worshipped the emperor received a certificate or mark of approval – *charagma*, the same word used in Revelation 13:16** [the famed mark of the beast].

Richard Anthony (2009) shares more details about Nero's life and character, all of which is substantiated by Suetonius (in his book *Nero*) and other historians who lived during the first two centuries:

According to *Suetonius*, he [Nero] murdered his parents, wife, brother, aunt, and many others close to him and of high station in Rome. He was a torturer, a homosexual rapist, and a sodomite. He even married two young boys and paraded them around as his wives. One of the boys, whose name was Sporus, was castrated by Nero. He was truly bestial in his character, depravity, and actions. He devised a kind of game: covered with the skin of some wild animal, he was let loose from a cage and attacked the private parts of men and women, who were bound at stakes. He also initiated the war against the Jews which led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD.

At one point, writes Kenneth Gentry (2002), Nero divorced his first wife, Octavia, in order to marry Poppaea, his mistress. Poppaea then gave orders to have Octavia banished to an island, where in 62 AD she was beheaded. Three years later, when Poppaea was pregnant and ill, Nero kicked her to death. For entertainment, according to the Roman historian Suetonius, Nero "compelled four hundred senators and six hundred Roman knights, some of whom were well to do and of unblemished reputation, to fight in the arena." The Roman historian Tacitus (55-117 AD) knew Nero as the one who "put to death so many innocent men," and Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD) called Nero "the destroyer of the human race" and "the poison of the world" (p. 52).

Kenneth Gentry (1998) writes that the beast in Revelation is sometimes spoken of as an individual (specific sense) and sometimes as a kingdom (generic sense). For example, John's readers are told to "*calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man*" (Revelation 13:18). Earlier in that same chapter John saw "*a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads*" (Rev. 13:1), and John later identified these seven heads as both "*seven mountains on which the woman [harlot] is seated*" and "*seven kings*" (Rev. 17:9-10).⁵ It's not surprising that the beast is interchangeably an individual and a kingdom, if ancient Rome is in view here. Regarding the emperor Augustus, the Roman poet Ovid (43 BC-18AD) wrote, "The state is Caesar." Gentry also adds, "Scholars as widely divergent as dispensationalist John Walvoord, anti-dispensationalist Philip Mauro, and critical scholar R. H. Charles agree that the Beast in Revelation has both a generic and a specific reference. Thus, he represents both a kingdom and an individual."

In what sense might Jerusalem have sat on the beast with seven heads (mountains), the beast that would ultimately turn on her and destroy her (Rev. 17:3, 9, 16-18)? Israel had enjoyed a good relationship with Rome until the Jewish revolt began in 66 AD, and Judaism was recognized as a valid religion within the Roman Empire. Josephus wrote of this relationship, "It seems to me to be necessary here to give an account of all the honors that the Romans and their emperors paid to our nation [Israel], and of the leagues of mutual assistance they have made with it" (*Antiquities*, 14.10.1-2). The Jews frequently took advantage of this relationship to induce persecution against Jesus and His followers (Luke 23:2; John 18:28-31, 19:15; Acts 4:27, 16:20, 17:7, 18:12, 21:11, 24:1-9, 25:1-2).⁶

Prior to Nero's persecution, writes Kenneth Gentry (2002), persecution against Christians had come largely from the Jews. Christianity was considered a sect of Judaism, which was a "legal religion." Gentry notes, "Earlier Paul had safely appealed to Nero Caesar (Acts 25:11-12; 28:19) and in A.D. 62 had been acquitted and released." Herbert Workman, in his 1906 work, *Persecution in the Early Church*, said that Rome didn't make a clear distinction between Christianity and Judaism until 64 AD (pp. 62-63).

Kenneth Gentry takes note of the testimonies of early historians regarding Nero's campaign of persecution against Christians (pp. 54-55, 64-66). Clement of Rome (30-100 AD) said that it targeted "a vast multitude of the elect...through many indignities and tortures." Eusebius (260-340 AD) pointed out that Nero was "the first of the emperors who showed himself an enemy of the divine religion," and Lactantius (240-320 AD) agrees by saying of Nero, "He it was who first persecuted the saints of God." Sulpicius Severus (360-420 AD) said that he was "the basest of all men, and even of wild beasts, [showing himself] in every way most abominable and cruel...he first attempted to abolish the name of Christian." Sulpicius devoted two chapters to Nero's reign of terror in his *Sacred History*, but only three sentences for Domitian. In 1854 church historian John Laurence von Mosheim added these thoughts:

Foremost in the rank of those emperors, on whom the church looks back with horror as her persecutors, stands Nero, a prince whose conduct towards the Christians admits of no palliation [minimizing], but was to the last degree unprincipled and inhuman. The dreadful persecution which took Diace by order of this tyrant, commenced at Rome about the middle of

⁵ Interestingly, Gentry notes, the Coin of Vespasian (emperor of Rome from 69-79 AD) discovered by archaeologists pictures the goddess *Roma* as a woman seated on seven hills. Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire, is the one city in history famous for its seven mountains. First-century Rome used to celebrate a feast called *Septimontium*, the feast of "the seven-hilled city."

⁶ W.H.C. Frend even writes that "the promptings of orthodox Jews in the capitol had something to do with" Nero's decision to begin persecuting Christians in 64 AD (The Rise of Christianity [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 109; quoted in Kenneth Gentry, 2002, p. 63).

November,⁷ in the year of our Lord 64. This dreadful state of persecution ceased with the death of Nero. The empire, it is well known, was not delivered from the tyranny of this monster until A.D. 68, when he put an end to his own life.⁸

Tacitus, the Roman historian who lived from 56-117 AD, wrote in detail of Nero's move to persecute the saints soon after the fire that raged through Rome, destroying 10 out of 14 city divisions:

But by no human contrivance, whether lavish contributions of money or of offerings to appease the gods, could Nero rid himself of the ugly rumor that the fire was due to his orders. So to dispel the report, he substituted as the guilty persons and inflicted unheard-of punishments on those who, detested for their abominable crimes, were vulgarly called Christians... wrapped in the hides of wild beasts, they were torn to pieces by dogs, or fastened to crosses to be set on fire, that when the darkness fell they might be burned to illuminate the night (Tacitus, *Annals* 15:44).

The most remarkable detail about Nero's campaign of persecution is that it lasted just over 42 months, which Revelation 13:5-8 records is the length of time that would be given to the beast to war against and conquer the saints. The persecution ended when Nero died on June 9, 68 AD. In this context, Revelation 13:10 was a comfort to the saints. Not only were they already told that the beast would only be allowed to persecute them for 3.5 years, but they were also told how their persecutor would be removed: "...he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and faith of the saints." Nero ended his life by thrusting his sword through his own throat, with the help of his personal secretary, Epaphroditus, when he realized that his popularity had waned and that a coup was in the making.

Upon Nero's demise, the Roman Empire immediately fell into chaos and civil war, and rooting out Christians became less of a priority for Rome. What followed was the "Year of the Four Emperors," the reigns of Galba (six months), Otho (four months), Vitellius (eight months), and Vespasian (beginning in December 69 AD). When the empire stabilized more than a year later under Vespasian, Nero's successors did not carry on his campaign of religious persecution. As *The Interpreter's Bible Dictionary* notes, "There is no solid evidence that Christians suffered persecution by the Roman state under Vespasian and his two sons, Titus and Domitian" (p. 67).

Nero's death by the sword is the type of mortal wound that John said the beast would receive (Revelation 13:12, 14). Richard Anthony (2009) and Kenneth Gentry (1998) postulate that the healing of this wound can perhaps be seen in what took place in the Roman Empire immediately following Nero's death. Upon his death, the Roman Empire's founding family suddenly had no representative. "The blood line that had given birth to, extended, stabilized, brought prosperity to, and had received worship from the Roman Empire was cut off forever" (Gentry, p. 311). The "Julio-Claudian House" became extinct. The empire was plunged "into civil wars of horrible ferocity and dramatic proportions" and Rome appeared ready to topple.

The general Vespasian pulled back from the wars he was committed to, including the siege on Jerusalem, because of the turmoil on his own home front. Josephus, Tacitus, and Suetonius all recorded that Rome at this time was brought near to utter ruin, with Josephus saying that "every part of the habitable earth under them [the Romans] was in an unsettled and tottering condition" (Wars 7.4.2). It wasn't until Vespasian took the throne in December 69 AD, initiating the Flavian Dynasty, that stability was restored. He was the one who oversaw the destruction of Jerusalem the following year. Perhaps in this sense the beast's "mortal wound was healed," i.e. the beast as corporately considered.

Herbert W. Benario (2006) and others show how this question might also be viewed from an additional angle. Benario writes, "Nero's popularity among the lower classes remained even after his death. His close friend, and successor to Galba, Otho paid him all public honors." The historians Tacitus, Suetonius, and Zonaras affirm that after Nero's death proclamations continued to be published in his name as if he was still alive, and that his image was frequently placed upon the rostra (large speaker's platforms in Rome) "dressed in robes of state." Even Jewish and Christian writers began to foretell that Nero was back from death as the dreaded Beliar demon. Paul Kroll (1999) adds the following details:

Nero committed suicide in June of AD 68. However, a rumor arose and persisted that he had not died but had fled across the Euphrates river to Rome's arch-enemy, Parthia. It was said that one day Nero would return at the head of Parthian armies to destroy Rome. This became the so-called "Nero *redivivus*" myth. In fact, during the decades following Nero's death, several pretenders did come forth claiming to be Nero (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.78; 2.8; Suetonius, *Nero* 57). By the turn of the first century a further twist was added to the Nero legend. It was said he would actually rise from the dead, return to Rome and seize the empire... This myth of Nero's return so captured the popular fancy that it found its way into Jewish and Christian apocalyptic writings. Here the triumphant Nero was sometimes even pictured as the antichrist (*Ascension of Isaiah* 4:1-14; *Sibylline Oracles* 4:119-124; 5:137-154, 361-374)...

⁷ Moses Stuart (1845), a historian contemporary to von Mosheim, wrote that this persecution began at the end of November.

⁸ I Clement 6:1; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2:25:2-3; Lactantius, *On the Death of the Persecutors* 2:2; Severus, *Sacred History* 2:29; John L. von Mosheim, *History of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (New York: Converse, 1854) 1:138-139.

With these details, we can begin to see how Nero could have fulfilled what was written of the beast in Revelation 17:11. This text states: “As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction.” Kenneth Gentry (1998) notes the following about Otho, the eighth emperor of Rome:

Upon presenting himself to the Senate and returning to the palace, it is said of Otho: “When in the midst of the other adulations of those who congratulated and flattered him, he was hailed by the common herd as Nero, he made no sign of dissent; on the contrary, according to some writers, he even made use of that surname in his commissions and his first letters to some of the governors of the provinces” [Suetonius, *Otho* 7]. Tacitus, too, speaks of Otho’s predilection for Nero: “It was believed that he also brought up the question of celebrating Nero’s memory with the hope of winning over the Roman people; and in fact some set up statues of Nero; moreover on certain days the people and soldiers, as if adding thereby to Otho’s nobility and distinction, acclaimed him as Nero Otho.” Dio Cassius mentions the same idea: “But men did not fail to realize that his rule was sure to be even more licentious and harsh than Nero’s. Indeed, he immediately added Nero’s name to his own” (pp. 308-309).

Gentry adds that Otho reinstated Nero’s procurators and freedman to the offices they had vacated during Galba’s 6-month reign, and a court historian claims that Otho even used Nero’s title and name in official dispatches to Spain. So Otho, in many ways, took on the persona of Nero, and perhaps in this way Nero was “an eighth” king who also belonged to the seven kings (Revelation 17:10-11). Gentry, though, leans even more to the idea that the revived Roman Empire, under the new dynasty initiated by Vespasian, could be what is meant by the beast that “*is an eighth*” but also belongs to the seven.

Interestingly, Vitellius, the ninth emperor, was even more devoted in his worship of Nero. It is said that he “greatly pleased the public by offering sacrifices to Nero’s spirit in the Campus Martius [Latin for Field of Mars, a 2 sq km public square in Rome], making all the priests and people attend.” These were his “funerary offerings to Nero” and this left “no doubt in anyone’s mind what model he chose for the government of the State” (Suetonius, *Vitellius* 11:2). The actions of Vitellius appear to fulfill what was written in Revelation 13:11-12 of a second beast, referred to later as the false prophet. This text states: “Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence [or on its behalf], and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.” Vitellius had such a rabid fascination with Nero that Vespasian had to “make a determined effort to check the growth of the Nero cult when he came to power.”

Paul Kroll (1999) writes the following about the prospect of Vitellius, or someone like him, fulfilling the role of the false prophet in Nero’s time:

The false prophet sends out a universal order to “set up an image in honor of the beast” (verse 14)... Strangely enough, the false prophet gives the inanimate image breath so that it can speak. Thus, the second beast has power to animate the image of the first beast. In the time Revelation was written, this was not an alien idea. The ancients believed that statues spoke and performed miracles. It was thought that the gods and demons used statues as conduits to communicate with humans and work miracles. For example, the heretic Simon Magus is said to have brought statues to life (*Clementine Recognitions* 3.47; Justin, *Apologia* 1.26; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.23). In ancient times, that was precisely the point of having idols. People thought that the life of the person or being was actually in the idol.

In their book, *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (1999), the authors (Brown, Bowersock, Grabar) write about the common sight of images of Roman emperors in the third and fourth centuries. These images took prominent places throughout the empire and were literally worshipped. This was ordinary in the first century as well:

Those who beheld Constantine in his golden raiment were said by Eusebius to be “stunned and amazed by the sight—like children who have seen a frightening apparition.” But away from court and capital, emperors rarely appeared in person. In the provinces, their presence was represented by statues and other images. Municipal squares were dominated by imperial statues; the portraits of emperors hung in official buildings, shops, theaters, and public porticoes... In their range and variety, imperial images made emperors omnipresent...the crowd applauded not only the emperor but also his image as it was paraded around them, surrounded—like the emperor himself—by the imperial bodyguard... These mirror images of majesty not only made permanent the transitory messages of imperial ceremonial, but were designed to blur the distinction between emperors and their representations... [There was] a rigid insistence on the performance of the same rituals and ceremonies before imperial images as before the emperor himself. Those approaching an emperor’s statue were required to prostrate themselves “not as though they were looking at a picture, but upon the very face of the emperor.” A proper atmosphere of sanctity was to be maintained at all times (pp. 173-174).

As expected then, statues of Nero’s likeness already existed in the Roman Empire during his lifetime, even from early in his reign. In 55 AD, the second year of his reign, the Roman senate erected a statue of Nero in the Temple of Mars that stood between 110 and 120 feet high. “The emperor’s brow was crowned with rays, suggesting a comparison or identification with the Sun-god” (Kenneth Gentry, 2002). His portrait appeared on coins at the time as Apollo playing the lyre. “He appears with his head radiating the light of the sun on copper coins struck in Rome and at Lugdunum.” Even his mother, Agrippina, was hailed by provincial coins “as goddess and the parent of a god.” Inscriptions found in Ephesus

called Nero “Almighty God” and “Savior,” and inscriptions found in Cyprus called him “God and Savior” (pp. 80-81). The behavior of the highly-revered Augustus Caesar (27 BC-14 AD) was very modest compared to the worship Nero demanded for himself. Dio Cassius writes of an incident in which a regional king was compelled to worship both Nero and his image. This occurred in 66 AD when Tiridates, King of Armenia, paid Nero a visit:

Indeed, the proceedings of the conference were not limited to mere conversations, but a lofty platform had been erected on which were set images of Nero, and in the presence of the Armenians, Parthians, and Romans Tiridates approached and paid them reverence; then, after sacrificing to them and calling them by laudatory names, he took off the diadem from his head and set it upon them... Tiridates publicly fell before Nero seated upon the rostra in the Forum: “Master, I am the descendant of Arsaces, brother of the kings Vologaesus and Pacorus, and thy slave. And I have come to thee, my god, to worship thee as I do Mithras. The destiny thou spinnest for me shall be mine; for thou art my Fortune and my Fate” (Gentry, p. 82).

“By this action this king actually worshiped ‘the image of the Beast’ (Rev. 13:15),” says Gentry. One senator, though, failed to worship Nero and his “Divine Voice,” and Dio Cassius records that he was executed: “Thrasaea was executed because he failed to appear regularly in the senate...and because he never would listen to the emperor’s singing and lyre-playing, nor sacrifice to Nero’s Divine Voice as did the rest.” Nero was even deified in Greece, where he spent a significant amount of time in 67 AD as a musician and actor in the Grecian festivals. There he was proclaimed as “Zeus, Our Liberator,” and his statue was set up in the temple of Apollo where he was called “The new Sun, illuminating the Hellenes.” When he returned to Rome in early 68 AD, the entire population was made to come out and greet him with these words: “Hail, Olympian Victor! Hail, Pythian Victor! Augustus! Augustus! Hail to Nero, our Hercules! Hail to Hero, our Apollo! The only Victor of the Grand Tour, the only one from the beginning of time! Augustus! Augustus! O, Divine Voice! Blessed are they that hear thee” (Gentry, p. 83). Richard Anthony (2009) speaks further of the allegiance required by Nero during his lifetime:

All those under the jurisdiction of Rome were required by law to publicly proclaim their allegiance to Caesar by burning a pinch of incense and **declaring, "Caesar is Lord". Upon compliance with this law, the people were given a papyrus document called a "libellus", which they were required to present when either stopped by the Roman police or attempting to engage in commerce** in the Roman marketplace, increasing the difficulty of "buying or selling" without this mark (emphasis added).

If Vitellius was indeed the second beast who compelled the Roman world to be marked with the name or number of the first beast (Revelation 13:16-18), then the practice described by Anthony above would have continued during his 8-month reign. Scripture seems to indicate that it would have been taken to an even more oppressive level. No doubt he also would have carried on Nero’s practice of putting to death those who would not worship the images of Nero, which in Nero’s day were considered to be divine.

John revealed the identity of the beast to his readers in a coded manner, Richard Anthony (2009) says, using the system of Gematria which assigned numerical values to the alphabet: “John used this puzzle to reveal Nero without actually writing down his name. Remember, the early churches were being persecuted during this time—not only from the Jews, but also from the Romans.” The following chart shows the Hebrew letters in ‘Nero Caesar’ (NRWN QSR):

נ	= 50	ר	= 200	ו	= 6	נ	= 50	ק	= 100	ד	= 60	ר	= 200
thus:													
נרונ קסר = 666													

John wrote to seven historical churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 1:4, 11) which were going through a time of great trouble and tribulation, just as he was (Rev. 1:9, 2:3, 2:9-10, 2:13, 3:10). What better candidate was there for such an intense time of trouble than the first and greatest imperial persecution of Christianity initiated by Nero from late November 64 AD until his death in early June 68 AD?⁹ Kenneth Gentry (2002) poses this question for those who hold to the Futurist position: “Put yourself in first century sandals: Would you think John might be speaking of events occurring untold centuries after the collapse of the Empire which was presently persecuting you? Would you surmise that he was not really relating a message about Imperial Rome?”

John wrote the book of Revelation in such a way that the subject matter of the entire book, not just his letters to the churches, was urgent for and relevant for those churches. At the end of the book, Jesus said, “*And behold, I am coming*

⁹ John’s participation in this persecution means that it was imperial, coming from Rome, as only Rome had the authority to banish individuals to Patmos, its own prison island. If the early date is true for Revelation’s authorship, John then wrote no earlier than November 64 AD because this is when the first imperial persecution began.

soon. *Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book*” (Revelation 22:7). God, speaking in terms that man would understand, spoke through John saying, “*The Revelation of Jesus, which God gave him to show his servants the things that must soon take place...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*” (Revelation 1:1-4). We see that the seven churches who received this writing were encouraged to read the entire book aloud in their assemblies, and to keep what was written in it. We can also note that the Greek word used for “soon” here is the same one Jesus used when He said His time to be crucified was “*at hand*” (Matthew 26:18), and when John said “*the Jews’ Feast of Booths was at hand*” (John 7:2), events that no doubt were literally near. Four times Jesus said, “*Behold, I am coming quickly*” (Revelation 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). In some translations, “soon” is used instead of “quickly.”

It’s noteworthy that Daniel was told that the prophecies he received referred “*to many days from now*” (Daniel 8:26), and were for the time of the end and thus they were to be “*shut up and sealed*” (Daniel 12:4, 9). Yet John, in his time, was told *not* to seal up the prophecies he received because the time of their fulfillment was near (Revelation 22:10). If their fulfillment has still not come in our day, how do we account for these different instructions, when one set of prophecies was given about 2550 years ago and the other set about 1950 years ago?

Dispensationalism assumes that when Daniel mentioned “*the time of the end*,” he was referring to the end of the world. However, the context itself contains other constraints, and it should be noted that the phrase “the end of time” is never used in these prophecies. Daniel had already been told that his visions concerned his people (e.g. 11:14). Again he was told that “*at the time of the end*” (11:40) Michael, “*the great prince who has charge of your people*,” would arise. There would be a time of trouble, “*such as never has been since there was a nation till that time* [cf. Matthew 24:21]. *But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book*” (Daniel 12:1).

Whose “time of the end” was God referring to? From the language used, it’s evident that these things directly concerned the nation of Israel rather than mankind in general. Daniel asked for a more specific time marker (12:6), and he was given one: “*...it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished*” (12:7). The utter destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and more than a million Jews in 70 AD did accomplish this. Daniel’s writings will be examined in more detail later.

Another intriguing detail in the book of Revelation is that twice in the letters to the seven churches (Revelation 2:9 and 3:9), Jesus spoke of Judaizers who were persecuting the churches, saying they were “*of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not.*” After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD this type of persecution faded, but it was certainly a significant factor in the Church prior to that event. Therefore, it would make far more sense for this remark to have been written while Jerusalem and the temple still stood.

Other examples of internal evidence for an early date will be shown, whether explicit or implicit, in the section on actual historical events during the Roman/Jewish War.

D. Daniel’s 70-Week Prophecy

Earlier we saw that Clement’s statement regarding John’s banishment to Patmos makes it difficult to determine when he believes the book of Revelation was written. However, there is no doubt that he saw in the events of the Roman/Jewish War the fulfillment of the final week of Daniel’s 70-Week prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27). Dispensationalist Futurists hold that this final week (seven years) is still unfulfilled, and that the book of Revelation foretells the events which will take place during those seven years. Clement saw it differently:

From the captivity at Babylon, which took place in the time of Jeremiah the prophet, was fulfilled what was spoken by Daniel the prophet as follows: [Here he quotes Daniel 9:24-27 in its entirety.] ...And Christ our Lord, “the Holy of Holies,” having come and fulfilled the vision and the prophecy, was anointed in His flesh by the Holy Spirit of His Father. In those “sixty and two weeks,” as the prophet said, and “in the one week,” was He Lord. The half of the week Nero held sway, and in the holy city Jerusalem placed the abomination; and in the half of the week he was taken away, and Otho, and Galba, and Vitellius [were also taken away]. And Vespasian rose to the supreme power, and destroyed Jerusalem, and desolated the holy place. And that such are the facts of the case, is clear to him that is able to understand, as the prophet said (Puritan Lad, 2008).

In his mind, Clement may or may not have tied the final week of Daniel’s 70-Week prophecy to the book of Revelation, as is often done by Dispensationalists and non-Dispensationalists alike. If he did, though, then by definition he was an advocate for Revelation’s early authorship, i.e. before 70 AD, because he clearly taught that Daniel 9:24-27 was entirely fulfilled by the end of the Roman/Jewish War. In any case, his view of Daniel 9 was certainly Preterist and, as we will see, so also was his view of Matthew 24 and other passages thought by Futurists to be unfulfilled.

It can be noted that nowhere in the book of Revelation is a 7-year period indicated, but a period of 3.5 years can be seen. The basis for a future 7-year Tribulation period within Dispensational thought is taken only from Daniel’s 70-Weeks prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27. Sam Storms (2006) speaks of the importance of this passage to Dispensationalist and

Futurist theology when he says, “One could conceivably make an argument that apart from the dispensational interpretation of Daniel 9, these and related prophetic doctrines would lack substantial biblical sanction.”

The final week (i.e. seven years) will be initiated, Dispensationalists say, when the Antichrist makes a covenant with Israel. This is the current popular interpretation of verse 27, which states: “*And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering...*”). For this to happen, we are also told, the Jerusalem temple must be rebuilt and the sacrifices and offerings resumed. John Hagee, Benny Hinn, and others are willing to raise millions of dollars to see this happen, despite the blasphemous nature of such a venture in light of Christ’s work on the cross and also what happened in 70 AD.

This viewpoint does not appear to be the historic one. A number of the early church writers (like Clement) and also some of the reformers, in fact, did not see the “he” of verse 27 as referring to the Antichrist, but they insisted that this was a reference to Jesus. The covenant in view, then, was the New Covenant, made with many (Matthew 26:28, Mark 10:45, Mark 14:24). The first half of the final week was fulfilled in Jesus’ 3.5 year earthly ministry. The “end to sacrifice and offering” was achieved by Christ’s work on the cross, which was the ultimate sacrifice. Philip Mauro, a brilliant lawyer who spent years on the bar of the US Supreme Court, spoke of the centrality of Christ’s work on the cross in Daniel’s 70-Weeks prophecy in his 1921 book, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation*:

No one will dispute that, when Christ suffered and died on the Cross, thus offering “one sacrifice for sins forever,” he then and there caused the sacrifice, and oblations of the law to cease as a divine appointment... Neither can there be any question that the removal of those sacrifices (which could never take away sins) was a great thing in the eyes of God, a thing so great and well-pleasing to Him, to warrant its having a prominent place in this grand Messianic prophecy. In proof of this important point we direct the attention of our readers to Hebrews, chapters 8, 9 and 10... The great subject of this part of Hebrews, as of the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, is the Cross... And when we find, both in the prophecy (Daniel 9:27) and in Hebrews 10, that this setting aside of the sacrifices of the law is connected directly with the confirming of the New Covenant, we are compelled to conclude that the passage in Hebrews is the inspired record of the fulfillment of this Prophecy... This gives to the last week of the seventy the importance it should have, and which the prophecy as a whole demands, seeing that all the predictions of verse 24 depend upon the events of that last week. On the other hand, to make this last Week refer to a paltry bargain between Antichrist (or a supposed Roman prince) and some apostate Jews of the future, for the renewal (and that for a space of only seven years) of those sacrifices which God has long ago abolished forever, is to intrude into this great scripture a matter of trifling importance, utterly foreign to the subject in hand and to bring the entire prophecy to an absurdly lame and impotent conclusion (pages 30-32, emphasis added; Todd Dennis [21], 2009).

Ralph Woodrow in 1971 pointed out the significance of Christ’s ministry being 3.5 years long, in relation to the prophecy in Daniel 9:27a (Todd Dennis [22], 2009). He notes that Augustine and Eusebius recognized that Daniel had defined the exact length of Christ’s ministry, with Eusebius saying, “Now the whole period of our Saviour’s teaching and working of miracles is said to have been three-and-a-half years, which is half a week. John the evangelist, in his Gospel makes this clear to the attentive [by the mention of four Passovers during His ministry; John 2:13, 5:1, 6:4, 13:1].”

Understanding this, we can now see real significance in certain New Testament statements which also speak of a definite established time at which Jesus would die. For example, we read: “They sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come” (John 7:30). In John 2:4, Jesus said, “Mine hour is not yet come.” On another occasion, he said, “My time is not yet come” (John 7:6). Then just prior to his betrayal and death, he said, “My time is at hand” (Mt. 26:18), and finally, “the hour is come” (John 17:1; Mt. 26:45).

These and other verses clearly show that there was a definite time in the plan of God when Jesus would die. He came to fulfill the scriptures, and there is only one Old Testament scripture which predicted the time of his death—the prophecy which stated that Messiah would be cut off in the midst of the 70th week—at the close of three and a half years of ministry! How perfectly the prophecy was fulfilled in Christ!

But those who say that the confirming of the covenant and causing sacrifices to cease in the midst of the 70th week refers to a future Antichrist, completely destroy this beautiful fulfillment and are at a complete loss to show where in the Old Testament the time of our Lord’s death was predicted.

The prophecy of Daniel 9 stated that Messiah would confirm the covenant (or would cause the covenant to prevail) with many of Daniel’s people for the “week” or seven years. We ask then, when Christ came, was his ministry directed in a special way to Daniel’s people—to “Israel” (Dan. 9:20)? Yes!

Some Preterists believe that the “end to sacrifice and offering” took place in another sense when the temple (the place of sacrifices and offerings) was destroyed in 70 AD. Tertullian (160-220 AD), for example, writing about Jerusalem’s destruction, said, “Therefore, when these times also were completed, and the Jews subdued, there afterwards

ceased in that place ‘libations and sacrifices,’ which thenceforward have not been able to be in that place celebrated [because the temple is gone]” (An Answer to the Jews, Chapter VIII—Of Jerusalem’s Destruction).¹⁰

Besides Clement and Tertullian, others who viewed Jesus as the “he” of verse 27 include John Wycliffe (1324-1384), Martin Luther (1483-1546), John Calvin (1509-1564), and Isaac Newton (1643-1727).¹¹ Calvin, for example, said: For [Daniel] then said, **Christ shall confirm the covenant with many for one week**, and shall cause the sacrifices and oblation to cease. Afterwards, the abomination that stupifieth shall be added, and desolation or stupor, and then death will distill, says he, upon the astonished or stupefied one. The angel, therefore, there treats of the perpetual devastation of the Temple. So in this passage, without doubt, he treats of the period after the destruction of the Temple; there could be no hope of restoration, as the law with all its ceremonies would then arrive at its termination. **With this view Christ quotes this passage in Matthew 24**, while he admonishes his hearers diligently to attend to it... Without the slightest doubt, **this prophecy was fulfilled when the city was captured and overthrown, and the temple utterly destroyed by Titus the son of Vespasian**. This satisfactorily explains the events here predicted (Todd Dennis [9], 2009).

Any gap then, according to this view, was not a 2000-year gap between weeks 69 and 70, but a roughly 37-year gap between Christ’s ascension and the 3.5 year period of great tribulation leading up to Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 AD (spoken of in verse 26b and 27b).¹² This is said to have been foreseen in Isaiah 61:2, especially as Jesus chose to quote it in Luke 4:18-19. On the surface there seems to be no gap in Isaiah’s statement, but Jesus alluded to one when He stopped after stating that He had come to “*proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*” The part He didn’t quote then (“*and the day of vengeance of our God*”) He later referred to at the end of His ministry when He predicted the destruction of Jerusalem: “*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near...for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written...For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people...*” (Luke 21:20-24). The nearly 40-year gap then served the purpose of giving Israel a generation within which to repent.

In this way Isaiah 61:2 and Daniel 9:27 refer to the same two time periods, separated by the same gap, i.e. the acceptable year of the Lord (the 3.5 year-ministry of Jesus) and the day of vengeance (the 3.5 year-siege on Jerusalem leading up to its destruction, what Jesus called “great tribulation” in Matthew 24:21). Therefore, the first half of the 70th week (3.5 years) established the New Covenant, and the second half of the 70th week (3.5 years) a generation later confirmed the New Covenant by completely abolishing the Old Covenant temple system. The kingdom of God, already established in heaven when Jesus ascended and being lived out among those who followed Christ, was then fully established on earth and given to the saints (Daniel 7:27). It was taken from national Israel and given to the Church, the people whom Jesus said would produce its fruits (See the ‘Parable of the Tenants’ in Matthew 21:33-45).

Some see no gap at all, contending that the last half of the 70th week was fulfilled during the 3.5 years following Jesus’ ascension (31-34 AD). In this view the Jews were given priority in hearing the gospel, but Philip’s evangelistic trip to Samaria in 34 AD marked a time when the gospel began in earnest to go to non-Jews.¹³ The “wing of abominations” then refers to the fact that after Christ’s work on the cross, every temple sacrifice was abominable and a rejection of Christ. These abominations continued for 40 years until, finding that Israel would not repent, the temple was destroyed in 70 AD. This last statement reflects Calvin’s view when, referring to the phrase “wing of abominations,” he said,

I have no hesitation in referring this language of the angel to that profanation of the Temple which happened after the manifestation of Christ, when sacrifices ceased, and the shadows of the law were abolished. From the time, therefore, at

¹⁰ Sam Storms, Meredith Kline, and others believe that the final week is not a literal seven years. The first half, they say, extends from Christ’s ascension until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The second half extends from 70 AD until Christ’s Second Coming. This is based in part by combining Daniel’s prophecy with the details in the sign of the woman and dragon in Revelation 12:5-6.

¹¹ An interesting analysis of the 70-Weeks prophecy, drawing parallels between the numbers used in this prophecy to identical numbers found in periods of Israel’s redemptive history, can be found here: <http://pjmillier.wordpress.com/2009/04/25/daniel%E2%80%99s-countdown-from-exile-to-messiah/>. For instance, 62 weeks after the Israelites received the Law at Mount Sinai, that generation was deemed unworthy to enter the Promised Land. In Daniel’s prophecy, it was 62 prophetic weeks (62 x 7 = 434) after Ezra reinstated the Law that Israel rejected its Messiah. “Both events led to the destruction—within 40 years—of the faithless generation.”

¹² Regarding verses 26 and 27, Sam Storms (2006) makes the helpful point that they “are not relating events that are sequential (i.e., A B C D) but rather parallel (i.e., A B A B).” In other words, Christ is spoken of in the beginning of verse 26 and again in the beginning of verse 27 (Sam Storms affirms that the “he” there speaks of Christ). Likewise, the Roman Empire, which presided over Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 AD, is spoken of in the latter parts of both verse 26 and 27. The Dispensational view is that 70 AD is spoken of in verse 26b, but that the world has not yet seen the desolations spoken of in verse 27b.

¹³ Philip was only one of many who were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, preaching the word, as a result of the great persecution which arose the day Stephen was stoned to death (Acts 8:1-5). This viewpoint sees the 490 years as literal and without interruption, after which (unlike in typical Dispensationalist thought) the Israelites would cease to be God’s chosen people. Instead, Jews and Gentiles alike could only be saved on an individual basis, making up the Church in which there is no Jew or Gentile (Galatians 3:28; cf. Acts 10:45, 11:18, 13:46, 14:27, 15:9, 18:6, 22:20-22).

which the sacrifice really ceased to be offered; this refers to the period at which Christ by his advent should abolish the shadows of the law, thus making all offering of sacrifices to God totally valueless... God's wrath followed the profanation of the Temple. The Jews never anticipated the final cessation of their ceremonies, and always boasted in their peculiar external worship, and unless God had openly demonstrated it before their eyes, they would never have renounced their sacrifices and rites as mere shadowy representations. Hence Jerusalem and their Temple were exposed to the vengeance of the Gentiles.

It's difficult to see from Calvin's quote whether or not he believed there was a generation-long gap between the first and second halves of the 70th week. For the Preterist, the idea of a gap or no gap likely depends upon whether Daniel 9:27b is thought to fulfill the last half of this week or is simply related to the final week. That is, there is no gap if what is stated in Daniel 9:27b falls outside of the 490-year timeline (Daniel 9:25-27a), but is closely related to (and is an implication of) what occurs in the final week. Ralph Woodrow looks to the fact that the seventy weeks were "decreed about [Daniel's] people" (verse 24a) as proof enough that there is no gap and offers up an explanation for how the final half of the 70th week concerned the people of Israel:

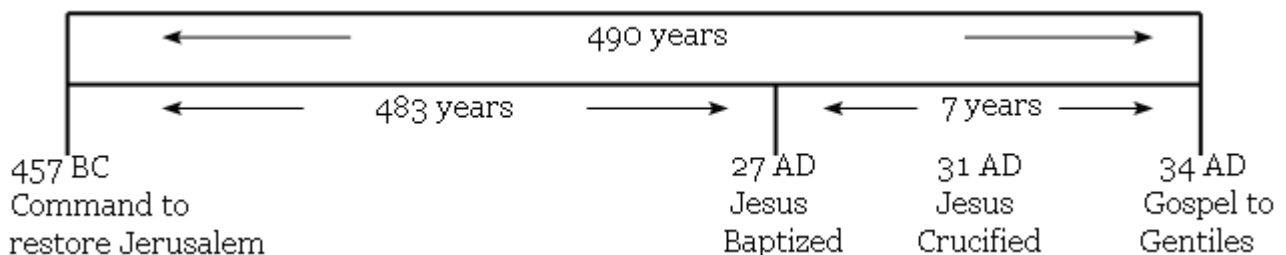
The first half of the "week", the time of our Lord's ministry, was definitely directed toward ISRAEL. But what about the second half—the final three and a half years of the prophecy—was it also linked with Israel? Did the disciples continue to preach for the duration of the remaining three and a half years (as Christ's representatives) especially to Daniel's people—to Israel? Yes, they did! Jesus had told the disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mk. 16:15; Mt.28:19; Acts 1:8), YET—and this is significant—after Christ ascended, the disciples still at first preached only to Israel! Why? We know of only one prophecy which would indicate that this was to be the course followed. It is the prophecy of the 70 weeks which implied that after the death of Messiah there would still be three and a half years that pertained to Israel!

Bearing this in mind, we can now understand at least one reason why the gospel went "to the Jew first" and then later to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:16). Peter preached shortly after Pentecost: "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant... unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:25, 26). "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you" (Acts 13:46).

In person, Christ came to Israel during the first half of the "week"—three and a half years. Through the disciples—for the three and a half years that remained—his message still went to Israel, "the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mk. 16:20). In a very real sense of the word, the ministry of the disciples was a continuation of the ministry of Christ. Then came the conversion of Cornelius which completely changed the missionary outreach, outlook, and ministry of the church. Though the New Testament does not give an exact date when this happened, apparently the time for special exclusive blessing upon Daniel's people had drawn to a close. The gospel which had gone first to the Jews was now to take its full mission—to be preached to all people of all nations!

This time of changeover was marked by a number of supernatural events. Cornelius received a heavenly visitation. An angel appeared to him and told him to call for Peter "who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). God showed Peter a vision which caused him to know that the gospel was now to go to the Gentiles and not to Israelites only. All of these things were timed perfectly—showing that God's hand was accomplishing a definite purpose. Returning to Jerusalem, Peter explained what had happened. "When they heard these things, they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, 'Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life'" (Acts 11:18).

The following chart illustrates the no-gap viewpoint¹⁴:



¹⁴ This chart is based on the idea that Artaxerxes, in his 7th year (Ezra 7:7), made a detailed decree allowing Jerusalem to be rebuilt and restored (Ezra 7:11-28). This occurred in the year 457 BC, according to Ptolemy's chronological system. However, Philip Mauro (Todd Dennis [21], 2009), who believed that there is no gap in Daniel's 70 Week-prophecy, wrote in 1921 that Ptolemy's system was one of guesswork when it came to the period between Cyrus and Alexander. He points out that Martin Anstey's Bible Chronology, published in 1913, shows that Ptolemy assigned to the Persian Empire a period that was about 80 years too long. The decree, in any case, spoken of in Daniel 9:25, came from Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28-45:13; II Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-3). Mauro therefore cautions against preferring "the guesses of a heathen astronomer (who had no means of knowing the facts which occurred over five hundred years before his time) to the evidence of Scripture" (Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation*, pages 5-9).

Zev Vilnay (1973) tells of a Jewish tradition supporting the truth that Christ's death made the Jewish sacrificial system invalid. Under Mosaic Law a scapegoat, symbolically carrying Israel's sin, would be driven out into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement, at which time a crimson wool thread tied to the temple would supernaturally turn white. During the last 40 years of the temple's existence, however, according to numerous Jewish sources, this thread never turned white (pp. 115-116). If this tradition is true, it demonstrates the truth that from the time of Jesus' death the sacrifices and offerings of the temple did nothing to atone for Israel's sin.

James B. Jordan (1988) says the imagery behind the phrase "wing of abominations" probably goes back to Numbers 14:37-41 where all Israelites "throughout their generations" were to wear blue tassels on the wings (corners) of their garments to remind them to stay on the path of holiness. An apostate Israel, though, he says would naturally not have "wings of holiness" but would be symbolically marked by "wings of abominations" (cf. Matthew 23:38, where Jesus said Jerusalem was a house left desolate).¹⁵ Considering then what happened leading up to 70 AD, especially with the installation of a false high priest in 67 AD, Jordan suggests that Daniel 9:27b can be viewed in this way: "*And on the wing of abominations [apostate Judaism and priesthood] will come one who makes desolate [the apostate High Priest], even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate [at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70].*"

Aside from Clement, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, and Newton, others who taught that Daniel's 70-Week prophecy is already fulfilled (gap or no gap) include the following:

[1] **Origen** (185-254 AD): "The weeks of years, also, which the prophet Daniel had predicted, extending to the leadership of Christ, have been fulfilled." [2] **Eusebius** (314 AD): "When the captivity of the Jewish people at Babylon was near its end, the Archangel Gabriel [told Daniel that Jerusalem would] be destroyed, and that after the second capture and siege it will no longer have God for its guardian, but will remain desolate, with the worship of the Mosaic Law taken away from it, and another new Covenant with humanity introduced in its place... 'For ending disobedience, and for completing transgression [Daniel 9:24].' I think that our Saviour's words to the Jews, 'Ye have filled up the measure of your fathers [Matthew 23:32],' are parallel to this... [T]here follows the prophecy of the new Covenant announced by our Saviour. So when all the intermediate matter between the seven and the sixty-two weeks is finished, there is added, 'And he will confirm a Covenant with many one week,' and in half the week the sacrifice and the libation shall be taken away, and on the Holy Place shall come the abomination of desolation, and until the fullness of time fullness shall be given to the desolation. Let us consider how this was fulfilled." [3] **Augustine** (354-430 AD): "Daniel's weeks...had to be completed afterwards in the end of all things, for Luke most plainly testifies that the prophecy of Daniel was accomplished at the time when Jerusalem was overthrown." [4] **Theodoret** (430 AD): "And so [begins] the last [70th] week at the baptism of Christ." [5] **William Hales** (1747-1831): "During this one week, which ended about A.D. 34 (about the martyrdom of Stephen,) a new covenant was established with many of the Jews, of every class; in the midst of which the Temple sacrifice was virtually abrogated by the all-sufficient sacrifice of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the [repentant and believing] world" (Todd Dennis [14], 2009).

E. Jerusalem's Destruction Foretold in the Olivet Discourse

Futurists and Preterists alike seem to agree that there are remarkable parallels between the revelation given to John and the teachings of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 21). After all, Jesus speaks of His prophesied events as "great tribulation (Matthew 24:21) and John uses the same phrase (Revelation 7:14). One's preconceived ideas can lead to vastly different assumptions about these details. For Futurists, the bulk of what Jesus shared in the Olivet Discourse refers to events which have not yet taken place, and this is in keeping with their view that the bulk of the book of Revelation is also not yet fulfilled. For Preterists, Jesus spoke far more in Matthew, Mark, and Luke regarding 70 AD than Futurists give Him credit for, and this is in keeping with the Preterist view that the parallel events found in the book of Revelation took place by 70 AD.

It can be noted that the Olivet Discourse, as it is recorded in Luke, is somewhat different than its parallel account in Matthew and Mark. Mike Rusten (2009 [1]), Associate Dean of The Bethlehem Institute and formerly an elder at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, observes, "Whereas in Matthew the disciples ask two questions, 'Tell us, when will these things happen (i.e. the destruction of the temple), and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?' Luke only records the disciples asking about the time of the destruction of the temple." He further notes that unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke does not make reference to false prophets, an increase in lawlessness, enduring until the end¹⁶, or the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel. On the other hand, Matthew and Mark do not explicitly

¹⁵ Note that Jesus referred to Jerusalem as "your house" (speaking to the Jewish people), instead of "My house."

¹⁶ One could say, though, that those spoken of in Luke 21:8 are false prophets, and that Christ does speak of endurance leading to salvation in verse 19.

mention Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, the days of vengeance upon Israel, Jerusalem being trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, or the Jews being led captive into all the nations.

Mike Rusten concludes that “the times of the Gentiles,” as mentioned in Luke 21:24, refer to the nearly 2000 years which have transpired since the destruction of the temple in 70 AD (Luke 21:20-24a) and the Second Coming of Christ (Luke 21:25-27), which we currently await. If this is true, though, one must still grapple with the fact that Matthew 24:4-28 and Luke 21:8-24 are parallel passages to a very large extent. In both passages readers are warned of [1] imposters claiming to be Christ [2] wars and rumors of wars [3] nations and kingdoms clashing [4] earthquakes [5] famines [6] persecution and martyrdom [7] betrayal and hatred [8] a signal indicating the need to flee to the mountains without the slightest delay [9] the difficulties for pregnant woman and those who will be nursing infants in those days [10] great distress and tribulation.

Matthew 24:29-31 and Luke 21:25-28 are parallel passages as well. The difference is that Matthew says the coming of the Son of Man would immediately follow “*the tribulation of those days*,” while Luke does not use the same phrase but instead refers to the slaughter and captivity of the Jewish people, the trampling of Jerusalem, and the times of the Gentiles. Futurists generally agree with Preterists that Luke indeed refers to 70 AD at this point, but they place a multi-century gap in Luke 21:24a so that verses 25-28 are yet future. Futurists can’t place any gap before Matthew 24:29, however, because Matthew uses the word “*immediately*.” So they consign “*the tribulation of those days*,” described in verses 15-28, to the future as well. They have no choice but to do so, if Matthew 24:29-31 is yet future. The Futurist interpretation then is left to explain why the above 10 warnings refer to two entirely different time periods, depending on the book in which they are found; i.e. in Luke they refer to a time period in the first century, and in Matthew (as well as Mark) they refer to a time period no sooner than the 21st century.

This leads to a dilemma when we come to the next set of parallel verses, Matthew 24:32-35 and Luke 21:29-33. In both cases Jesus said, “*Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.*” For the Futurist, this means that all the things Jesus prophesied will take place in one future (or present) generation which will see them *begin*. At first glance, this seems to work in Matthew’s account of the Olivet Discourse because, says the Futurist, the vast majority of Matthew 24 must refer to a generation alive in the 21st century. This line of reasoning falls apart with Luke’s account, however, because the Futurist admits that the “great distress” in Luke 21:20-24a took place around 70 AD. By any reckoning, a “generation” is *far* shorter than 1939 years.

Mark’s account of the Olivet Discourse is interesting in this regard. After Jesus prophesies of the impending overthrow of the temple (Mark 13:1-2), Mark records the disciples asking Him only one question (verses 3-4, “*Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?*”) Jesus then articulates all of the same 10 warnings which were noted above in the accounts of Matthew and Luke. In Mark’s account, verses 24-27 are parallel with Matthew 24:29-31 and Luke 21:25-28. Mark’s transition is more similar to Matthew’s use of “*immediately*” in that he says, “*But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened... And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.*” (Mark 13:24, 26). This is significant because Mark is only addressing the question of the temple’s overthrow, and the signs which would show it was about to happen. We know without any doubt that it happened in 70 AD.

It may be possible to account for the different details highlighted by each author by considering the audiences to which they were writing. For example, Luke, a Gentile doctor, may have repeatedly made specific references to Jews and Gentiles because he expected his audience to be Gentile. Matthew, however, may have chosen not to do so because his audience was primarily Jewish. By this way of thinking, Luke perhaps omitted any explicit reference to the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel because such a reference was less likely to resonate with his Gentile audience.

In any case, it’s even more interesting that John, in his gospel account, omits the Olivet Discourse entirely, even though he was no doubt present when Jesus spoke those things. From the Preterist viewpoint, one likely reason for this curious fact is that the book of Revelation, which he authored, actually functions as his exposition of the Olivet Discourse, albeit in a more detailed manner. Therefore, he felt no need to include the Olivet Discourse passage in his gospel account, especially if the book of John was written after the book of Revelation.

Regarding the notion that the question posed by the disciples in Matthew 24:3 is different in nature than the question posed in the other two accounts, the Preterist view is that there is no division of questions. The disciples did not ask about the end of the world, but rather the end of the age (i.e. the Jewish age) as spoken of by Daniel and other Old Testament prophets. So what appears to some to be a 3-part question is simply the disciples asking questions about the same event; i.e. the destruction of the temple, the coming of Christ in judgment, and the end of the age. Thomas Newton, in 1754, said (Todd Dennis [20], 2009), “‘The coming of Christ,’ and ‘the conclusion of the age,’ being therefore only different expressions to denote the same period with the destruction of Jerusalem, the purpose of the question plainly is, when shall the destruction of Jerusalem be, and what shall be the signs of it?” Kevin Daly (2009) likewise remarks:

It is Jesus’ emphatic confirmation of the Temple’s fate that leads to the disciples’ question: ‘When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’ While some argue this to be three separate questions - so that

Jesus' answer in the subsequent verses must be unraveled and applied to three different events - this is not supported by the parallel accounts in Mark's and Luke's gospels: 'Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?' (Mark 13:4); 'Teacher,' they asked, 'when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?' (Luke 21:7). What Jesus prophesied against the Temple would happen at our Lord's *coming in judgment* and would also, by implication, bring about *the end of that age*.

I. Did Jesus Come in 70 AD?

At this point, a key concern alluded to earlier needs to be considered in more depth, i.e. the idea of Christ having already come in 70 AD. The Futurist position sees Matthew 24:29-31, Mark 13:24-27, and Luke 21:25-27 as a description of Christ's Second Coming at the end of the world. Partial-Preterism, on the other hand, while affirming that Christ's Second Coming is yet future, does not see these passages as a description of that event. Instead they refer to Christ's coming in judgment. Daly comments:

Matthew records the disciples' question in the prophetic language of the Old Testament, which was familiar to the Jewish audience for which his gospel was written. In this language, the execution of Divine judgment was commonly spoken of as a visitation of the LORD, as either *His coming* or *His coming in the cloud*.

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous around him" (Psalm 50:3).

"For behold, the LORD comes out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (Isaiah 26: 21. Cf. Mat 23:35-36 & Rev 18:24).

Most pertinent, in view of the disciples' question, is Micah's prophecy against the 'high places' - being localities of false worship,⁴ which the Temple in Jerusalem had now also become: "For behold, the LORD comes forth from his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be melted under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel ... What are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?" (Micah 1:3-5).

Kenneth Gentry (1998) refers to the prophecy in Matthew 24:29-30 as a "Cloud-Coming" of Christ in judgment which, like Daly, he says can be understood in light of similar language from the Old Testament. He explains:

The Old Testament frequently uses clouds as indicators of divine judgment. God is said to be surrounded with thick, foreboding clouds as emblems of His unapproachable holiness and righteousness (Gen. 15:17; Ex. 13:21-22; 14:19-20; 19:9, 16-19; Deut. 4:11; Job 22:14; Psa. 18:8ff; 97:2; 104:3; Isa. 19:1; Eze. 32:7-8). He is poetically portrayed as coming in clouds in historical judgments upon men (Psa. 18:7-15; 104:3; Isa. 19:1; Joel 2:1, 2; Nah. 1:2ff; Zeph. 1:14, 15). Thus, the New Testament speaks of Christ's coming in clouds of judgment in history at Matthew 24:30 and 26:64, [so that these passages in Matthew do not refer to] His Second Coming at the end of world history [as do Acts 1:11; I Thess. 4:13ff].

A look at several Old Testament passages announcing judgment upon other major nations indicates that it was already common for God to use the same type of language as that which appears in the Olivet Discourse: [1] Regarding Babylon: "*For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light*" (Isaiah 13:10). [2] Regarding Edom: "*All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree...her land shall become burning pitch. Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever...*" (Isaiah 34:4, 9-10). [3] Regarding Egypt: "*When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord God*" (Ezekiel 32:7-8; cf. Isaiah 5:30, 13:10; Jeremiah 4:14, 28; Jeremiah 13:16; Joel 2:10; Amos 8:9). When judgment came to those nations, there were no literal cosmic catastrophes affecting the entire planet. This was symbolic, apocryphal language used commonly in the Old Testament, and now appearing in the New Testament as well.

Furthermore, it's quite possible that Jesus referred to the sun, the moon, and the stars so that His Jewish listeners would be reminded of Joseph's dream in which "*the sun, the moon, and eleven stars*" bowed down to him (Genesis 37:9). Thus these would be symbols of Israel, in addition to speaking of the collapse of a political structure.

Another illustration of the Bible's use of this type of language to denote political events can be found in Psalm 18, written by David "on the day when the Lord rescued him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul." David writes of being entangled by "the cords of Sheol" (verse 5); the earth reeling and rocking and the mountains trembling (verse 7); devouring fire coming from God's mouth (verse 8); God bowing the heavens, thick darkness, God riding on a cherub and coming to him (verses 9-10); hailstones and coals of fire coming to the earth through the clouds (verses 12-13); God sending arrows and lightning (verse 14); and the sea being divided and "the foundations of the world"

being laid bare (verse 15). There is no record, Biblical or otherwise, of any such events literally taking place during David's lifetime. This is apocalyptic language, common throughout the Bible.

Kenneth Gentry sees the Olivet Discourse prophecies of Christ's "Cloud-Coming" as parallel to John's words in Revelation 1:7, which many scholars¹⁷ believe is the theme verse of the book of Revelation: "*Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him. Even so. Amen.*" According to Gentry, "His Cloud-Coming is a Judgment-Coming that brings mourning. But upon whom? And when? And how? Fortunately...time cues exist within the theme text, and can be found in the other New Testament allusions to this same passage."

Gentry then makes the case that, although the Romans had a part in crucifying and piercing Jesus (and in the broadest sense, all of mankind did), the responsibility for these deeds belonged to the Jews of that generation who instigated and demanded that they be done (See Acts 2:22-23, 36; 3:13-15a; Acts 5:30; 7:52; I Thessalonians 2:14-15). He quotes from Adam Clarke who, in his 1823 commentary on this verse, remarked, "By this the *Jewish people* are most evidently intended, and therefore the whole verse may be understood as predicting the destruction of the Jews; and is a presumptive proof that the Apocalypse was written *before* the final overthrow of the Jewish state."

Seeing that Revelation 1:7 uses the phrase "all tribes of the earth" to indicate who would wail upon seeing Christ coming with the clouds, Gentry notes that the Greek word for "tribe" refers to the Jewish tribes when used elsewhere in Scripture, almost without exception. With his conclusion, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* and the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* agrees (Cf. Revelation 5:5, 7:4, and 21:12). The strongest indication of this association, though, can be seen in the fact that Revelation 1:7 is clearly a reference to Zechariah 12:10, a passage leaving no doubt that Israel and Jerusalem are in view: "*And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on Me, on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a firstborn.*"¹⁸

Another consideration regarding the language of Matthew 24:30 (and the parallel passages in Mark, Luke, and Revelation 1:7) is that it is reminiscent of Daniel 7:13-14: "*I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a Son of Man, and He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.*" This passage is often interpreted to be the Second Coming immediately preceding a Millennium kingdom, but the picture is actually of Christ *ascending* to the Father, not *descending* to the earth.

Jesus' ascension took place about 40 years prior to 70 AD, of course. Yet if Jesus' words in Matthew 24:30 do recall Daniel 7:13-14 then it is not a Second Coming-type descent which is tied to "the sign of the Son of Man" appearing in heaven, but rather His ascension. Somehow, in context, this sign would be seen in the judgment of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD, i.e. this judgment would verify or point to the reality of Christ's ascension with power and great glory. Matthew 24:31 then would be speaking of the ingathering of the harvest as God's Kingdom is established through the Church, since the kingdom is in view in Daniel 7 (cf. John 11:51-52).¹⁹ Kevin Daly (2009) writes regarding these things:

The appearance of a sign (verse 30) would not be necessary if the Son of Man would come visibly at this time. The sign is necessary because his coming in the clouds of heaven, in power and vindication glory, alludes once more to Daniel, who spoke of 'one like the son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven,' to receive from the Ancient of Days 'authority, glory and sovereign power' so that 'all peoples, nations and men of every language' might worship him. The fall of Jerusalem was itself the sign (evidence) that Jesus was enthroned at the right hand of the Father in heaven, bringing judgment on the city.

Adam Clarke [1762-1832] comments on verse 30: "The plain meaning of this is, that the destruction of Jerusalem will be such a remarkable instance of Divine vengeance, such a signal manifestation of Christ's power and glory, that all the Jewish tribes shall mourn, and many will, in consequence of this manifestation of God, be led to acknowledge Christ and his religion." Since Deuteronomy 18:22 establishes the fulfillment of prophecy as the test for a true prophet, Jesus would be fully vindicated at the time that his Word was fulfilled. He is thus affirmed as the risen King, ruling from the right hand of the Father in heavenly glory, with power to execute judgment and bring salvation. The trumpet call that called back the exiles in Isaiah 27:13 would now call in the elect from the four corners of the earth. This harvest of souls to whom the gospel was sown, from far and wide for Messiah's glory, is contrasted with the tribes of the land (Greek – της γης), who would mourn for the one they had pierced, in accordance with Zechariah 12:10.

¹⁷ These scholars include Moses Stuart (1845), Justin A. Smith (1884), Friedrich Dusterdieck (1886), J. Stuart Russell (1887), Bernhard Weiss (1889), Milton S. Terry (1898), Donald W. Richardson (1964), and David Chilton (1987).

¹⁸ Dispensationalists take this passage in Zechariah 12 to be yet unfulfilled. Lactantius (240-320 AD), though, is just one example of an early church writer who believed that it was fulfilled in 70 AD (Todd Dennis [19], 2009).

¹⁹ Many Dispensationalists see this as anything but the Rapture, because it follows "the tribulation of those days" and most Dispensationalists hold to a Pre-Tribulational Rapture view. Tim Lahaye, John Walvoord, and Thomas Ice all teach that Matthew 24:31 refers to the salvation of national Israel, who are allegedly "God's elect," at the Second Coming.

Daniel's prophecy was surely in view when Jesus uttered a similar statement to Caiaphas: "...I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64). Some Preterists believe that this passage also has in view the judgment of 70 AD as a sign of Christ's ascension in power. Kenneth Gentry (2002), for example says, "The Daniel 7:13 context—upon which Matt. 24:30 and 26:64 are based—refers to the Ascension of Christ to take up his kingly rule. The dramatic, historical judgment-experience or witness to the fact of his having ascended is the destruction of the Temple, which event is in view in these and related passages (p.35). Hank Hanegraaff (Todd Dennis [17], 2009), also adds:

Jesus was the One who in the Olivet Discourse made the mother of all prophecies. He said 'not one stone here will be left upon another; every one will be thrown down.' And He based His deity on that just like He did on the resurrection. If that prophecy had not been fulfilled, Jesus would indeed have been a false prophet. In fact, when He was before Caiaphas the High Priest, He said to Caiaphas, 'you will see the Son of Man coming on clouds and seated at the right hand of the Mighty One.' In other words, He said to him, 'you will see my vindication and exaltation. And, indeed, the very court that condemned Him to death saw His vindication and exaltation when Jerusalem was destroyed. The utter destruction of Jerusalem takes places and vindicates what Jesus Christ has said.

Todd Dennis,²⁰ however, is one who does not connect this passage with 70 AD, with one reason being that Caiaphas likely died soon after 40 AD, and therefore wasn't around to witness that judgment. He recognizes that some (like Hanegraaff, and also Kenneth Gentry) maintain this connection by holding to the idea that Christ's vindication was seen, not by Caiaphas specifically, but by the court he presided over; yet he believes this explanation is too much of a stretch (Todd Dennis [1], 2008). R.C. Sproul also feels that this passage, with its open-ended time reference ("*from now on*") does not demand a first-century fulfillment (Todd Dennis [17], 2009), but has a wider application to all who have lived since the time of Christ. R.C.H. Lenski, in his 1943 commentary on this passage, picked up on the phrase Jesus used, "*from now on,*" and gave this explanation:

[I]n the miracles recurring at the time of his death they shall begin to see, in his resurrection likewise, and thus onward in every manifestation of power, including especially the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jewish nation. But *opsesthe* [the Greek word for "see"] does not refer to physical or spiritual seeing but to experimental perception (Gentry, 2002, p. 35).

Earlier Jesus had also said to His disciples: "*For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom*" (Matthew 16:27-28). If this statement was fulfilled in His transfiguration six days later, as some contend, in what sense did Jesus "come with His angels" then and repay each person according to what he had done (a clear picture of judgment), and why would He have done so before their lives had come to an end? Also why did Jesus say that "some" (rather than all) would not taste death before they saw this happen? None of Jesus' disciples died during the six days after Jesus made this statement, but some were indeed martyred before 70 AD.

In the common Preterist view, then, those who were still alive in 70 AD indeed saw "the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" before they tasted death. John Wesley, clearly holding to this view, said of this passage, "For there is no way to escape the righteous judgment of God. And, as an emblem of this, there are some here who shall live to see the Messiah coming to set up his mediatorial kingdom with great power and glory, by the destruction of the temple, city, and polity of the Jews" (Todd Dennis [10], 2009). Dr. Thomas Newton (1704-1782) and Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) also held this view, as does R.C. Sproul (Todd Dennis [16], 2009). Some Preterists see Matthew 16:27-28 as being identical to the prophecy Jesus gave in Revelation 22:12, revealing the purpose for His soon coming: "*Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done.*"²¹

In some way, Jesus tied His coming²² to the lives of His listeners in Matthew 16:27-28 and 26:64, though it continues to be debated whether He spoke there of His coming in judgment in 70 AD. One instance, though, where He did

²⁰ Todd Dennis is a pastor and the moderator of the comprehensive website, www.preteristarchive.com. He transitioned from Dispensational Futurism to Partial-Preterism to Hyper-Preterism (10 years), and is now what he calls a Moderate Preterist.

²¹ Todd Dennis again, though, does not see in this passage a direct connection to 70 AD. Instead, he says, the immediate context for Jesus' statement in Matthew 16 is the subject of self-denial, persecution, and potential martyrdom, "with the attendant rewards which follow" (Todd Dennis [2], 2008). It's a suffering/vindication motif which finds frequent mention in the New Testament (e.g. Stephen's martyrdom in Acts 7:54-58, where Stephen sees Jesus revealed in power and glory just prior to tasting death; Hebrews 9:27-28, where judgment is said to follow death, and—in Todd's view—there is a personal coming of Christ for each of His followers at the occasion of their deaths (in the manner of Christ saying, "*I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also*" [John 14:3]). The "death of the individual is where the focus lies in [Matthew 16:28]," he adds, and only *some* would have the privilege of seeing Him come in His kingdom before tasting death because *some* (i.e. Judas) would reject Him.

²² Or "a coming of His"; Even Dispensationalists generally believe that some of Jesus' disciples saw Him come in His kingdom before they died, albeit only three of them six days later when He was transfigured. Holding to this belief, then, they should have no logical

clearly connect His judgment-coming in 70 AD to His audience was in Matthew 24:34. Here we read the following statement concerning all He had revealed in the Olivet Discourse up to that point, “*Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.*”

As already noted, this very clear time marker has been taken by Dispensationalists to mean that all the things Jesus prophesied would take place in one future generation which would see them *begin*. This is not the historical viewpoint, however. Indeed, the question can be asked why Jesus would have meant anything different by the phrase “this generation” here than He did in Matthew 11:16; 12:41, 42, 45; 17:17; 23:26; Mark 8:12; Luke 7:31; 11:29-32; 17:25 (all clearly referring to His immediate audience). Charles Spurgeon, in his 1868 commentary on this passage, remarked:

The King left his followers in no doubt as to when these things should happen: ‘*Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.*’ It was just about the ordinary limit of a generation when the Roman armies compassed Jerusalem, whose measure of iniquity was then full, and overflowed in misery, agony, distress, and bloodshed such as the world never saw before or since. Jesus was a true Prophet; everything that he foretold was literally fulfilled” (Joe Haynes, 2001).

The reformer John Calvin, in his commentary on this verse, said, “This prophecy does not relate to evils that are distant, and which posterity will see after the lapse of many centuries, but which are now hanging over you, and ready to fall in one mass, *so that there is no part of it which the present generation [in Jesus’ time] will not experience*” (Todd Dennis [9], 2009, emphasis added). John Wesley, in 1754, stated, “The expression implies that great part of that generation would be passed away, but not the whole. Just so it was; for the city and temple were destroyed thirty-nine or forty years after.”

These men were in good historical company. Clement (150-220 AD) said, “And in like manner He spoke in plain words the things that were straightway to happen, which we can now see with our eyes, *in order that the accomplishment might be among those to whom the word was spoken*” (Puritan Lad, 2008, emphasis added). Eusebius (263-339 AD) also assigned the meaning of “this generation” to those alive when Jesus spoke these words (Todd Dennis [4], 2009):

And when those that believed in Christ had come thither [out] from Jerusalem [in obedience to Matthew 24:15-16], then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men (Proof of the Gospel, Book III, Ch. 5).

Eusebius, in fact, taught that Jesus came at that time in judgment. After detailing how the other signs given by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse had been fulfilled prior to 70 AD [see next section], Eusebius concluded that His predicted coming likewise had occurred (Todd Dennis [19], 2009):

[W]hen the lamentation and wailing that was predicted for the Jews, and the burning of the Temple and its utter desolation, can also be seen even now to have occurred according to the prediction, *surely we must also agree that the King who was prophesied, the Christ of God, has come*, since the signs of His coming have been shewn in each instance I have treated to have been clearly fulfilled” (Proof of the Gospel, Book VIII, emphasis added).

Henry Alford, an English scholar and theologian who was also Dean of Canterbury from 1857-1871, believed that Jesus’ 70 AD coming should also be apparent from His telling of the Parable of the Tenants in Matthew 21:33-45. There He identified the tenants of the vineyard as the Jews, who consistently killed God’s servants whenever they were sent to collect fruit. They finally killed God’s own Son, begging the question (verse 40), “*When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will He do to those tenants?*” Jesus affirmed the answer of the chief priests and the Pharisees (verse 41) by stating that they would be put to a miserable death, they would be crushed (verse 44), and the kingdom of God would be taken from them “*and given to a people producing its fruits*” (verse 43; cf. Daniel 7:18-27). Alford notes:

We may observe that our Lord makes ‘when the Lord cometh’ *coincide with the destruction of Jerusalem*, which is incontestably the overthrow of the wicked husbandmen. This passage therefore forms an important key to our Lord’s prophecies, and a decisive justification for those who, like myself, firmly hold that the coming of the Lord is, in many places, to be identified, primarily, with that overthrow (Todd Dennis [19], 2009, emphasis in original).

As already noted, we have the testimony of Jonathan Edwards a century earlier (1776), saying, “Tis evident that when Christ speaks of his coming; his being revealed; his coming in his Kingdom; or his Kingdom’s coming; He has respect to his appearing in those great works of his Power Justice and Grace, which should be in the Destruction of Jerusalem and other extraordinary Providences which should attend it.” John Owen (1721), commenting on Matthew 24, noted the similarities between Christ’s coming in judgment in the first century and His final future coming:

That the language is similar to that in which Christ’s final coming is described, cannot be denied. But that is not strange, when we consider, as has been remarked, that the one event is typical of the other; that his coming to destroy Jerusalem is a

problem believing that Christ came within the lifetime of the generation that heard Him speak, in some sense other than His Second Coming.

representation, faint indeed but real, of his glorious and awful coming to take vengeance upon the finally impenitent, and that language therefore is used of it, which seems appropriately to belong to the final judgment (Todd Dennis [20], 2009).

II. Signs of the Close of the Age

Regarding the time markers and signs which Jesus gave in His Olivet Discourse, one may object, for example, that Matthew 24:14 couldn't have possibly been fulfilled before 70 AD. Here Jesus states that *“this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”* However, it's interesting that Paul told his Roman readers that their faith “is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Romans 1:8). In his epistle to the Colossians he also said that “the word of the truth of the gospel,” which had come to them, had gone to “the entire world” (Colossians 1:6) and had “been proclaimed in all creation under heaven” (verse 23). Devout Jews “from every nation under heaven” heard the gospel in their own languages on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5).

Do these statements not indicate that Matthew 24:14 had already been fulfilled by the time they were written? The phrase “the whole world” here then must mean what it meant in Luke 2:1 when we are told that “the entire world” was registered in the days of Caesar Augustus, i.e. the known world or the Roman Empire (cf. Luke 11:28, Acts 24:5, Romans 16:25). Eusebius (263-339), the early church father whose quotation of Irenaeus' words became pivotal to the late-date theory for Revelation, said this about Matthew 24:14:

Thus, under the influence of heavenly power, and with the divine co-operation, the doctrine of the Saviour, like the rays of the sun, quickly illumined the whole world; [1] and straightway, in accordance with the divine Scriptures, [2] the voice of the inspired evangelists and apostles went forth through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world; the Apostles preached the Gospel in all the world, and some of them passed beyond the bounds of the ocean, and visited the Britannic isles (Dennis Todd [4]; [8], 2009).

Bishop Newton of Brazil (ordained in 1949) says of the spread of the gospel:

It appears from the writers of the history of the church, that before the destruction of Jerusalem the Gospel was not only preached in the *Lesser Asia, and Greece*, and Italy, the great theatres of action then in the world, but was likewise propagated as fax northward as Scythia, as far southward as *Ethiopia*, as far eastward as *Parthia* and India, as far westward as Spain and Britain (Todd Dennis [8], 2009).

John Wesley believed Jesus didn't mean in this verse that the gospel would be preached in all the world “universally” before the end came. He said, “[T]his is not done yet: but in general through the several parts of the world, and not only in Judea [this happened]. And this was done by St. Paul and the other apostles, before Jerusalem was destroyed. *And then shall the end come—Of the city and temple.*” Regarding ‘the end’ that Jesus said would come, then, it's clear that Wesley and other Preterists do not regard this as the end of the world. Kevin Daly (2009) comments:

Jesus' *coming in judgment* would bring about the destruction of the city and the Sanctuary - in the case of the latter, to the removal of its last stone. Daniel prophesied some 530 years earlier that ‘seventy weeks' were decreed ‘for your people and your holy city ... The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the Sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed' (Daniel 9:24, 26b). ‘The end' that Daniel spoke of and the same ‘end of the age' that the disciples refer to in their question [Matthew 24:3], is thus the end precipitated by the destruction of the Sanctuary, not the end of the mortal age, as many conclude.

Daly points out that the events predicted by Jesus in response to the disciples' question were to be land-specific and people-specific, indeed “wrath against this people” (Luke 21:23). Jesus said those days were to be “days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written” (Luke 21:22). He naturally then drew on Old Testament prophecy “regarding the fate of impenitent Israel.” As an example, Daly puts forth the following chart:

MATTHEW 24:6, 14	DANIEL 9:26b
You will hear of wars and rumors of wars ... but the end is not yet.	War will continue until the end.
And there will be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in different places.	And desolations have been decreed.
Then the end will come.	The end will come like a flood.

Daly adds, “We have it on the authority of scripture and history that war and famine ensued from the time of Jesus' crucifixion to the time that the Romans conquered Jerusalem, forty years later. More than ten major earthquakes

were recorded during that time.”²³ John Wesley (1703-1791), reflecting the same viewpoint, wrote the following in the introduction to his commentary on Matthew 24:

Josephus' *History of the Jewish War* is the best commentary on this chapter. It is a wonderful instance of God's providence, that he, an eyewitness, and one who lived and died a Jew, should, especially in so extraordinary a manner, be preserved, to transmit to us a collection of important facts, which so exactly illustrate this glorious prophecy, in almost every circumstance (Todd Dennis [10], 2009).

Regarding wars in this time period, the Roman historian Tacitus had this to say, “The history on which I am entering is that of a period rich in disasters, terrible with battles, torn by civil struggles, horrible even in peace. Four emperors fell by the sword; there were three civil wars, more foreign wars, and often both at the same time” (*The Histories*, 1:2).

George Peter Holford, in the year 1805, wrote a book entitled “The Destruction of Jerusalem.” His work contained many historical details from the time between Jesus’ ascension and Jerusalem’s downfall in 70 AD, which he showed to line up with the prophecies of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Todd Dennis [8], 2009). He writes, for example:

[Jesus commenced] with a caution: "Take heed," says He, "that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, saying, 'I am Christ,' and shall deceive many" [Matthew 24:4-5]. The necessity for this friendly warning soon appeared; for within one year after our Lord's ascension, rose Dositheus the Samaritan, who had the boldness to assert that he was the Messiah, of whom Moses prophesied; while his disciple Simon Magus deluded *multitudes* into a belief that he, himself, was the "GREAT POWER OF GOD."

Holford went on to list a host of similar deceivers in that generation, some who literally called themselves “the Christ” or “Messiah,” and others who promised to take on His expected role in delivering the Jews from Roman bondage and bringing a physical kingdom to Jerusalem. Holford also referred to the great earthquakes which took place during those years, along with terrifying storms and violent winds, the like of which prompted Josephus to say, “It seems as if the system of the world had been confounded for the destruction of mankind; and one might well conjecture that these were signs of no common events.”

Holford then notes that the great famine predicted by Agabus in Acts 11:27-30 began in the fourth year of the reign of Claudius (i.e. 45 AD) and “was of long continuance. It extended through Greece, and even into Italy, but was felt most severely in Judea and especially at Jerusalem, where many perished for want of bread.” This famine was recorded by Eusebius, Orosius, and Josephus, who related that “an assaron [about 3.5 pints] of corn was sold for five drachmae” (in the heyday of ancient Greece in the 4th century BC one drachmae was the daily wage for a skilled worker). This brings to mind Revelation 6:6, where under the third seal judgment it is said that a denarius (or a typical daily wage) would only purchase a quart of wheat. This situation was said by Josephus to have climaxed during the siege on Jerusalem from 67-70 AD. Regarding Christ’s predictions of pestilences, Holford writes:

History...particularly distinguishes two instances of this calamity, which occurred before the commencement of the Jewish war. The first took place at Babylon about A. D. 40, and raged so alarmingly, that great *multitudes* of Jews fled from that city to Seleucia for safety, as hath been hinted already. The other happened at Rome A.D. 65, and carried off prodigious *multitudes*. Both Tacitus and Suetonius also record, that similar calamities prevailed, during this period, in various parts of the Roman empire. After *Jerusalem* was surrounded by the army of Titus, *pestilential* diseases soon made their appearance there to aggravate the miseries, and deepen the horrors of the siege. They were partly occasioned by the immense multitudes which were crowded together in the city, partly by the putrid effluvia which arose from the unburied dead, and partly from spread of *famine*.

Jesus also predicted that there would be “terrors and great signs from heaven” (Luke 21:11) and “signs in sun and moon and stars” (verse 25). In this regard Holford pointed to a number of strange accounts recorded by Josephus, some of which portend to heavenly signs:

[1] "A meteor, resembling a sword, hung over Jerusalem during one whole year." This could not be a comet, for it was stationary, and was visible for twelve successive months.

[2] "On the eighth of the month Zanthicus, (before the feast of unleavened bread) at the ninth hour of the night, there shone round about the altar, and the circumjacent buildings of the temple, a light equal to the brightness of the day, which continued for the space of half an hour." [Does this recall Zech. 14:7?]

[3] "As the High Priest were leading a heifer to the altar to be sacrificed, she brought forth a *lamb*, in the midst of the temple." Such is the strange account given by the historian. Some may regard it as a "Grecian fable," while others may think

²³ A great famine which would cover the entire Roman world was foretold in Acts 11:27-30. The earthquakes took place in Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Colosse, Campania, Rome, Judea and Pompei (February 5, 63 AD). Other earthquakes are recorded in Scripture in Matthew 27:51-54, Matt. 28:2, and Acts 16:26.

that they discern in this prodigy a miraculous rebuke of Jewish infidelity and impiety, for rejecting the ANTITYPICAL Lamb, who had offered Up Himself as an atonement, "once *for all*," and who, by thus completely fulfilling their design, had virtually abrogated the Levitical sacrifices. However this may be, the circumstances of the prodigy are remarkable. It did not occur in an obscure part of the city, but in the *temple*; not at an ordinary time, but at *the passover*, the season of our LORD'S crucifixion in the presence, not of the vulgar merely, but of the *High Priests* and their attendants, and when they were *leading the sacrifice to the altar*.

[4] "About the sixth hour of the night, the eastern gate of the temple was seen to open without human assistance." When the guards informed the Curator of this event, he sent men to assist them in shutting it, who with great difficulty succeeded. -- This gate, as hath been observed already, 'Was of solid brass, and required twenty men to close it every evening. It could not have been opened by a "strong gust of wind," or a *slight* earthquake;" for Josephus says, it was secured by iron bolts And bars, which were let down into a large threshold; consisting of one entire stone."

[5] "Soon after the feast of the Passover, in various parts of the country, before the setting of the sun, chariots and armed men were seen in the air, passing round about Jerusalem."

[6] Josephus relates that one Jesus, the son of Ananus, a rustic of the lower class, during the Feast of Tabernacles, suddenly exclaimed in the temple, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west -- a voice from the four winds- a voice against Jerusalem and the temple -- a voice against bridegrooms and brides -- a voice against the whole people!" These words he incessantly proclaimed aloud both day and night, through all the streets of Jerusalem, for seven years and five months together, commencing at a time (A. D. 62) when the city was in a state of peace, and overflowing with prosperity, and terminating amidst the horrors of the siege. This disturber, having excited the attention of the magistracy, was brought before Albinus the Roman governor, who commanded that he should be *scourged*. But the severest stripes drew from him neither tears nor supplications. As he never thanked those who relieved, so neither did he complain of the injustice of those who struck him. And no other answer could the governor obtain to his interrogatories, but his usual denunciation of "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" which he still continued to proclaim through the city, but especially during the festivals, when his manner became more earnest, and the tone of his voice louder. At length, on the commencement of the siege, he ascended the walls, and, in a more powerful voice than ever, exclaimed, "Woe, woe to this city, this temple, and this people!" And then, with a presentment of his own death, added, "Woe, woe to myself!" He had scarcely uttered these words when a stone from one of the Roman engines killed him on the spot.

Except for the first omen above, says Holford, all the others were placed by Josephus during the final year leading up to the Jewish War (67-73 AD). Some of these accounts were also recorded by the Roman historian Tacitus.

Holford picks up on the phrase spoken by Jesus in Matthew 24:28, "*For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.*" Without being dogmatic on the meaning of this phrase, he notes that not only was Israel fit to be described as a carcass in 70 AD; being spiritually, politically, and judicially dead; but it was also a curious fact that the eagle was the principal figure on the Roman ensigns which were planted throughout the city of Jerusalem and finally in the temple itself. Holford also notes a very sad situation predicted in the words of Jesus Himself:

The day on which Titus encompassed Jerusalem, was the feast of the Passover; and it is deserving of the very particular attention of the reader, that this was the anniversary of that memorable period in which the Jews crucified their Messiah! At this season multitudes came up from all the surrounding country, and from distant parts, to keep the festival. How suitable and how kind, then, was the prophetic admonition of our LORD, and how clearly he saw into futurity when he said, "Let not them that are in the countries enter into Jerusalem (Luke 21:21).

Nevertheless, the city was at this time crowded with Jewish strangers, and foreigners from all parts, so that the whole nation may be considered as having been shut up in one prison, preparatory to the execution of the Divine vengeance; and, according to Josephus this event took place *suddenly*; thus, not only fulfilling the predictions of our LORD, that these calamities should come, like the swift-darting lightning "that cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the West," and " as a *snare* on all of them (the Jews) who dwelt upon the face of the whole earth " (Matt. 24:27, and Luke 21:35,) but justifying, also, his friendly direction, that those who fled from the place should use the utmost possible [speed].

Eusebius, in his work entitled "Proof of the Gospel" (Book III, Chapter VII), written in 314 AD, did not assign these events to the future as Dispensationalists do. Quoting from Christ's words in Matthew 24:19-21, he said:

It is fitting to add to these accounts the true prediction of our Saviour in which he foretold these very events. His words are as follows: "Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day; For there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." ...These things took place in this manner in the second year of the reign of Vespasian, in accordance with the prophecies of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who by divine power saw them beforehand as if they were already present, and wept and mourned according to the statement of the holy evangelists (Todd Dennis [19], 2009).

There is also a logical reason for Preterists as to why Jesus told His listeners to pray that their flight from Jerusalem would not be on a Sabbath (Matthew 24:20). Prior to 70 AD the Jews who controlled the city would close the

city gates on the Sabbath and there would be no way to escape (See Nehemiah 13:15-22). It's significant to note that this is not a practice in modern Israel; if it was, it would be helpful to the Futurist view which says that this will happen soon.

III. The Abomination of Desolation

It is said by a number of futurists that, in the time of Jerusalem's destruction, nothing occurred which may have fulfilled Christ's prophecy of a coming abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel (8:13; 9:26-27, 11:31, 12:11). Of this, Jesus said, "*when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains*" (Matthew 24:15-16). A number of early church writers, however, did teach that the abomination of desolation occurred in the time period of Jerusalem's destruction. These included Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD), Eusebius (263-339) Athanasius (296-372), Augustine (379), Chrysostom (379), Jerome (347-420), and Remigius (437-533). Eusebius, for example, said:

...the many great sieges which were carried on against the cities of Judea, and the excessive sufferings endured by those that fled to Jerusalem itself, as to a city of perfect safety, and finally the general course of the whole war, as well as its particular occurrences in detail, and how at last **the abomination of desolation, proclaimed by the prophets, stood in the very temple of God**, so celebrated of old, the temple which was now awaiting its total and final destruction by fire-- all these things any one that wishes may find accurately described in the history written by Josephus (Dennis [4], 2009).

Sam Storms (2006) is one contemporary pastor and author who believes that the abomination of desolation and the great tribulation are already long past. He says, "[A] careful study of [Matthew 24 and Mark 13] will reveal that 'the abomination of desolation' to which [Jesus] refers, as well as the 'great tribulation,' pertain to the events of 70 a.d."

From Scripture it seems possible that the holy place mentioned by Jesus was not the temple, but Jerusalem, since the entire city was considered holy (Daniel 9:24, Nehemiah 11:1, Matthew 4:5, Matthew 27:53). In Daniel's day the temple was holy, but Jesus had just pronounced it desolate (Matthew 23:38). This was the viewpoint of Chrysostom, who wrote, "For this it seems to me that the abomination of desolation means the army by which the holy city of Jerusalem was made desolate" (recorded in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*). Thomas Newton, in his dissertation titled "The Prophecy of Matthew 24" written in 1753, also took this position (Todd Dennis [12], 2009):

Whatever difficulty there is in these words [in Matthew 24:15-16], it may be cleared up by the parallel place in St. Luke, 'And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains,'-xxi - 20, 21. So that 'the abomination of desolation' is the Roman army, and 'the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place' is the Roman army besieging Jerusalem. This, saith our Saviour, is 'the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet,' in the ninth and eleventh chapters; and so let every one who readeth those prophecies, understand them. The Roman army is called 'the abomination,' for its ensigns and images, which were so to the Jews.

Other commentators roughly contemporary to Thomas Newton held to the same view, i.e. that these words of Jesus were fulfilled in 67-70 AD, also allowing that "the holy place" was not the inner temple but Jerusalem itself. These included John Wesley (1754), Adam Clarke (1837), C. H. (Charles) Spurgeon (1868), and Philip Schaff (1877). For many of these commentators, it was enough of an abomination that the Romans came into Jerusalem bearing standards, emblems, and banners with images of their gods and proclamations of the deity of their emperor.²⁴ B.H. Carroll (1915), in his well-known work, "An Introduction of the English Bible," related an interesting incident which took place during the reign of Tiberius (14-37 AD). This incident sheds light on what was constituted as an abomination at this time:

Pilate, at that time Roman Procurator, sent from Caesarea, the seaport of that country on the Mediterranean Sea, a legion of Roman soldiers and had them secretly introduced into the city and sheltered in the tower of Antonio overlooking the Temple, and these soldiers brought with them their ensigns. The Roman sign was a straight staff, capped with a metallic eagle, and right under the eagle was a graven image of Caesar. Caesar claimed to be divine. Caesar exacted divine worship, and every evening when those standards were placed, the Roman legion got down and worshiped the image of Caesar thereof, and every morning at the roll call a part of the parade was for the whole legion to prostrate themselves before that graven image and worship it. The Jews were so horrified when they saw that image and the consequent worship, they went to Pilate, who was at that time living in Caesarea, and prostrated themselves before him and said, 'Kill us, if you will, but take that abomination of desolation out of our Holy City and from the neighborhood of our holy temple' (pp. 263-264).

²⁴ E.g. Spurgeon said, "This portion of our Savior's words appears to relate solely to the destruction of Jerusalem. As soon as Christ's disciples saw 'the abomination of desolation', that is, the Roman ensigns, with their idolatrous emblems, 'stand in the holy place', they knew that the time for them to escape had arrived, and they did 'flee to the mountains.' The Christians in Jerusalem and the surrounding towns and villages, 'in Judea', availed themselves of the first opportunity for eluding the Roman armies, and fled to the mountain city of Pella, in Perea, where they were preserved from the general destruction which overthrew the Jews (Haynes, 2001).

As we will see later, it's a historical fact that thousands of believers, recalling Jesus' words, did flee to the mountains around 67 AD. According to Remigius, they did so as the Roman army approached, even a couple years before the Romans invaded the temple itself:

[F]or on the approach of the Roman army, all the Christians in the province, warned, as ecclesiastical history tells us [referring to Eusebius], miraculously from heaven, withdrew, and passing the Jordan, took refuge in the city of Pella; and under the protection of that King Agrippa, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles, they continued some time.

IV. No Greater Tribulation Before Or Since

Holford writes that in the final days and hours of the siege on Jerusalem, when the temple was penetrated, many Jews inexplicably forsook the towers of the temple which they had arrogantly deemed to be impenetrable. In a panic, they "sought refuge in caverns and subterraneous passages; in which dismal retreats no less than two *thousand* dead bodies were afterwards found. Thus, as our Lord had predicted, did these miserable creatures, in effect, "*say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the rocks, 'Cover us'* (Luke 23:30; cf. Rev. 6:16)." Even the Roman general Titus recognized the hand of God in Israel's destruction, for he exclaimed, "Had not God himself aided our operations, and driven the Jews from their fortresses, it would have been absolutely impossible to have taken them; for what could men, and the force of engines, have done against such towers as these?"

Josephus vindicates the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:21 ("*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.*") with his own firsthand report: "If the misfortunes of all nations, from the beginning of the world, were compared with those which befell the Jews, they would appear far less in comparison; No other city ever suffered such things, as no other generation, from the beginning of the world, was ever more fruitful in wickedness."

This statement by Jesus is one more indication that the tribulation He spoke of is already past. For if this refers to a yet future time just prior to the Second Coming, and not 67-70 AD, why would Jesus use the phrase "and never will be"? It wouldn't make so much sense to use the expression "and never will be" when referring to an event that brings humanity to the very end of time. Instead this phrase implies that a significant period of time would follow the great tribulation Jesus spoke of, which makes sense if it was completed by 70 AD. The final section will show in more detail how awful that tribulation was.

F. The Man of Lawlessness (II Thessalonians 2)

Just like the seven churches who first received the book of Revelation, Paul wrote to a church in Thessalonica that was under persecution (II Thessalonians 1:4-7). This persecution was evidently coming from the Jews, based on Acts 17:1-13 and I Thessalonians 2:14-16. Also the first Imperial persecution against Christians under Nero had not yet begun, since this book was written around 52 AD.²⁵ The Thessalonians would experience relief from their affliction, they were told, when Jesus came in vengeance, and to be glorified in and marveled at by His people (verses 7-10).

In this regard, Paul writes to a church that was concerned that they had missed this coming, for Paul writes: "*Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to Him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come*" (II Thess. 2:1-2). The nature of their expectation must be considered. For if their expectation of the Lord's coming was that it would be visible, it would bring an end to the world, or it would result in the instant removal of all believers from the earth, it's hard to imagine how they could be led to believe that these things had already occurred. Referring to their concern, David Lowman (2009 [1]) writes:

This Day of the Lord is commonly argued to be the Second Coming, but the context simply does not allow for it. As mentioned in a previous post, it would literally make no sense for the Thessalonians to write a letter asking if the Day of the Lord has passed if the Day of the Lord was the Resurrection or rapture. Should the Thessalonians expect Paul to still be around if the day of the Lord meant "rapture"? If the Day of the Lord truly was understood to be the "rapture" then writing to Paul would be fruitless! Now, if on the other hand, the Thessalonians believed the Day of the Lord to be the coming judgment against apostate Israel, then asking about that event would make sense. And if they had friends or relatives in the Judean area it would easily explain their concern that the Day of the Lord had passed.

²⁵ This date has been determined, in part, because the authors (Paul, Silas, and Timothy; see II Thess. 1:1) were all together in Corinth at that time (Acts 18:5), where Paul dwelt for 18 months (Acts 18:11).

When the term “day of the Lord” is used elsewhere in Scripture, it almost exclusively speaks of an instance of God’s judgment. Therefore, it should be easy enough to conceive of Paul using the term in this text to refer to a day of the Lord against Jerusalem, if that’s what the context demands.

Paul states that two events had to occur before the day of the Lord would come: [1] the rebellion, and [2] the revealing of the man of lawlessness (II Thess. 2:3). Paul reminded the Thessalonians that he had already discussed these things with them in person (verse 5), and his language indicates that we are not given all the details of their conversation. Apparently, Paul had privately discussed with them the identity of the man of lawlessness and the entity that was restraining him, because he says, “*And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time*” (verse 6). This points to a first-century fulfillment, as does Paul’s next statement: “*For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way*” (verse 7).

James Stuart Russell, whose book, *Parousia*, in 1878 had a profound effect on both Charles Spurgeon²⁶ and R.C. Sproul, wrote the following about the immediate relevance of this subject to the Thessalonians (Todd Dennis [26], 2009):

Is it not obvious that whoever the man of sin may be, he must be someone with whom the apostle and his readers had to do? Is he not writing to living men about matters in which they are intensely interested? Why should he delineate the features of this mysterious personage to the Thessalonians if he was one with whom the Thessalonians had nothing to do, from whom they had nothing to fear, and who would not be revealed for ages yet to come? It is clear that he speaks of one whose influence was already beginning to be felt, and whose unchecked and lawless fury would ere [before] long burst forth.

But why does not the apostle speak out frankly? Why this reserve and reticence in darkly hinting what he does not name? It was not from ignorance; it could not be from the affectation of mystery. There must have been some strong reason for this extreme caution. No doubt; but of what nature? Why should he have been in the habit, as he says, of *speaking* so freely on the subject in private, and then *write* so obscurely in his epistle? Obviously, *because it was not safe to be more explicit*. On the one hand, a hint was enough, for they could all understand his meaning; on the other, more than a hint was dangerous, for to name the person might have compromised himself and them...

But how striking are the indications that point to Nero in the year when this epistle was written, say A.D.52 or 53. At that time Nero was not yet ‘manifested;’ his true character was not discovered; he had not yet succeeded to the Empire. Claudius, his step-father, lived, and stood in the way of the son of Agrippina. But that hindrance was soon removed. In less than a year, probably, after this epistle was received by the Thessalonians, Claudius was ‘taken out of the way,’ a victim to the deadly practice of the infamous Agrippina; her son also, according to Suetonius, being accessory to the deed. But ‘the mystery of lawlessness was already working;’ the influence of Nero must have been powerful in the last days of the wretched Claudius; the very plots were probably being hatched that paved the way for the accession of the son of the murderess. A few months more would witness the advent to the throne of the world of a miscreant whose name is gibbeted in everlasting infamy as the most brutal of tyrants and the vilest of men.

Kurt Simmons (2009 [2]) relates that there was no shortage of early church writers who agreed that Paul spoke of events in his own generation:

This has long been recognized as referring to Claudius Caesar and the restraining power of the *religio licita*...²⁷ Victorinus [???-303 AD], in his commentary on the Apocalypse, states: “[John tells us that the beast] was in the kingdom of **the Romans**, and that he was among the **Caesars**. The Apostle Paul also bears witness, for he says to the Thessalonians: ‘Let him who now restraineth restrain, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall appear the **Wicked One**, even he whose coming is after the working of Satan, with signs and lying wonders.’ And that they might know that he should come **who then was the prince**, he adds: ‘He already endeavours after the secret of mischief’ – that is, the mischief which he is about to do he strives to do secretly; but he is not raised up by his own power, nor by that of his father, but by command of God.”

Victorinus here connects the “beast” from the abyss with the Roman empire and the “Wicked One” with the one who was prince when Paul wrote (Nero), and would follow his father (Claudius) to the throne.

Augustine (A.D. 354-430) is even more explicit: “Some think that these words refer to the **Roman empire**, and that the apostle Paul did not wish to write more explicitly, lest he should incur a charge of calumny against the Roman empire, in

²⁶ Russell embraced elements of Hyper-Preterism, but Spurgeon had this to say in his review of Russell’s book: “Though the author’s theory is carried too far, it has so much of truth in it, and throws so much new light upon obscure portions of the Scriptures, and is accompanied with so much critical research and close reasoning, that it can be injurious to none and may be profitable to all” (The Sword and the Trowel [magazine], October 1878 issue).

²⁷ This is Latin for “tolerated religion,” and it meant that adherents of a certain religion could enjoy various benefits under the Roman Empire, including exemption from following the official Imperial Cult. In Paul’s time, Judaism was the only tolerated religion in Rome, although Tiberius (who ruled from 14-37 AD) sought to change this during his time. Claudius (ruler from 41-54 AD), feeling much the same way, actually protected the Christians from the Jews, restraining them from more openly persecuting the Christians as they wished to do. Suetonius records that Claudius even banished the Jews from Rome at one point for rioting over the spread of the Christian faith (cf. Acts 18:2). When Claudius was poisoned by Agrippina, Nero’s mother, Judaism again enjoyed royal favor under Nero. Nero’s wife, Poppaea, was a Jewish proselyte, and Nero himself expressed interest in the Jewish religion.

wishing ill to it when men hoped that it was to be everlasting. So in the words: **‘For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work’** he referred to **Nero**, whose deeds already seemed to be as those of Antichrist” (emphasis in original).

Regarding the identity of the man of lawlessness, also known as the “man of sin” and the “son of perdition,” there has been no end of speculation in history. Aside from 20th and 21st century figures, and various Catholic Popes, more than one 1st century personality has also been tagged as the man of lawlessness. Not all Preterists assume that the man of lawlessness and the beast of Revelation are one and the same. One reason for this is because of the language used in II Thess. 2:4, which says that the man of lawlessness *“opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.”* Nero, who is generally regarded within Preterism as the beast of Revelation, certainly proclaimed himself to be God, but some question whether he was the man of sin because he is not known to have physically entered into the Jerusalem temple.

On the other hand, some have interpreted the phrase “temple of God” to refer to the Church (e.g. Ephesians 2:11-22) rather than to any physical temple. In other words, the man of lawlessness would attempt to usurp the place of God as the object of supreme worship within the Church. This Nero did, of course, but this alone perhaps isn’t proof that Paul wasn’t referring to a physical temple. He could just as well have been referring to the physical temple which still stood in his day, that is, except for one other point of truth. God had already rejected that temple as His own. As Jesus said, *“See, your house is left to you desolate”* (Matthew 23:38). Keeping this statement by Jesus in mind, why would God then refer to the Jerusalem temple as the “temple of **God**”? This interpretation then, of a spiritual temple rather than a physical one, has solid ground to stand upon. Kurt Simmons points out that similar language to that used by Paul is used in the Old Testament, as in this instance regarding the prince of Tyre: *“Thus says the Lord God: Because your heart is proud, and you have said, ‘I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas...’”* (Ezekiel 28:2).

Dispensationalism is surely wrong in saying that Paul had in mind a physical temple which, in our time, has not yet been rebuilt. For one thing, the Thessalonian believers had the ability to know from Jesus’ own prophecies that the temple they were acquainted with would be destroyed in their generation (Matthew 23:29-24:1, 24:3, 24:34; Luke 19:41-44, Luke 21:5-33, etc.). How strange it would have been for them to consider that this temple would later be replaced for the purpose of granting a momentary seat to a lawless individual, one whom they didn’t need to be concerned about because he was generations away from appearing. Also, as noted earlier, any future temple which may still be rebuilt for the purpose of resuming Old Covenant sacrifices would in no sense be God’s temple but would be the ultimate symbol of apostasy and an outright rejection of Christ. It’s a tragedy that many believers today are passionate about seeing such a project come to pass in modern Israel, even to the point of sending millions of dollars to see it happen.

Nero does seem to have been the candidate of choice, though, among many early church writers, as the man of lawlessness spoken of by Paul. Aside from Victorino and Augustine, Chrysostom (347-407 AD) also wrote: *“‘For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work.’ He speaks here of Nero... But he did not also wish to point him out plainly: and this not from cowardice, but instructing us not to bring upon ourselves unnecessary enmities, when there is nothing to call for it”* (Kurt Simmons [2], 2009). Lactantius (260-330 AD), embracing the viewpoint that by “temple of God” Paul was referring to the Church, said that Nero became enraged by the “faithful and steadfast **temple of the Lord**” built through the evangelism of Peter, Paul, and the early Church. So Nero “sprung forward to raze **the heavenly temple** and destroy the true faith” (emphasis added).

Aside from Claudius, the emperor who preceded Nero, another figure who has been suggested as the restrainer²⁸ is Ananus, the high priest who opposed the Zealot-led rebellion against Rome. He is seen to have restrained the Zealots as long as he was in his position. Within a couple months from the time he was removed from his position and replaced by Phannias, who was one of the Zealots’ own men, the Zealots and the Idumeans together slaughtered 12,000 Jews who would not join their cause. Around the same time, they also caused the temple to “overflow with blood” in one particular civil war in which 8,500 were killed in one night. This view either regards the Zealots as a corporate “lawless one,” or their leader, John of Gischala, as the man of lawlessness.

As will be seen in the final section, John led a faction in Jerusalem during the Roman/Jewish War which occupied the Jerusalem temple and turned it into a military fortress. John personally melted down the sacred temple vessels and dishes, poured out the wine and oil which was meant to be poured on the burnt-offerings, and caused the Jews to become drunk from the wine. His behavior provoked Josephus to exclaim that Jerusalem was more worthy of judgment than Sodom ever was, and that such madness was the true cause of the people’s destruction. This was terrible sacrilege from the standpoint of Judaism, of course, but the temple ceremonies were invalid in God’s eyes anyway because Christ had

²⁸ Dispensationalists often assert that the restrainer (II Thess. 2:6-7) is the Holy Spirit, who will be taken out of the way when the Rapture snatches away the Church before a future Tribulation. This creates a dilemma, though, because Dispensationalism also says that there will be a revival during the 7-year Tribulation Period led by 144,000 Jewish evangelists. It’s impossible that such a spiritual harvest, or any salvation at all, could be accomplished without the work of the Holy Spirit.

already gone to the cross. This view of Ananus as the restrainer and John and/or the Zealots as the “man of sin” seems highly unlikely, though, for the simple reason that there is no record of John or any of the other zealots claiming to be God. John also fails as the candidate for the man of lawlessness, in any case, because he survived the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and instead spent the rest of his life in a Roman prison. The true lawless one, Paul said, would be killed by the appearance of Christ’s coming in vengeance (II Thess. 1:8): “*And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of His mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of His coming*” (II Thess. 2:8). Of this language, James Stuart Russell said:

In this significant expression we have a note of the *time* when the man of sin is destined to perish, marked with singular exactitude. It is the coming of the Lord, the Parousia, which is to be the signal of his destruction; yet not the full splendour of that event so much as the first appearance or dawn of it. Alford (after Bengel) very properly points out that the rendering ‘brightness of his coming’ should be ‘the appearance of his coming,’ and he quotes the sublime expression of Milton, ---‘far off His coming shone.’ Bengel, with fine discrimination, remarks, ‘Here the appearance of His coming, or, at all events, *the first glimmerings of His coming, are prior to the coming itself.*’ This evidently implies that the man of sin was destined to perish, not in the full blaze of the Parousia, but at its first dawn or beginning. Now what do we actually find? Remembering how the Parousia is connected with the destruction of Jerusalem, we find that the death of Nero preceded the event. It took place in June A.D. 68, in the very midst of the Jewish war which ended in the capture and destruction of the city and the temple. It might therefore be justly said that ‘the appearance, or dawn, of the Parousia was the signal for the tyrant’s destruction (Todd Dennis [26], 2009).

David Lowman (2009 [1]) points out that the Greek word for the phrase “gathered together,” *episunagoge*, used in II Thess. 2:1, appears three times in the New Testament²⁹: [1] in Matthew 24:31 (“...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.”), [2] here in this passage, [3] and in Hebrews 10:25 (“not neglecting to **meet together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”). In each of these cases the term denotes the fellowship of believers or the gathering of the Church in terms of the spread of the gospel. Lowman notes that, where this term was used in the Olivet Discourse, it was the fall of the temple and Jerusalem that enabled the gospel to be released apart from infringement³⁰ by Jewish authorities. It also accomplished the official separation of Christians and Jews in the eyes of the Roman world.³¹

Before this gathering to Christ was to occur, there was one more event, not yet discussed in any detail, that Paul said had to happen first. There had to be a rebellion. David Lowman again comments:

The Greek word “apostasia” is used here. It can mean rebellion or falling away. Most modern translations have properly identified the proper usage as “rebellion.” This is not to be seen necessarily as a spiritual falling away, but rather a social or political rebellion. It is quite probable that Paul is making the argument that the Day of the Lord’s judgment against Judea will not happen until the rebellion of the zealots has already occurred. We know this began taking place some 15 years or so after the writing of this letter (David Lowman [2], 2009).

The Jewish rebellion against the Romans played a large role in ensuring that Jerusalem would be crushed. This and other related historical events will be examined in the following section.

G. The Historical Events Leading Up to 70 AD

A number of historical events belonging to this time period have already been enumerated in previous sections, but here further details will be added. Some are of a gory nature, but it should be remembered that one purpose of this judgment was to advance the kingdom of God. Jesus said as much in Luke 21:31 when He stated, “*So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.*” John Wesley, in his commentary on this passage, said, “The destruction of the Jewish city, temple, and religion” occurred in order “to make way for the advancement of [God’s] kingdom” (Todd Dennis [10], 2009).

²⁹ It can be argued, though, that a different form of the same root (Greek) word is used several more times in other instances.

³⁰ Whether or not this interpretation is accepted, such infringement is certainly in view in I Thessalonians 2:14-16, where Paul says the Jews “*oppose all mankind by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God’s wrath has come upon them at last!*”

³¹ Hyper-Preterism, or Full Preterism, says that this “gathering together” was a physical resurrection of Old Testament saints as well as the faithful who had died in Christ up until that point, as a parallel to Revelation 20:4-6.

In order to see a basic framework for the historical events leading up to 70 AD, the following is a timeline derived from dates given by Josephus (Todd Dennis [11], 2009),³² and combined with information from sources referenced in this paper. Some commentary is included, as well as related Scripture references as inferred by Preterist sources:

DATE	EVENT(S)
62 AD	James, the brother of Jesus, is martyred in Jerusalem. According to Hegesippus [110-180 AD], the Scribes and Pharisees confronted James and said to him, "We entreat thee, restrain the people; for they are gone astray in regard to Jesus, as if he were the Christ." However, James used his last words on earth to say, "Why do ye ask me concerning Jesus, the Son of Man? He himself sitteth in heaven at the right hand of the great Power, and is about to come upon the clouds of heaven." At that statement, James was thrown off the temple and stoned to death. The believers among the crowd, seeing and hearing his testimony, shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" This prompts the Pharisees to say, "We have done badly in supplying such testimony to Jesus."
Late 62	Jesus, the son of Ananus and a common Roman citizen, came to the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem during a time of great peace and prosperity and began to cry out, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!" He continued to do this for seven years and five months, day and night, in all the lanes of the city, crying out the loudest during the festivals. He was often whipped until his bones were bare, but witnesses say he never shed a tear, only crying out at every lash, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" He was dismissed by the Roman Procurator as a madman.
June 64	Nero reportedly sets fire to Rome, watching the "beauty of the flames" with delight from Mecena's Tower while dressed in actor's clothes and singing of the destruction of Troy. When he is pinned down as guilty by rumors, he places the blame for this fire on the Christians.
November 64	Nero launches an imperial persecution against Christians throughout the empire, and against anyone who would not declare allegiance to him. This proves to be the first and the most intense persecution in Rome's history. Some are covered with the skins of wild beasts and sent into arenas to be torn apart by dogs, while others are crucified. Many others are burned, their bodies first clothed with pitch, paper, and wax, and then fastened to stakes through their throats. At night their bodies are lit up as torches to give light, especially to provide light in Nero's garden so that he could put on circus shows. This time of persecution lasts until Nero's death in June 68, a period of 42 months (cf. Revelation 13:5-7).
65	The elaborate temple renovations begun by Herod the Great in 20 BC are finally completed.
Spring 66	Cestius Gallus reports to Nero on the strength and status of Jerusalem. On Passover 256,500 sacrifices were made, so based on estimates of how many individuals were fed by each lamb Gallus reports that 2.7 million were present for the feast.
April 66	[1] On the 8 th day of Nisan, when great crowds are gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a tremendous light begins to shine around "the altar and the holy house." This happens at 3:00 AM, lasting for half an hour, and it appears to be "bright day time." Many interpret this to be a good sign, perhaps God's favor. [2] At this same festival, a heifer, led by the (false and blasphemous) high priest to be sacrificed, suddenly gives birth to a lamb in the midst of the temple. [3] One night at midnight the eastern gate of the inner court of the temple opens of its own accord. This gate, made of very heavy brass, normally requires the strength of 20 men to open and shut it, and it "had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor." Writes Josephus, "This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy, as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness." [4] A few days after the feast, seen and recorded by multiple witnesses, just before sunset "chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor are seen <i>running about among the clouds</i> ," surrounding the cities.
June 66	At the Feast of Pentecost, the priests who are going at night into the inner court of the temple to perform the sacred duties feel a quaking and hear a great noise. Then they hear "a sound as of a great multitude, saying, 'Let us remove hence.'"
Fall 66	[1] Zealots and Revolutionaries (against Rome) take control of the Jerusalem temple. [2] The

³² One of the best sources containing the complete works of Josephus, including his "War of the Jews" and "Antiquities of the Jews," can be found in the translated work of William Whiston, located here: <http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/JOSEPHUS.HTM>.

	Jewish/Roman War begins in October with a revolt at Caesarea due to a group of Greeks sacrificing birds in front of a local synagogue. The revolt occurred because the Jews were frustrated that the local Roman garrison did not intervene. [3] The High Priest successfully leads a massacre of the Roman garrison stationed in Jerusalem. [4] The Romans in Caesarea slaughter 20,000 Jews. [5] About 13,000 more Jews are put to death in Damascus, Syria.
Late 66/Early 67	[1] Cestius Gallus, the Roman governor of Syria, takes the Twelfth Legion to put down the Jewish rebellion. He plunders and burns the city of Zebulun in Galilee, then moves south to surround Jerusalem. He arrives when most of Judea is gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. Surprisingly, his army is defeated and driven away, with the Romans suffering about 5700 deaths. This gives many Jews confidence that they could overcome any Roman army, and the moderates who advocated maintaining peace with Rome are scorned all the more. [2] Thousands of Christian believers, however, recalling the warnings Jesus gave (e.g. Luke 21:20-21), and also collectively being instructed by a divine oracle, flee to Pella beyond the Jordan River. ³³ It's recorded that not one single believer perished in the siege that would come later. [3] The Jews cease to offer prayers and sacrifices at the temple for Nero, the Roman Emperor.
Early February 67	Rome officially declares war on Israel, and Nero formally commissions Vespasian as his general to lead this war (Revelation 6:2).
Early spring 67	Vespasian marches into Judea with an army of 60,000 men. At least 150,000 Jewish inhabitants of Galilee and Judea are killed in the coming months. Josephus describes Galilee at one point as "filled with fire and blood," and writes that the sea turned to blood near Joppa after a brutal slaughter there, recording also that the Sea of Galilee was filled with dead bodies.
June 29, 67	Paul the Apostle is beheaded in Rome on this day, according to Chrysostom and later records of the eastern and western church. Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, affirms in a letter that Peter is martyred with him, crucified upside down as Christ had foretold (John 21:18-19).
August 67	Josephus is captured by the Romans when Yotapata falls. He surrenders, thus receiving the label of traitor by the Zealots. Josephus is held in Caesaria until 69 AD, and returns with Titus to Jerusalem in 70 AD as an eye-witness to the final siege there.
Fall/Winter 67	Civil War breaks out in Judea between the revolutionaries and those who want peace with Rome. Jerusalem is eventually divided into three factions led by [1] Eleazar, who was over the Zealots [2] John of Gischala, who was over the Galileans, and [3] Simon, who was over the Idumeans. It remains this way until the city is destroyed. ³⁴ Numerous earthquakes occur at this time..
November 67	[1] Gischala was the last city in all of Galilee to be taken by Vespasian and his son, Titus, because it was a farming community. However, John, who was fond of war and most corrupt, had built a wall around it. When Titus arrived with 1000 horsemen, John pretended that he cared about honoring the Sabbath day and persuaded Titus to retreat until the Sabbath was over. However he escaped during the night with all the armed men and many families. The next day Titus the remaining inhabitants came out of the city and embraced Titus as if he was a deliverer, so their lives were spared but they were taken captive. Titus could not catch John before he reached Jerusalem, so in his anger he slew 6000 of the women and children who had followed behind him in the escape. [2] John of Gischala, the enemy of Josephus, arrives in Jerusalem with numerous followers; he proves to be a false prophet as he repeatedly assures everyone that Rome lacks the power to take Jerusalem. He is also the cause of much division and fighting.
Winter 67/68	[1] Guerilla groups make their way to Jerusalem and are welcomed by the populace; [2] Relatives of King Agrippa and other Royalists are executed by the Zealots for supposed treason; [3] The Zealots appoint their own High Priest, Phannias, annulling the previous succession of the high priesthood. Phannias, in the months to come, commits what, to Judaism, are lawless acts of false worship. [4] The people are incited to rebel against the Zealots by prominent men

³³ The timing of this event is based on the testimonies of Eusebius (263-339 AD) and Remigius (437-533 AD), who said that the Christians dwelling in Jerusalem and the surrounding regions fled to Pella beyond the Jordan "on the approach of the Roman army." There are some who suggest that the believers may not have fled during the first approach of the Roman army in late 66/early 67 AD, but rather during the Roman army's second approach in 69/70 AD. They note correctly that Vespasian, having swept through Galilee and Judea and having closed in on Jerusalem by early 68 AD, upon learning of Nero's death in 68 AD then retreated to Rome to deal with the sudden civil war there. It was then his son, Titus, who led the Roman army's second march toward Jerusalem, arriving by April 70 AD. The contention is that the last of the believers may have only fled during this second approach led by Titus.

³⁴ Kurt Simmons (2009 [2]) sees this fact as a fulfillment of Revelation 16:19; "*The great city was split into three parts...*"

	(including Ananus, the former High Priest), but the Zealots, hearing of the plan, strike first. When the people retaliate much bloodshed occurs and the Zealots fall back into the Inner Court and bar themselves inside. [5] Certain Zealot leaders escape and, using deceitful means, persuade 20,000 Idumeans to march on Jerusalem. [6] The Idumeans are kept shut outside the city gates, but a verbal war ensues. Overnight a terrible storm takes place, along with a great earthquake, which Josephus described as “amazing concussions and bellowing of the earth” (Wars 4.4.5). Certain Zealots take advantage of the awful noise to cut through the gates unnoticed. The Idumeans enter, and the Zealots fight from within, and by daybreak 8,500 are dead. The outer temple is said to be “overflowing with blood.” Houses are then looted and their inhabitants killed. The corpses are cast outside the city without burial.
February 68	[1] The Zealots and Idumeans murder 12,000 of their opponents who will not join them, including Ananus and Jesus son of Gamaliel, two former High Priests who had been popular with many people. The Idumeans discover that they were duped by John of Gischala numerous times and decide to leave Jerusalem. Unchecked, the Zealots continue to murder all possible opponents and persons of authority. [2] Vespasian of Rome decides not to attack Jerusalem yet, giving time for the dissension to weaken its inhabitants first. [3] The Zealots ridicule “every dictate of religion” and “scoffed at the oracles of the [Old Testament] prophets as impostor’s tales.” [4] Simon, son of Gioras, leaves Masada, gains a following, and comes to Jerusalem to “proclaim liberty for the slaves and rewards for the free.”
Feb./March 68	Vespasian attacks Gadara before moving on toward Jerusalem.
March/April 68	The Sicarii (assassins) at Masada conduct raids on Judea, including a Passover attack on En Gedi.
June 68	[1] Vespasian reaches the walls of Jerusalem. [2] Nero’s reign ends when he commits suicide. Vespasian, unnerved by this news, loosens his grip on Jerusalem. He is forced to return to Rome to deal with the outbreaks of civil war there. Numerous false prophets in Jerusalem and Judea proclaim God’s favor and deliverance for the Jews. [3] The “Year of Four Emperors” begins, as Nero is succeeded by Galba, Ortho, Vitellius, and finally Vespasian. Rome is in political disarray during this time and teeters on the brink of total collapse. [4] Simon takes control of parts of Judea and clashes with the Zealots. With 20,000 troops he overcomes Idumaea, takes Hebron and begins to ravage the country. When his wife is kidnapped by the Zealots, he attacks Jerusalem in a rage until they give her back.
April 69	Simon drives many Idumean refugees back into Jerusalem.
Spring 69	[1] The Galilean followers of John dress like women (probably during the festival of Purim) and “indulge themselves in feminine wantoness,” while attacking men at random and running them through with swords kept under their gowns. [2] The Idumeans gather together against John and his followers, but the Zealots rush to John’s defense. [3] The chief priests, Idumaeans, and the wealthy in Jerusalem invite Simon to Jerusalem to overthrow John, and Simon is hailed as “their Savior and Protector.” [4] Simon becomes the Master of Jerusalem and attacks the Zealots in the temple. The part of the temple deemed as the Holy Court is filled with lakes of blood and dead carcasses.
June 69	Vespasian resumes his attack on Judea and Jerusalem, retaking areas conquered by Simon as he makes his advance.
Summer 69	A star and a comet, both resembling a sword, appear over the city of Jerusalem, and remain there stationary for a full year, until Jerusalem’s destruction is final.
December 69	[1] Vespasian is declared Emperor in Rome. He dispatches his son Titus to crush Jerusalem. [2] Eleazar the son of Simon breaks from the Zealots, and takes over the Inner temple, planting weapons on top of the gates. [3] The parties of Eleazar, Simon, and John exchange missile fire, making victims of the “worshippers who still come to the Temple from all corners of the Earth,” and “the blood of all manner of corpses formed pools in the courts of God.” [4] John of Gischala foolishly sets fire to the supply warehouses, and nearly all the grain supplies are burned, which would have lasted the city for years. This sets up a massive famine that will prove to be Jerusalem’s undoing. [5] As Titus advances on Jerusalem with four legions of the Roman army (more than 80,000 men), some of the Jews launch successful guerilla warfare-type attacks on his men, attacking quickly and then retreating. [6] Titus arrives and camps with his army at the Mount of Olives. The factions in Jerusalem temporarily stop fighting, only to resume later while

	under the final siege.
April 70	[1] Titus suddenly closes in on Jerusalem and the final siege of begins in full fury, 40 years to the week from the crucifixion of Christ, according to Josephus. This siege is to last for five months. Many had come up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and were unable to escape because they were trapped by the Roman armies. [2] The 10 th Legion of the Romans begins to launch white boulders as heavy as 100 pounds over the city walls into Jerusalem. They are cast by catapults from Roman engines from a distance of up to two furlongs (a quarter mile) away. Josephus records that the watchmen on the wall, if they saw them coming, would shout, “The Son cometh!” ³⁵ After a while the Romans learned to blacken the stones so that they couldn’t as easily be detected, and thus many were crushed by these stones. [3] Jesus, the son of Ananus, is killed by a large stone flung from one of the Roman engines. He had loudly and repeatedly prophesied Jerusalem’s destruction throughout the city for seven years and five months. Just before he was struck, he cried out with great force, “Woe, woe to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house! Woe, woe to myself also!”
April 10-14, 70	The Roman armies, situated some distance outside of Jerusalem, begin leveling the ground between them and the city walls. This is completed in four days.
Mid-late April 70	The Romans begin to bombard the city with missiles, shot from their siege towers. Titus begins to pound the third (outer) wall with his battering rams.
April 29, 70	One of the Roman battering rams breaches the third wall.
May 25, 70	The Romans completely bypass the third wall and capture the New City northwest of the temple.
May/June 70	[1] The Romans bypass the second wall; the Jews retreat behind the first wall. [2] Titus divides his army and they try to attack the first wall and the Fortress of Antonia at the same time, but fail. [3] Within three days Titus and his army cast a trench around Jerusalem, and the entire city is enclosed with a new wall, nine miles in length. All available timber within a 10-mile radius around Jerusalem is used, and the entire area is stripped bare of foliage. [4] Titus challenges the Jewish fanatics to let the citizens go, promising that they would receive their houses back in time, but the fanatics instead begin to execute any caught discussing the idea of surrender. Their bodies are mutilated and thrown over the wall to the Romans. [5] Titus, making his rounds, sees the valleys full of dead bodies and groans with his hands spread toward the sky, calling heaven as a witness that these deaths were not his doing but “were the sad case of the city itself.”
Summer 70	[1] In the city, dead bodies are piled up in heaps, the result of famine and civil war. Some of the mansion houses are used as body depositories. The stench of decomposing bodies fills the city. [2] Robbers plunder the city houses at will, thrusting some of the starving ones through with their swords for sheer pleasure. However, writes Josephus, those who asked to be killed in order to escape their misery were laughed at and left alone to suffer. Most of them died with their eyes fixed on the temple, as if they hoped until the end that the temple itself could save them. [3] During the siege many desperate Jews tried to escape Jerusalem, mostly men who left behind their wives and children thinking they alone could escape unnoticed. However, writes Josephus (Jewish Wars, Book 5, Chapter 6), they were caught by the thousands, whipped, tortured by various means, and crucified just outside the city walls at a rate of 500 crucifixions per day. Titus took pity on these victims, but didn’t interfere because he hoped that the inhabitants (who could see this going on) would surrender in order to avoid a similar fate. In the end, being that there weren’t enough crosses and scarcely room for all of them in any case, more than one Jew was often nailed to the same cross.
Late June/July 70	[1] The Romans breach part of the first (inner) wall with their battering rams, but discover to their dismay that the rebel forces under John have built another inner wall behind it. [2] The Romans take their fight all the way to the temple gates, but meet fierce resistance and are forced to retreat. [3] On July 18 th , the Jews set a fire trap in the walkway connecting the temple and the

³⁵ J. Stuart Russell, in his 1878 book titled *The Parousia*, offers this explanation (p. 482): “It could not but be well known to the Jews that the great hope and faith of the Christians was the speedy coming of the Son. It was about this very time, according to Hegesippus [110-180 AD], that St. James, the brother of our Lord, publicly testified in the temple that ‘the Son of man was about to come in the clouds of heaven,’ and then sealed his testimony with his blood [in 62 AD]. It seems highly probable that the Jews, in their defiant and desperate blasphemy, when they saw the white mass hurtling through the air, raised the ribald cry, ‘The Son is coming,’ in mockery of the Christian hope of the Parousia” (Todd Dennis [23], 2009).

	Fortress of Antonia. These Jews pretend to retreat, luring the Roman soldiers into the walkway and into the fire trap. Many Roman troops are burned.
July 22, 70	[1] The Fortress of Antonia falls to Titus. [2] Around this time (the 17 th of Tammuz) the daily sacrifice of the Jews fails, as recorded by Josephus in Wars, VI, 2.1., greatly troubling the Jewish people: “[T]he last lamb was gone and not even a handful of flour was left in the city. Thus the sacrifice ended and the fire on the altar was extinguished.”
July 29, 70	Earthworks are completed, and Titus and his troops approach the temple outer courtyard from the west. The Romans try to scale the temple walls with ladders, but fail. As a last resort, Titus orders his troops to set fire to the temple gates, but to spare the temple itself. [2] Since the time of the initial invasion and withdrawal of Cestius Gallus at the end of 66 AD, a time period of roughly three years and seven months has transpired, or 1,290 days if each year is reckoned as 360 days (cf. Daniel 12:12).
July 31, 70	[1] The Romans burn the gates and enter the temple courtyards. Despite the orders of Titus to spare the temple, it is burnt to the ground on the exact same day and month as the previous temple had been burnt by the Babylonians in 586 BC. The flames are so great that from a distance, the entire city of Jerusalem appears to be on fire. [2] Old Covenant Judaism ceases to be intact from this point forward. History records that Judaism has never been the same since, and that religious Jews, having no central temple, have ever since been unable to obey the stipulations which required the presence of the temple. [3] Surviving Jews flee the temple and go into the city to continue the fight from there or to search for hiding places. [4] The victorious Romans carry the idolatrous standards of their legions into the temple courtyards and make sacrifices to them there.
Aug/Sept 70	[1] Surviving Jews retreat to the Upper City of Jerusalem, where many continue to plunder, ambush, and assault their fellow Jews. The victims are too weakened by famine to resist, and quite a few are killed senselessly. Josephus tries to persuade them to surrender to the Romans and spare what is left of the city, but he is laughed at. Josephus records that some put on happy faces “in expectation, as they said, of death to end their miseries.” [2] Many Jews seek refuge in the caves and underground caverns, hoping to remain hidden once the Romans would reach the Upper City. However, Josephus records: “This was no better than a dream of theirs; for they were not able to lie hid either from God or from the Romans” (cf. Revelation 6:15-17). [3] The Romans burn the Lower City, assault Herod’s Palace, and prepare to enter the Upper City. They are once again forced to build earth ramps, which are completed on August 27. The next day the whole city is burning. Josephus estimates the death toll in Jerusalem to be 1,197,000. Most of the surviving Jews are sold into international slavery (cf. Luke 21:24), a total of 97,000.
September 14, 70	[1] With all resistance ended, and cleanup complete, Titus leaves Jerusalem for Caesarea. [2] Since the time of the initial invasion and withdrawal of Cestius Gallus, a time period of three years, eight months, and 15 days has transpired, or 1,335 days (cf. Daniel 12:12).
Late 70-Early 73	[1] Those who had managed to escape from Jerusalem during its final overthrow create pockets of resistance around the Dead Sea areas, including at the hill fortress of Masada. [2] Titus throws two birthday parties, one for his brother (Domitian) and one for his father. As entertainment, Jewish captives are forced to fight beasts or each other, and others are burnt. At least 2500 are killed in this manner in the first party, and an even greater “multitude” in the second party.
April 8, 73	Masada is taken by the Romans and the last of the Jewish refugees, 960 individuals, commit mass suicide rather than surrender to the Romans. This is accomplished by the men first killing their own wives and children, then killing all but 10 among themselves, according to the lots they had cast. Nine of the final 10 are killed by one last man, who sets fire to the palace and then plunges himself through with a sword. This account is related to Josephus by two women who survive by hiding inside a cistern with five children.
May 20, 73	The last of the territories of Israel is sold off, leaving no trace of the Jewish homeland, its territories, or its temple in Jewish hands. Since the initial invasion and withdrawal of Cestius Gallus, a time period of just over six years and four months has transpired (cf. Daniel 8:14, regarding “2,300 evenings and mornings”).

Before enumerating some of the above events in more detail, it should be pointed out that some Preterists believe that the time references in Daniel of 1290, 1335, and 2300 days (Daniel 8:13-14; 12:11-12) found their fulfillment in the

siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the desolation of all Israel. This is not least because Daniel was told that “*when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end*” all the wonders he had seen would be finished (Daniel 12:6-7). Even though a large portion of chapter 11 speaks in detail of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (215-164 BC), ruler of the Seleucid realm, and his attacks on Egypt about 240 years earlier,³⁶ it was the events of the Roman/Jewish War (67-73 AD) which epitomized “*the shattering of the power of the holy people.*”³⁷

Also, as Ed Meelhuysen (1992), a Futurist, points out, precisely three lunar years transpired between the defiling of the temple (the sacrifice of a pig on the altar and the setting up of a statue of Zeus in the temple) on 25 Chislev 167 BC³⁸ and the cleansing and restoration of the temple by Judas Maccabees and other zealous Jews on 25 Chislev 164 BC. Therefore, the time range within which these (and other related) events took place falls short of all the time references in Daniel by at least six months.

Preterists and Futurists alike agree that Daniel does foretell Jerusalem’s destruction, if nowhere else, then at least in his pivotal 70-Weeks prophecy (Daniel 9:26b). Preterists would maintain that the “*time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time*” (Daniel 12:1) also refers to 67-70 AD, as does the reference to “*a time, times, and half a time*” (verse 7),³⁹ and the reference to the regular burnt offering being taken away (Daniel 8:11-14, 12:11). Regarding this offering, Philip Mauro quotes the following from Josephus to show that it was taken away at the very end of the final siege on Jerusalem, i.e. late July 70 AD (Todd Dennis [21], 2009):

And now Titus gave orders to his soldiers that were with him to dig up the foundations of the tower of Antonia, and make a ready passage for his army to come up, while he himself had Josephus brought to him; for he had been informed that, on that very day, which was the seventeenth day of Panemus, the sacrifice called ‘the daily sacrifice’ had failed, and had not been offered to God for want of men to offer it; and that the people were grievously troubled at it (Wars, VI. 2.1.).⁴⁰

John Denton, of the UK-based Bible Research and Investigation Company, offers the following chart in an effort to show that these time references played out precisely as stated in the Jewish/Roman War (Todd Dennis [18], 2009):⁴¹

.....

³⁶ Philip Mauro, in his 1921 publication, “The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation” (pages 53-63) makes a fascinating and compelling case for Herod being the king spoken of in Daniel 11:36-45, i.e. the same Herod who killed all the male children in Bethlehem and the surrounding region in an effort to destroy Jesus (cf. Daniel 11:37a, 44). This publication can be viewed in its entirety here: http://www.preteristarchive.com/Books/pdf/1921_mauro_seventyweeks.pdf.

³⁷ In order for this prophecy to remain unfulfilled, i.e. awaiting a future fulfillment as Futurists say, it must be demonstrated that ethnic Jews are still God’s holy people. This is, in fact, a common premise of Dispensationalism. The New Testament, however, identifies the Church as God’s holy people (e.g. I Peter 2:4-10) and unbelieving Jews (and, by implication, unbelieving Gentiles also) by such unsavory titles as the synagogue of Satan (e.g. Revelation 2:9, 3:9).

³⁸ The abolishing of the daily sacrifices took place only 10 days prior to the sacrifice of the pig, on 15 Chislev 167 BC, according to I Maccabees 1:54-60 and 4:52. See Daniel 8:11 and Daniel 12:11.

³⁹ Philip Mauro, anticipating the trouble many would have assigning Daniel 12:2 to the past, makes this observation: “The words ‘and many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,’ etc. are commonly taken as referring to the bodily resurrection of the dead, and this is one reason why the entire passage is frequently relegated to the future. But there is nothing said here about either death or resurrection.” He goes on to point out that such language was commonly used in Scripture to denote a spiritual awakening (e.g. Isaiah 9:2, 29:10; Matthew 4:14-16; and especially John 5:25 and Ephesians 5:14). Not all who would be awakened would be saved, reminiscent of Christ speaking of those who would and wouldn’t receive Him (cf. John 3:16, 18, 36). The turning of many to righteousness and the running to and fro (Daniel 12:3-4), says Mauro, speaks of the rapid spread of the gospel in the time of the apostles and the early Church.

⁴⁰ In view of the wording in Daniel 12:11, notes Mauro, it could appear that these events happened in the reverse order. That is, Daniel seems to suggest that the offering is taken away at the beginning of the 1290 days, and the abomination of desolation is set up at the end of those days. Historically speaking, and by comparing Luke 21:20 with Matthew 24:15, the desolation of Jerusalem occurred in late 66 AD when the Roman armies first surrounded her, precisely 43 months (or 1290 days) before the daily offering was taken away. That these events appear to be reversed is not an issue, says Mauro, quoting from the 19th century scholar James Farquharson who said regarding this verse that “there is nothing whatever in the verbs of the sentence to indicate which of the events should precede the other; the interval of time between them only is expressed.”

⁴¹ The historical dates used by John Denton are based on *The Complete Works of Josephus* (Kregel Publications: Grand Rapids (Michigan), 1981).

THREE CONCURRENT TIME PERIODS OF DANIEL

-Romans appear & withdraw -Signals time to flee	-Temple destroyed	-Happy are the ones arriving at this point	-Sanctuary restored to right state [earthly kingdom/Old Covenant system vanishes]
End December 66 AD	July 31, 70 AD	September 14, 70 AD	May 20, 73 AD
←----- 1,290 days -----→	←-----45 days-----→		
Period of escaping (Jan 1, 67 – July 31, 70) (3 years, 7 months)	Jerusalem searched and burned; Jews killed or sold	Israeli territories sold off	
←----- 1,335 days -----→			
(Jan 1, 67 – Sept 14, 70) (3 years, 8 months, 15 days)			
←----- 2,300 days -----→			
(January 1, 67—May 20, 73) (6 years, 4 months, 20 days)			

Daniel 8:13; 12: 8, 11 **Daniel 12:11** **Daniel 12:12** **Daniel 8:14**

George Peter Holford, in his 1805 book titled “The Destruction of Jerusalem,” wrote that Nero was the one who appointed Vespasian (assisted by his son, Titus) to prosecute the war against the Jews (Todd Dennis [8], 2009). In early spring 67 AD, which was 3.5 years before Jerusalem’s final downfall, Vespasian first entered Judea with a 60,000-member army. In the campaign which was to follow he destroyed at least 150,000 inhabitants of Galilee and Judea, along with many towns. One of the first towns Vespasian crushed was Joppa, because its inhabitants had provoked his men by their frequent piracies at sea. The Jews there tried to flee from Vespasian on their ships, but Vespasian was helped by a tremendous storm that blew in just as they began to flee. Their vessels were crushed against each other and against the rocks, and when this slaughter was complete more than 4,200 bodies were strewn along the coast and a very long stretch of the coast was stained with blood.

Eusebius records that when Vespasian began to close in on Jerusalem, believers living there received a sign, “given by revelation to those in Jerusalem who were ‘approved,’ bidding them leave the doomed city and settle in Pella” (F.F. Bruce, 1983, p. 375). Pella was a community on the other side of the Jordan River in modern day Jordan. This perhaps calls to mind the sign of the woman and the dragon in Revelation 12: “...and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days; And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time” (Rev. 12:6, 13-14). Pella is indicated by the number “2” on the map.

Vespasian pulled back in his campaign to take over Jerusalem when he was informed of Nero’s death in June 68 AD. Yet the people there did not repent of their wicked ways and instead, as Josephus and Tacitus reported in detail, their evil deeds increased. Civil war among the Jews resulted in thousands being murdered at a time, their bodies often left unburied. Holford writes about one such slaughter:

Atthirst for blood, and inflamed by revenge, they spared neither age, sex, nor infancy; and the morning beheld *eight thousand five hundred* dead bodies lying in the streets of the holy city. They plundered every house, and having found the chief priests Ananius and Jesus, not only slew them, but,



insulting their bodies, cast them forth unburied. They slaughtered the common people as unfeeling as if they had been a herd of the vilest beasts... Such as fled were intercepted and slain: their carcasses lay in heaps on all the public roads: every symptom of pity seemed utterly extinguished, and with it, all respect for authority, both human and divine.

At the same time, there were bands of robbers and murderers plundering towns and homes throughout Judea, also not sparing even women or children. Simon, son of Gioras, the commander of one of these bands, entered Jerusalem and began a third faction in addition to the two who were already engaged in senseless warfare. The city was in anarchy, as it was divided into three sections under the following leaders: [1] Eleazar, the son of Simon, leader of the Zealots [2] John of Gischala, a Galilean partisan and Zealot leader [3] Simon Gioras, leader of the priestly party. Writes Holford:

The three factions, rendered frantic by drunkenness, rage, and desperation, trampling on heaps of slain, fought against each other with brutal savageness and madness. Even such as brought sacrifices to the temple were murdered. The dead bodies of priests and worshippers, both natives and foreigners were heaped together, and a lake of blood stagnated in the sacred courts. John of Gischala, who headed one of the factions, burnt storehouses full of provisions; and Simon, his great antagonist, who headed another of them, soon afterwards followed his example. Thus they cut the very sinews of their own strength. At this critical and alarming conjuncture, intelligence arrived that the Roman army was approaching the city.

In the absence of believers in Jerusalem, Josephus writes of many rampant and callous evil acts taking place (Todd Dennis [13], 2009). These included sacrilegious activities taking place in the temple, committed by the Jews, things which even the Roman emperors wouldn't have done:

But as for John [one of the Jewish leaders], when he could no longer plunder the people, he betook himself to sacrilege, and melted down many of the sacred utensils, which had been given to the temple; as also were many of those vessels which were necessary for such as ministered about holy things, - the caldrons, the dishes, and the table; nay, he did not abstain from those pouring-vessels that were sent them by Augustus and his wife; for the Romans emperors did ever both honour and adorn this temple; ...on which account he emptied the vessels of that sacred wine and oil which the priests kept to be poured on the burnt-offerings, and which lay in the inner court of the temple, and distributed it among the multitude, who, in their anointing themselves and drinking, used [each of them] above an hin of them; and here I cannot but speak my mind, and what the concerns I am under dictates to me, and it is this: - I suppose that had the Romans made any longer delay in coming against these villains, the city would either have been swallowed up by the ground opening upon them, or been overflowed by water,

or else been destroyed by such thunder as the country of Sodom perished by, for it had brought forth a generation of men much more atheistical that were those that suffered such punishments; for by their madness it was that all the people came to be destroyed.



This description by Josephus may perhaps bring to mind the latter part of Revelation 6:6, which says, "...do not harm the oil and wine!" In a way that is reminiscent of this same passage (Rev. 6:5-6), Josephus writes of the dire conditions that came about in Jerusalem due to famine. This escalated when the Romans finally broke through two of the three walls which surrounded the city. Even while under siege, the pitiful situation of the Jews caused them to turn on each other in almost unthinkable ways:

It was now a miserable case, and a sight that would justly bring tears into our eyes, how men stood as to their food, while the more powerful had more than enough, and the weaker were lamenting [for want of it]; ...insomuch that children pulled the very morsels that their fathers were eating out of their very mouths, and what was still more to be pitied, so did the mothers do as to their infants; and when those that were most dear were perishing under their hands, they were not ashamed to take from them the very last drops that might preserve their lives: and while they ate after this manner, yet were they not concealed in so doing; but the seditious everywhere came upon them immediately, and snatched away from them what they had gotten from others; for when they saw any house shut up, this was to them a signal that the people within had gotten some food; whereupon they broke open the doors, and ran

in, and took pieces of what they were eating almost up out of their very throats, and this by force: the old men, who held their food fast, were beaten; and if the women hid what they had within their hands, their hair was torn for so doing; nor was there any commiseration shown either to the aged or to the infants, but they lifted up children from the ground as they hung upon the morsels they had gotten, and shook them down upon the floor. But still they were more barbarously cruel to those that had prevented their coming in, and had actually swallowed down what they were going to seize upon, as if they had been unjustly defrauded of their right. They also invented terrible methods of torments to discover where any food was, and they were these to stop up the passages of the privy parts of the miserable wretches, and to drive sharp stakes up their fundament; and a man was forced to bear what it is terrible even to hear, in order to make him confess that he had but one loaf of bread, or that he might discover a handful of barley-meal that was concealed.

Holford remarks that Jesus was just in His words when He said, “*And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days*” (Matthew 24:19). Josephus also told of one mother who roasted her own infant son and ate half of him, offering the other half to her neighbor. He mentions at one point seeing more than 600,000 dead bodies thrown out of the city gates, due to famine and other causes. It was common for whole families to perish, he said, and tomb-robbing was also rampant. At one point an individual attempted to desert the city, but he was caught with gold that he had swallowed in an attempt to smuggle it out. Suspecting that others were trying to do the same, the Romans killed and ripped open the stomachs of more than 2000 individuals in one night. Josephus (Jewish War 5:13:4) writes that some escaped from Jerusalem during the final siege by jumping from the wall and fleeing to the Romans. However, being extremely ravaged by famine, they failed to restrain their appetites and quickly ate so much that they literally caused their bodies to burst open.

The starvation in Jerusalem was especially severe because so many Jews from the countryside foolishly tried to take refuge there, against the advice of Jesus (Luke 21:21). They also had come up from various nations for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The famine grew so bad that, records Holford, the “Jews, for want of food were at length compelled to eat their belts, their sandals, the skins of their shields, dried grass, and even the ordure [dung] of oxen.” When a woman was discovered to have eaten half of her own child, the Roman soldiers were horrified and “the whole city stood aghast, and poured forth their congratulations on those whom death had hurried away from such heartrending scenes.” Josephus declared that if there had not been many credible witnesses of this event he would not have recorded it because “such a shocking violation, never having been perpetuated by any Greek or barbarian, the insertion of it might have diminished the credibility of his history.” Yet these things fulfilled what was spoken by Moses at the end of giving the Law to the people, when he stated what would happen if they forsook the path of obedience:

The man who is the most tender and refined among you will begrudge food to his brother, to the wife he embraces, and to the last of the children whom he has left, so that he will not give to any of them any of the flesh of his children whom he is eating, because he has nothing else left, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in all your towns. The most tender and refined woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because she is so delicate and tender, will begrudge to the husband she embraces, to her son and to her daughter, her afterbirth that comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears, because lacking everything she will eat them secretly, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in your towns (Deut. 28:54-57).

Late in the siege on Jerusalem the Romans used engines called “ballistas” equipped with strong catapults which were capable of launching boulders weighing between 75-160 pounds in weight. According to Josephus, when the assault first began these boulders, some a quarter mile wide, could be seen coming because they were white in color. The Romans soon modified them to be black in color, and the slaughter of the Jews in this way became much more effective. These missiles killed many priests and worshippers in the temple and even at the altar itself because, writes Josephus, “despite war, the sacrifices went on.” They came “from all over the earth,” says Josephus, because they deemed the temple and the city to be holy. Revelation 16:19-21 speaks of hailstones falling out of heaven, with each stone weighing about 100 pounds. The Roman boulders, being white in color, would have resembled giant hailstones falling from the sky.⁴²

⁴² Preterists have taken some flak for suggesting that this historic event fulfilled the prophecy of one-hundred pound hailstones, because this would mean a non-literal fulfillment. Gary DeMar (2008) responds, “Benware and other dispensationalists claim that the only way Revelation can be interpreted is literally. Let’s put their standard to the test. “The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters” (Rev. 8:10). If one star hits the earth, the earth will be vaporized in an instant. In fact, if a star gets even close to the earth, the earth is going to burn up before it hits. Then there’s Revelation 8:12: “Then the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten, so that a third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.” How can a “third of the sun” be smitten without catastrophic results on the whole earth and not just a third of it? All of this language is drawn from the Old Testament and only has meaning as it is interpreted in light of its Old Testament context—the judgment and destruction of nations (Isa. 14:12; Jer. 9:12–16). To ignore how a passage is used in the Old Testament is like trying to interpret Egyptian hieroglyphics without the Rosetta Stone.”

In the end, after months of failed attempts, the Romans at last succeeded in penetrating the final wall surrounding Jerusalem. Records Josephus (William Whiston [2], 2009), “A false prophet was the occasion of the people’s destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance.” Another remarkable event occurred, says Tacitus: “In the sky appeared a vision of armies in conflict, of glittering armour. A sudden lightening flash from the clouds lit up the Temple. The doors of the holy place abruptly opened, a superhuman voice was heard to declare that the gods were leaving it, and in the same instant came the rushing tumult of their departure.”

Titus, the son of Vespasian, had determined to spare the temple as an ornament to the Roman Empire. In a speech to the Jews defending the city, he had said, “I appeal to my own army, and the Jews that are now with me, and even to you yourselves, that I do not force you to defile this sanctuary; and if you will but change the place whereon you will fight, no Roman shall either come near your sanctuary, or offer any affront to it; nay, I will endeavor to preserve you your holy house, whether you will or not” (*The Wars of The Jews*, 6:2:4).

However, a Roman soldier, ignoring his words because he was urged on by a “divine impulse,” threw a flaming stick into a window of the temple, setting it on fire. The Jews instantly rushed in and tried in vain to extinguish the flames. Titus also shouted for help in stopping the fire, but his own men helped only to spread them wider. Writes Holford,

They rushed furiously upon [the Jews], slaying some with the sword, trampling others under their feet, or crushing them to death against the walls. Many, falling amongst the smoking ruins of the porches and galleries, were suffocated. The unarmed poor, and even sick persons, were slaughtered without mercy. Of these unhappy people numbers were left weltering in their gore. Multitudes of the dead and dying were heaped round about the altar, to which they had formerly fled for protection, while the steps that led from it into the outer court were literally deluged with their blood... The Romans, exasperated to the highest pitch against the Jews, seized every person whom they could find, and, without the least regard to sex, age or quality, first plundered and then slew them. The old and the young, the common people and the priests, those who surrendered and those who resisted, were equally involved in this horrible and indiscriminate carnage. Meanwhile the Temple continued burning, until at length, vast as was its size, the flames completely enveloped the whole building; which, from the extent of the conflagration, **impressed the distant spectator with an idea that the whole city was now on fire.** The tumult and disorder which ensued upon this event, it is impossible (says Josephus) for language to describe. The Roman legions made the most horrid outcries; the rebels, finding themselves exposed to the fury of both fire and sword, screamed dreadfully; while the unhappy people who were pent up between the enemy and the flames, deplored their situation in the most pitiable complaints. Those on the hill and those in the city seemed mutually to return the groans of each other. Such as were expiring through famine, were revived by this hideous scene, and seemed to acquire new spirits to deplore their misfortunes. The lamentations from the city were re-echoed from the adjacent mountains, and places beyond Jordan. The flames which enveloped the Temple were so violent and impetuous, that the lofty hill on which it stood appeared, even from its deep foundations, as one large body of fire. The blood of the sufferers flowed in proportion to the *rage of this destructive* element; and the number of *the* slain exceeded all calculation. The ground could not be seen for the dead bodies, over which the Romans trampled in pursuit of the fugitives; while the crackling noise of the devouring flames mingled with the clamor of arms, *the groans of the dying* and *the shrieks of despair*, augmented the tremendous horror of a scene, to which the pages of history can furnish no parallel.

The smoke of Jerusalem’s burning was indeed seen by those who stood afar off and who were out at sea (Revelation 18:17-18). Ivan Lewis writes (Todd Dennis [24], 2009), “No one believed that God would permit His Temple to be destroyed, and when this finally did happen, everyone within the city, men and women, young and old, were crazed with despair. Thousands cast themselves into the fire while others fell on their own swords.”

The Romans then hoisted their own idol-covered banners at every key point of the temple area, and plundered and burned the houses in the city. They murdered by the sword every Jew they could find, man, woman, and child. Their only compassion was for the dead, whom they encountered in mass numbers in many of the houses, mostly victims of the famine. Josephus writes, “But although they had this commiseration for such as were destroyed in that manner, yet had they not the same for those that were still alive, but they ran every one through whom they met with, and obstructed the very lanes with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood, to such a degree indeed that the fire of many houses was quenched with these men’s blood” (*The Wars Of The Jews*, 6:8:5).

The amount of blood that flowed, not only in Jerusalem but also throughout the surrounding region, could possibly bring to mind a passage like Revelation 14:19-20, which says, “*So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse’s bridle, for 1,600 stadia [about 184 miles].*” This was the understanding of John Wesley (1703-1791) who, in his commentary on this passage, wrote:

And the winepress was trodden - By the Son of God, Rev 19:15. *Without [outside] the city* - Jerusalem. They to whom St. John writes, when a man said, ‘the city,’ immediately understood this. *And blood came out of the winepress, even to the*

horses' bridles - So deep at its first flowing from the winepress! One thousand six hundred furlongs - So far! At least two hundred miles, **through the whole land of Palestine.**

Wesley, like many today, tied this passage (Rev. 14:19-20) to Rev. 19:11-21, and rightly so. This is often referred to as the “Battle of Armageddon,” which Tim LaHaye and other Futurist authors generally say will happen in the plain of Megiddo. Author John Noe, on the other hand, notes that what the Bible refers to as a “*battle on the great day of God the Almighty*” (Rev. 16:14) would transpire “*at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon*” (Rev. 16:16). In Hebrew it’s actually “Har-Magedon,” as “har” means mountain in Hebrew (“Armageddon” is based on the Greek rendering, since “h” is silent in Hebrew). Therefore, this battle was to take place primarily on a mountain, not in a valley. Noe adds,

The most likely case is that Revelation’s “Har” is Jerusalem. Geographically, Jerusalem sits on top of a mountain. To get there from any direction one must go “up to Jerusalem” (2 Sam. 19:34; 1 Ki. 12:28; 2 Ki. 18:17; 2 Chron. 2:16; Ezra 1:3; 7:7; Zech. 14:17; Matt. 20:17, 18; Mark 10:32, 33; Luke 18:31; 19:28; John 2:13; 5:1; Acts 11:2; 15:2; 21:12, 15; 24:11; 25:9; Gal. 1:17, 18). Jerusalem is also called God’s “holy mountain” (Psa. 43:3) and the “chief among the mountains” (Isa. 2:2-3; also 14:13; Exod. 15:17; Joel 2:32; 3:16-17)... “Magedon/Megiddo” may also be comparative imagery. A great slaughter once took place in the valley of *Megiddo* (2 Ki. 9:27; Zech. 12:11). Throughout ancient history, this valley was also a favorite corridor for invading armies and the scene of numerous famous battles (Jud. 4-7; 1 Sam. 29-31; 2 Sam. 4; 1 Ki. 9:15; 2 Ki. 9-10; 22; 2 Chron. 35). So much blood was shed in this valley of Jezreel or Megiddo that it became a synonym for slaughter, violence, bloodshed, and battlefield, as well as a symbol for God’s judgment (Hos. 1:4-5). In our day, Armageddon has also become synonymous with and a symbol for the ultimate in warfare and conflict.

In a similar fashion, the word “Waterloo” has garnered a symbolic use. Back in 1815, this town in Belgium was the battleground and scene of Napoleon’s final defeat. Today, we have a saying that some one or some thing has met their “Waterloo.” We don’t mean they have met that city in Europe. We mean, by way of comparative imagery, that they have met a decisive or crushing defeat, or their demise. I suggest Revelation employs the word Magedon/Megiddo in this same manner. History records that a great slaughter took place on a mountain in Palestine within the lifetime of the original recipients of the book of Revelation. In A.D. 70 the Roman armies of Titus totally destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. According to Eusebius, 1.1million Jews were killed (Todd Dennis [15], 2009).

Josephus goes on to say, “Now as soon as the army had no more people to slay or plunder, because there remained none to be the objects of their fury, Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited” (*The Wars Of The Jews*, 7:1:1).

The final siege ended on September 26, 70 AD after a duration of five months. The destruction of Jerusalem, though, was not the end of Rome’s fury. Jews outside of Jerusalem also became victims. Holford continues,

All above the age of seventeen were sent in chains into Egypt, to be employed there as slaves, or distributed throughout the empire to be sacrificed as gladiators in the amphitheatres ; whilst those who were *under this* age, were exposed to sale. During the time that these things were transacted, *eleven thousand* Jews, guarded by one of the generals, named Fronto, were literally starved to death. This melancholy occurrence happened partly through the scarcity of provisions, and partly through their own obstinacy, and the negligence of the Romans. Of the Jews destroyed during the siege, Josephus reckons not less than ONE MILLION AND ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND, to which must be added, above TWO-HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SEVEN THOUSAND who perished in other places, and *innumerable multitudes* who were swept away by famine, and pestilence, and of which no calculation could be made. Not less than *two thousand* laid violent hands upon themselves. Of the captives the whole was about NINETY-SEVEN THOUSAND... After the destruction of Jerusalem *seventeen hundred* Jews who surrendered at Macherus were slain, and of fugitives not less than *three thousand* in the wood of Jardes. Titus, having marched his army to Caesarea, he there, with great splendour, celebrated the birthday of his brother Domitian; and according to the barbarous manner of those times, punished many Jews in honour of it. The number who were burnt, and who fell by fighting with wild beasts, and in mutual combats, exceeded *two thousand five hundred*. At the siege of Massada [73 AD], Eleazer, the commander, instigated the garrison [of Jews] to burn their stores, and to destroy first the women and children, and then themselves.

In summary, says Josephus, “neither did any other city ever allow such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world” (Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Book 5, Chapter 10, Paragraph 5).

H. The Spiritual Significance of 70 AD

It seems clear that the knowledge of Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 AD, and the significance of this event, once held a prominent place in Christian theology, and that this understanding has been supplanted in direct proportion to the rise of Dispensationalism within the last 180 years. As R.C. Sproul says in his book, *The Last Days according to Jesus* (p. 26), “No matter what view of eschatology we embrace, we must take seriously the redemptive-historical importance of

Jerusalem's destruction in 70 AD." The following are quotes from early church writers, reformers, and other leaders regarding the spiritual significance of 70 AD (Todd Dennis [19], 2009):

[1] Irenaeus (174 AD): "CHAP. IV.--ANSWER TO ANOTHER OBJECTION, SHOWING THAT THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM, WHICH WAS THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING, DIMINISHED NOTHING FROM THE SUPREME MAJESTY' AND POWER OF GOD, FOR THAT THIS DESTRUCTION WAS PUT IN EXECUTION BY THE MOST WISE COUNSEL OF THE SAME GOD. (1) Further, also, concerning Jerusalem and the Lord, they venture to assert that, if it had been 'the city of the great King,' it would not have been deserted. This is just as if anyone should say, that if straw were a creation of God, it would never part company with the wheat; and that the vine twigs, if made by God, never would be lopped away and deprived of the clusters... Even as Esaias saith, 'The children of Jacob shall strike root, and Israel shall flourish, and the whole world shall be filled with his fruit.' The fruit, therefore, having been sown throughout all the world, she (Jerusalem) was deservedly forsaken, and those things which had formerly brought forth fruit abundantly were taken away; for from these, according to the flesh, were Christ and the apostles enabled to bring forth fruit. But now these are no longer useful for bringing forth fruit. For all things which have a beginning in time must of course have an end in time also. (2) Since, then, the law originated with Moses, it terminated with John as a necessary consequence. Christ had come to fulfil it: wherefore 'the law and the prophets were' with them 'until John.' And therefore Jerusalem, taking its commencement from David, and fulfilling its own times, must have an end of legislation when the new covenant was revealed."

[2] Tertullian (160-220 AD): "Therefore, when these times also were completed, and the Jews subdued, there afterwards ceased in that place [Jerusalem] 'libations and sacrifices,' which thenceforward have not been able to be in that place celebrated; for 'the unction,' too, was 'exterminated' in that place after the passion of Christ. For it had been predicted that the unction should be exterminated in that place; as in the Psalms it is prophesied, 'They exterminated my hands and feet.' ... Accordingly, all the synagogue of Israel did slay Him, saying to Pilate, when he was desirous to dismiss Him, 'His blood be upon us, and upon our children;' and, 'If thou dismiss him, thou art not a friend of Caesar;' in order that all things might be fulfilled which had been written of Him" (*An Answer to the Jews*, Chapter VII—Of Jerusalem's Destruction).

[3] Hippolytus of Rome, disciple of Irenaeus (170-236 AD): "Come, then, O blessed Isaiah; arise, tell us clearly what thou didst prophesy with respect to the mighty Babylon [Isaiah 13]. For thou didst speak also of Jerusalem, and thy word is accomplished. For thou didst speak boldly and openly: 'Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate as overthrown by many strangers. The daughter of Sion shall be left as a cottage in a vineyard, and as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city' [Isaiah 1:8]. What then? Are not these things come to pass? Are not the things announced by thee fulfilled? Is not their country, Judea, desolate? Is not the holy place burned with fire? Are not their walls cast down? Are not their cities destroyed? Their land, do not strangers devour it? Do not the Romans rule the country? And indeed these impious people hated thee, and did saw thee asunder, and they crucified Christ. Thou art dead in the world, but thou livest in Christ" (*Fragments of Dogmatic and Historical Works*).

[4] Origen (185-254 AD): "Therefore He [God], also, having separated from her [Israel], married, so to speak, another [the Church], having given into the hands of the former the bill of divorcement; wherefore they can no longer do the things enjoined on them by the law, because of the bill of divorcement. And a sign that she has received the bill of divorcement is this, that Jerusalem was destroyed along with what they called the sanctuary of the things in it which were believed to be holy, and with the altar of burnt offerings, and all the worship associated with it... And what was more unseemly than the fact, that they all said in His case, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him,' and 'Away with such a fellow from the earth'? And can this be freed from the charge of unseemliness, 'His blood be upon us, and upon our children'? Wherefore, when He was avenged, Jerusalem was compassed with armies, and its desolation was near, and their house was taken away from it, and 'the daughter of Zion was left as a booth in a vineyard, and as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, and as a besieged city.' And, about the same time, I think, the husband wrote out a bill of divorcement to his former wife, and gave it into her hands, and sent her away from His own house, and the bond of her who came from the Gentiles has been cancelled about which the Apostle says, 'Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances, which was contrary to us, and He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross;' for Paul also and others became proselytes of Israel for her who came from the Gentiles" (*Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*, Book 2, Section 19).

[5] Lactantius (240-320 AD): "Also Zechariah says: 'And they shall look on me whom they pierced.' Amos thus speaks of the obscuring of the sun: 'In that day, saith the Lord, the sun shall go down at noon, and the clear day shall be dark; and I will turn your feasts into mourning, and your songs into lamentation.' Jeremiah also speaks of the city of Jerusalem, in which He suffered: 'Her sun is gone down while it was yet day; she hath been confounded and reviled, and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword.' Nor were these things spoken in vain. For after a short time the Emperor Vespasian subdued the Jews, and laid waste their lands with the sword and fire, besieged and reduced them by famine, overthrew Jerusalem, led the captives in triumph, and prohibited the others who were left from ever returning to their native land. And these things were done by God on account of that crucifixion of Christ, as He before declared this to Solomon in their Scriptures, saying, 'And Israel shall be for perdition and a reproach to the people, and this house shall be desolate; and every one that shall pass by shall be astonished, and shall say, "Why hath God done these evils to this land, and to this house? And they shall say, Because they forsook the Lord their God, and persecuted their King, who was dearly beloved by God, and crucified Him with

great degradation, therefore hath God brought upon them these evils.” For what would they not deserve who put to death their Lord, who had come for their salvation?” (*Epitome of the Divine Institutes*, Chapter 46).

[6] Eusebius (314 AD): “If any one compares the words of our Saviour with the other accounts of the historian (Josephus) concerning the whole war, how can one fail to wonder, and to admit that the foreknowledge and the prophecy of our Saviour were truly divine and marvelously strange” (*Proof of the Gospel*, Book III, Ch. VII).

[7] Athanasius (345 AD): “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 has 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” (*Incarnation*, Chapter VI).

[8] John Calvin (1509-1564): “So in this passage [Daniel 9], without doubt, he treats of the period after the destruction of the Temple; there could be no hope of restoration, as the law with all its ceremonies would then arrive at its termination... That devastation happened as soon as the gospel began to be promulgated. God then deserted his Temple, because it was only founded for a time, and was but a shadow, until the Jews so completely violated the whole covenant that no sanctity remained in either the Temple, the nation, or the land itself. Some restrict this [the abomination of desolation] to those standards which Tiberius erected on the very highest pinnacle of the Temple, and others to the statue of Caligula, but I have already stated my view of these opinions as too forced. I have no hesitation in referring this language of the angel to that profanation of the Temple which happened after the manifestation of Christ, when sacrifices ceased, and the shadows of the law were abolished. From the time, therefore, at which the sacrifice really ceased to be offered; this refers to the period at which Christ by his advent should abolish the shadows of the law, thus making all offering of sacrifices to God totally valueless... The Jews never anticipated the final cessation of their ceremonies, and always boasted in their peculiar external worship, and unless God had openly demonstrated it before their eyes, they would never have renounced their sacrifices and rites as mere shadowy representations. Hence Jerusalem and their Temple were exposed to the vengeance of the Gentiles. This, therefore, was the setting up of this stupefying abomination; it was a clear testimony to the wrath of God, exhorting the Jews in their confusion to boast no longer in their Temple and its holiness.”

[9] Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): “Thus there was a final end to the Old Testament world: all was finished with a kind of day of judgment, in which the people of God were saved, and His enemies terribly destroyed” (1736).

[10] William Whiston (1667-1752): “Josephus speaks so, that it is most evident he was fully satisfied that God was on the Romans' side, and made use of them now for the destruction of the Jews, which was for certain the true state of this matter, as the prophet Daniel first, and our Saviour himself afterwards had clearly foretold” (*Literature Accomplished of Prophecy*, p. 64, 1737).

[11] John Wesley (1703-1791): “Josephus' *History of the Jewish War* is the best commentary on this chapter (Matt. 24). It is a wonderful instance of God's providence, that he, an eyewitness, and one who lived and died a Jew, should, especially in so extraordinary a manner, be preserved, to transmit to us a collection of important facts, which so exactly illustrate this glorious prophecy, in almost every circumstance” (*Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, 1754).

[12] Dom Toutee (1790): “St. Chrysostom shows that the destruction of Jerusalem is to be ascribed, not to the power of the Romans, for God had often delivered it from no less dangers; but to a special providence which was pleased to put it out of the power of human perversity to delay or respite the extinction of those ceremonial observances.”

[13] William Dool Killen (1859): “Nero died A.D. 68, and the war which involved the destruction of Jerusalem and of upwards of a million of the Jews, was already in progress. The holy city fell A.D. 70; and the Mosaic economy, which had been virtually abolished by the death of Christ, now reached its practical termination. At the same period the prophecy of Daniel was literally fulfilled; for “the sacrifice and the oblation” were made to cease, [168:5] as the demolition of the temple and the dispersion of the priests put an end to the celebration of the Levitical worship. The overthrow of the metropolis of Palestine contributed in various ways to the advancement of the Christian cause. Judaism, no longer able to provide for the maintenance of its ritual, was exhibited to the world as a defunct system; its institutions, now more narrowly examined by the spiritual eye, were discovered to be but types of the blessings of a more glorious dispensation; and many believers, who had hitherto adhered to the ceremonial law, discontinued its observances. Christ, forty years before, had predicted the siege and desolation of Jerusalem; [169:1] and the remarkable verification of a prophecy, delivered at a time when the catastrophe was exceedingly improbable, appears to have induced not a few to think more favourably of the credentials of the gospel. In another point of view the ruin of the ancient capital of Judea proved advantageous to the Church. In the subversion of their chief city the power of the Jews sustained a shock from which it has never since recovered; and the disciples were partially delivered from the attacks of their most restless and implacable persecutors” (*The Ancient Church: Its History, Doctrine, Worship, and Constitution*, Project Gutenberg, available at <http://www2.cddc.vt.edu/gutenberg/1/6/7/0/16700/16700-8.txt>).

[14] C.H. (Charles) Spurgeon (1834-1892): "The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than anything that the world has ever witnessed, either before or since. Even Titus seemed to see in his cruel work the hand of an avenging God... Truly, the blood of the martyrs slain in Jerusalem was amply avenged when the whole city became veritable Aceldama, or field of blood... There was a sufficient interval for the full proclamation of the gospel by the apostles and evangelists of the early Christian Church, and for the gathering out of those who recognized the crucified Christ as their true Messiah. Then came the awful end, which the Saviour foresaw and foretold, and the prospect of which wrung from his lips and heart the sorrowful lament that followed his prophecy of the doom awaiting this guilty capital... Nothing remained for the King but to pronounce the solemn sentence of death upon those who would not come unto him that they might have life: 'Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.' The whole 'house' of the Jews was left desolate when Jesus departed from them; and the temple, the holy and beautiful 'house' became a spiritual desolation when Christ finally left it. Jerusalem was too far gone to be rescued from its self-sought doom (*Commentary on Matthew*, 1868, pp. 412-413).

[15] Philip Schaff (1819-1893): "A few years afterwards followed the destruction of Jerusalem, which must have made an overpowering impression and broken the last ties which bound Jewish Christianity to the old theocracy... The awful catastrophe of the destruction of the Jewish theocracy must have produced the profoundest sensation among the Christians... It was the greatest calamity of Judaism and a great benefit to Christianity; a refutation of the one, a vindication... of the other. It separated them forever" (*History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 1, 1877, pp. 403-404).

[16] F.W. Farrar (1831-1903): "The Fall of Jerusalem and all the events which accompanied and followed it in the Roman world and in the Christian world, had a significance which it is hardly possible to overestimate. They were the final end of the Old Dispensation. They were the full inauguration of the New Covenant. They were God's own overwhelming judgment on that form of Judaic Christianity which threatened to crush the work of St. Paul, to lay on the Gentiles the yoke of abrogated Mosaism, to establish itself by threats and anathemas as the only orthodoxy... No event less awful than the desolation of Judea, the destruction of Judaism, the annihilation of all possibility of observing the precepts of Moses, could have opened the eyes of the Judaisers from their dream of imagined infallibility. Nothing but God's own unmistakable interposition - nothing but the manifest coming of Christ - could have persuaded Jewish Christians that the Law of the Wilderness was annulled" (*The Early Days of Christianity*, 1882, pp. 489-490).

[17] Philip Mauro (1859-1952): "It is greatly to be regretted that those who, in our day, give themselves to the study and exposition of prophecy, seem not to be aware of the *immense significance* of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which was accompanied by the extinction of Jewish national existence, and the dispersion of the Jewish people among all the nations. The failure to recognize the significance of that event, and the vast amount of prophecy which it fulfilled, has been the cause of great confusion, for the necessary consequence of missing the past fulfillment of predicted events is to leave on our hands a mass of prophecies for which we must needs contrive fulfillments in the future. The harmful results are twofold: for first, we are thus deprived of the evidential value, and the support to the faith, of those remarkable fulfillments of prophecy which are so clearly presented to us in authentic contemporary histories; and second, our vision of things to come is greatly obscured and confused by the transference to the future of predicted events which, in fact, have already happened, and whereof complete records have been preserved for our information.

"Yet, in the face of all this, we have today a widely held scheme of prophetic interpretation, which has for its very cornerstone the idea that, when God's time to remember His promised mercies to Israel shall at last have come, He will gather them into their ancient land again, only to pour upon them calamities and distresses far exceeding even the horrors which attended the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This is, we are convinced, an error of such magnitude as to derange the whole program of unfulfilled prophecy" (*Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation*, 1921, emphasis added).

[18] Tony Campolo (1988): "Jesus told his disciples that their generation would not pass away before everything that needed to be fulfilled for His return would take place. I do not believe the Lord was wrong. I am convinced that by A.D. 70 everything was in place for the [physical] return of Christ, and that it has been right for Christians to expect His return ever since that time... I must point out that for centuries Christians did not see any need for the restoration of the state of Israel or the rebuilding of the temple... for the return of Christ" (*20 Hot Potatoes Christians are Afraid to Touch*, p.233).

[19] John Piper (1996): "It is almost impossible to exaggerate the importance of what happened in A.D. 70 in Jerusalem. It was an event that, for Jews and Christians, was critical in defining their faith for the next 2000 years."

[20] R.C. Sproul (1997-98): "The coming of Christ in A.D.70 was a coming in judgment on the Jewish nation, indicating the end of the Jewish age and the fulfillment of a day of the Lord. Jesus really did come in judgment at this time, fulfilling his prophecy in the Olivet Discourse" (*The Last Days According to Jesus*, p. 158, 1998). "The most significant, redemptive, historical action that takes place outside the New Testament, is the judgment that falls on Jerusalem, and by which judgment the Christian Church now [clearly] emerges as The Body of Christ" (R.C. Sproul, *Dust to Glory* video series, 1997).

Kevin Daly (2009) states, "In much the same way as a person might unwittingly wait for a bus that has already departed, our ignorance of the history of the interval between Jesus' ascension and the Roman siege of AD70 has

contributed much to our expectation that events mentioned in Matthew 24 must still come to pass.” However, these events were designed to achieve several purposes, and this has already been accomplished.

One of these purposes was to demonstrate once and for all that the very means by which forgiveness and mercy were administered under the Old Covenant, i.e. the temple, the sacrificial system, and the priesthood, were done away with (Hebrews 8:13). Those things ceased to exist so that one could no longer look to them for redemption or atonement, even if one were to try. Forgiveness and mercy are found solely through Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. Just as we rejoice in seeing prophecy fulfilled in Christ’s first coming as our Savior to take away sin, we can also rejoice in seeing how the words of Christ and the prophets were fulfilled in 70 AD.

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