

# A Preterist Interpretation of Revelation

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## Bible Versions

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(Note: All underlining of Scripture quotations for emphasis has been added by the author.)

## Background and Overview of Revelation

What John saw and wrote was “the revelation of Jesus Christ”.

God the Father gave this revelation to Jesus who in turn communicated it to John via a mediating angel (1:1).

The term *revelation* (Greek: *apokalypsis*) itself means “unveiling” or “disclosure”.

And so, the book is concerned with things that are hidden or unseen.

Moreover, Revelation reveals things that were about to take place (1:1, 3).

The intended recipients were the “servants” of Jesus (1:1) — first-century Christians, members of the churches of the province of Asia in present-day western Turkey (1:4, 11).

The visions reveal what could not be seen with the human eye. They show what was transpiring in the invisible/spiritual realm. They reveal Christ enthroned in heaven, orchestrating events on earth.<sup>1</sup>

They interpret the momentous events that were soon to break out.

Note that Roman province of Asia was one of the most important centers of early Christianity. It had a large and influential resident Jewish population. References to the “synagogue of Satan” (2:9; 3:9) suggest that the Jews of Asia were actively persecuting Christians. Asia was also a center of the cult of Caesar-worship. Its cities were loyal to the emperor and his Empire.

Revelation portrays imminent events (1:1, 3; 22:6, 10). These imminence statements serve as bookends for the entire prophetic content of Revelation. Therefore, all of John’s visions were fulfilled in the 1st century AD.

All the events portrayed are in our past!

Revelation’s relevance for first-century believers cannot be overstated.

Blessing was promised for those who first read and heard and obeyed its message (1:3; 22:7).

The reason: The outworking and fulfillment of John’s visions would affect them personally.

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<sup>1</sup> “The revelation of Jesus Christ” (in 1:1) is the revelation given by Jesus. But it is also clearly about Jesus (cf. 1 Peter 1:7, 13). Revelation shows Jesus enthroned with the Father receiving worship (5:6-14). He is the exalted Son of Man (1:13; 14:14), the Lion of Judah (5:5), the Root of David (5:5; 22:16), the Lamb (29 times), and the Word of God (19:13).

Revelation served as John's version of the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 – 25; Mark 13; Luke 21:5ff.). In this Discourse, Jesus connects his return with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple — to be witnessed by that generation (Mt 24:2, 15-16, 30, 34; Mk 13:2, 14, 26, 30; Lk 21:6, 20-21, 27, 32). All of this was fulfilled in AD 70 at the end of the Jewish-Roman War.

The entire prophecy is summed up in the one phrase: Jesus was “coming with the clouds” (1:7). That is to say, he was coming as the divine Judge.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, he was coming “soon” (3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). He was coming to judge the persecutors, both Roman and Jewish (represented by the Beast and the Harlot).

But Jesus was also coming to discipline or reward the churches and their members (2:5, 16, 25; 3:3, 11). As Revelation was read out to each of the assembled congregations,<sup>3</sup> the members would be encouraged or challenged by its message and strengthened in their resolve. Forewarned is to be forearmed! Amidst all their trials (both external and internal) they were to remain faithful, either until death or until Jesus came to them. Such faithfulness would be amply rewarded (2:10, 25; 3:11).

Note the many references in Revelation to God seated upon his heavenly throne:

Revelation 4:9-10; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 15; 19:4; 20:11.

God is enthroned in his heavenly temple ruling and reigning over the nations (cf. Ps 47:7-8; 99:1-2; etc.). Moreover, Jesus is with the Father on the throne (3:21; 7:17; 22:1, 3), receiving praise (5:13; 7:9-10) and executing judgment (6:16-17). He is the “Lord of lords and King of kings” (17:14; cf. 1:5; 19:16).

A world-view of God's absolute sovereignty was needed for the forthcoming persecution.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, Revelation portrays the persecutors as merely fulfilling God's predestinating purposes (17:17).<sup>5</sup>

Revelation is also to be understood in terms of the fulfillment of Old Testament (OT) prophecy:

It shows the first-century coming “with power” of the promised kingdom (Mk 9:1; cf. Rev 11:15-18, below).

As aforementioned, Jesus is shown as enthroned in heaven, ruling over all.

Revelation shows the fulfillment of Psalm 110: Messiah exerting his power to take possession of the Gentile nations, judging those who oppose his rule.

He comes on the clouds (1:7) to put down his enemies: the Harlot (18:2-24), and the Beast and false prophet and their allies (19:11-21).

The Devil is defeated (20:10); so too is Death — the very last enemy (20:14; cf. 1Cor 15:25-26).

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<sup>2</sup> Clouds, throughout the Old Testament, signify the presence and majesty of God, also as he visits the nations in judgment. Jesus' own promises to return on the clouds were, to all intents, a claim to deity (Mt 24:30; 26:64; cf. Mt 16:27; Dan 7:13-14). Revelation 1:7 therefore speaks of Jesus returning as the divine judge to put down his enemies.

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 1:3 (ESV): *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.*

<sup>4</sup> Concerning the significance of Revelation for first-century believers:

“To all appearance, at Rome, the Christian Church was drowning in its own blood in Nero's reign. We must consider the feeling of the ordinary Christian — the man in the street, so to speak — and look at it from his point of view. In later persecutions men had got to know that the Church could survive the furious edicts of Rome. But that was just the doubt which presented itself to the mind of the average Christian man in Nero's time.” James J.L. Ratton, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (London: R. & T. Washbourne, 1912), p. 87. Cited in Kenneth Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, p. 299.

Gentry himself continues: “No imperial persecution other than the very first would be more important to establishing the durability of the faith. No imperial persecution more than this one required a word of exhortation and consolation to the beleaguered faith.” See also the article on this website: *The relevance of the book of Revelation for first-century Christians*.

<sup>5</sup> John, like Paul, had a Calvinistic understanding of God's providence and of his sovereignty in salvation — see John 6:36-40, 44, 65; 10:14-16, 26-29; 12:37-40; 17:2; Revelation 17:8, 17.

Revelation shows the kingdom finally arriving with the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet<sup>6</sup> — coinciding with the Resurrection and with the judgment of both the living (nations) and the dead:

<sup>15</sup> *The seventh angel sounded [his trumpet], and there were loud voices in heaven, saying:*

*“The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.”*

<sup>16</sup> *And the twenty-four elders, who sat before God on their thrones, fell on their faces and worshipped God,* <sup>17</sup> *saying:*

*“We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who is and was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and begun to reign.*

<sup>18</sup> *The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time has come for the dead to be judged, and to reward Your servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, small and great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.”*

(Revelation 11:15-18, MEV).

John’s final vision (chaps. 21 – 22) depicts the new post-70 AD world order:

Jerusalem has been restored and God’s people have been gathered therein; all nations are being blessed through Christ’s beneficent rule (cf. Psalms 2, 72; Isa 2:1-4; 9:7; 11:1-10; 42:1-4; etc.).

The kingdom’s arrival implies the restoration of David’s throne: Messiah is enthroned in the heavenly Zion (Ps 2:6; 110:1-2) from whence he rules earth’s nations.

But Jerusalem is also on earth (21:2, 10):

It’s Christ’s Bride — the people of God, the Church (21:2, 9; cf. Eph 5:25ff.).

And it’s where believers “live” under the New Covenant (Heb 12:22).

We have been gathered, legally and spiritually, into the city and into God’s presence, so that already, this side of eternity, we are citizens of heaven (Gal 4:26; Php 3:20).

John’s vision depicts Jerusalem as the new world’s capital and seat of government:

- Jesus, with the Father, is enthroned therein (22:3), and the surrounding nations are firmly under his/their rule (cf. Rev 12:5; Ps 2:6-9).
- The saints co-reign with Christ from Jerusalem (cf. Rev 2:26-27; 5:10; 22:5; Dan 7:27).
- The city (as the Church) serves as a light and ministers gospel healing to the nations (21:24; 22:2).
- The wicked outside are invited to repent and enter through the gates (22:14-15, 17).
- In this way (i.e., via the gospel) the nations are blessed in accordance with the promises made to Abraham — see Romans 4:13; Galatians 3:8, 14 (cf. Gen 12:3; 22:18; Ps 72:17).
- In time, all nations will come to worship God in Jerusalem (Rev 15:4; cf. Ps 86:9; Isa 2:1-3; Mt 28:18-19).

This city — the true, spiritual, heavenly Jerusalem — represents the fulfillment of those many OT prophecies relating to Jerusalem’s restoration.

Jesus has accomplished this restoration through his death and resurrection.

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<sup>6</sup> Presumably this seventh trumpet is the one that Paul refers to that raises the dead (1Cor 15:52; 1Thes 4:16).

## Date of Revelation

When did John see and record his visions?

Most commentaries and study Bibles promote a late date for Revelation, around 95 AD.

The ultimate source of this late-date view is a (somewhat ambiguous) statement made by Irenaeus around the year 180 AD. Irenaeus claimed that Revelation was seen by John “towards the end of Domitian’s reign.”<sup>7</sup>

But Revelation’s own internal evidence overwhelmingly points to a much earlier date, ca. 64 AD, just prior to the outbreak of Nero’s brutal persecution.<sup>8</sup> Briefly, this evidence is as follows:

1. Roman persecution had not yet begun. In Pergamum, just one person had thus far been martyred (2:13). The Beast and its ten horns had not yet initiated their 42-month inquisition (13:5-7; 17:12).
2. Opposition was then coming from the Jewish synagogue (2:9; 3:9), which would require a pre-70 date.
3. The temple in Jerusalem was still standing (11:1-2).
4. The identification of the 666-man (13:18) as Nero.<sup>9</sup>
5. John’s claim that he saw and wrote during the reign of the sixth “king” in a line of seven (17:10): Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, NERO, Galba. Nero died in June 68 AD.<sup>10</sup>
6. Revelation anticipates the coming destruction of the Harlot City — Jerusalem (chap. 18).
7. The condition of the Asian churches is broadly consistent with what is depicted in the later New Testament epistles. Peter wrote his epistles in the early 60s AD to these same churches (1Pet 1:1; 2Pet 3:1), referencing their trials, imminent judgment, and the false teachers in their midst (1Pet 4:12-17; 2 Peter 2). Several years had elapsed since Paul had commended the Ephesian believers for their love, which by John’s time had seriously abated (2:4; cf. Eph 1:15).<sup>11</sup>

Adoption of an early date allows Revelation to be interpreted as a prophecy of the momentous events soon to transpire, namely, Nero’s persecution (64-68 AD) and the Jewish-Roman War and fall of Jerusalem (66-70 AD). Which of course is precisely what Revelation itself claims to be (1:3; 22:6-7, 10, 18-19).

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<sup>7</sup> Domitian reigned from 81 to 96 AD. Later patristic writers who make this same late-date claim are merely parroting Irenaeus.

<sup>8</sup> Nero’s persecution broke out around November 64 AD. For detailed analyses of Revelation’s date see: Kenneth Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* (Fountain Inn, SC: Victorious Hope Publishing, 2010) — the entire book; Kurt M. Simmons, *The Consummation of the Ages* (Carlsbad, NM: Bimillennial Preterist Association, 2003), pp. 13-25.

<sup>9</sup> The Greek form of Nero’s name, as found for example on ancient coins, is ΝΕΡΩΝ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ (= *Nerōn Kaisar*). Transliterating this into Hebrew gives נרֹון קסר (= *Nrwn Qsr*). These (Hebrew) letters each have numerical values; together they total 666.

For a discussion about 666 and Nero as its referent, see Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, pp. 196-203.

See also my article on this website, *The Number of the Beast* (666).

<sup>10</sup> One objection to the identification of Nero as the sixth king relates to the fact that the Roman Empire was officially constituted only under Augustus. With Augustus as the first emperor, Nero would then be number 5.

Response: John uses the term “king”, not emperor. Julius Caesar was the first sole ruler of the Roman world — effectively a king. His name “Caesar” was adopted by the later rulers. Moreover, early writers such as Suetonius, Dio Cassius, and Josephus did in fact regard Julius as the first emperor. Concerning Julius vs. Augustus as the first, see Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, pp. 154-159.

See also the online resource: *List of Roman Emperors*. Via <https://www.livius.org/articles/misc/list-of-roman-emperors>.

Note that the seventh king was to “remain only a little while” (Rev 17:10). Nero’s successor, Galba, reigned for just seven months, from 8 June 68 to 15 January 69 AD.

<sup>11</sup> Paul composed Ephesians while a prisoner (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20). But during which imprisonment did he write his Ephesian and Colossian epistles: his earlier internment in Caesarea (57-59 AD) or his later one in Rome (60-62 AD)? Either way, several years must have elapsed before the book of Revelation was written and circulated.

## The double harvest of the earth

Revelation 14 depicts a double harvest of “the earth”.

According to Kurt Simmons, “in the imagery of Revelation, the sea stands for the gentile peoples, the earth for Palestine and the Jews.”<sup>12</sup>

In the first harvest, Jesus is seated on a cloud harvesting the Jewish martyrs into Paradise (14:14-16).

The second is a harvest of judgment, where the unbelievers and persecutors within Israel are harvested into “the great winepress of the wrath of God” (14:17-20). Their blood is squeezed out to become a 300 km deluge outside of Jerusalem — encompassing the full north-south length of the Holy Land.

This last point emphasizes that the Roman campaigns and siege will result in a terrible blood-bath, so that the whole land becomes polluted with the blood of the slain.

These “harvests” probably ought to be related to the warnings given by John the Baptist and Jesus to the Jews, as related in Matthew 3:12 and 13:30.

## The meaning of “the earth”, and “the kings of the earth” in Revelation

As noted above, Kurt Simmons suggests that references to “the earth” in Revelation refer to Palestine and the Jews. This is undoubtedly the case in Revelation 14.

But does the term always denote such?

Similarly, Kenneth Gentry argues that John’s repeated phrase “the kings of the earth” denotes the religious authorities of Israel. He points out that in Psalm 2, the source of the phrase, the reference is to Gentile rulers and their opposition to Yahweh’s anointed King. According to Gentry, John has turned around the meaning to connote the opposition of the first-century Jewish leadership to the Church. The apostolic church, in Acts 4:25ff., applies Psalm 2 to the Jewish leaders. This shows (according to Gentry) that OT Gentile-focused passages can now be applied to and turned against the Jews. Indeed, John ironically calls Jerusalem “Sodom and Egypt” (11:8), and he refers to the “synagogue of Satan” (2:9, 3:9).<sup>13</sup>

In response, there is much to commend these claims. In many instances, “the earth” probably does refer to the Land of Israel. But there are several instances in Revelation where “the kings of the earth” (*tōn basileōn tēs gēs*) seems to intend a broader group than just the Jewish religious leadership:

1:5 (MEV): *and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

17:1-2 (MEV): <sup>1</sup> “... the great prostitute who sits on many waters, <sup>2</sup> with whom the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk ...”

The harlot being seated on many waters refers to the fact that the Jews inhabited much of the Roman world. Her influence was extensive; she had seduced foreign “kings”. The Jews incited Gentile rulers to act against the Church, resulting in persecution of Christians throughout the Empire.

Note that, in 14:8, Babylon (i.e., the harlot-city) is said to have “made all the nations” drunk with her wine and immorality. Her influence over “the kings of the earth” (in 17:2) clearly extended to Gentile rulers.

Finally, in 21:24: *By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.*

Here too, “the kings of the earth” seems to refer to the leaders of nations.

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<sup>12</sup> Kurt M. Simmons, *The Consummation of the Ages* (Carlsbad, NM: Bimillennial Preterist Association, 2003), p. 280.

<sup>13</sup> See Kenneth Gentry, “*The Kings of the Earth and Psalm 2 (10)*”, <https://postmillennialworldview.com/2020/01/21/the-kings-of-the-earth-and-psalm-2-10/>.

## Identity of the Harlot

- The Harlot is “seated on many waters” (17:1, 15).
- She is riding and driving the Beast (17:3).  
So whereas the Beast represents the actual inquisition, the Harlot is the one driving and inciting him.
- She is identified as “Babylon” (17:5), and as the “great city” (17:18).  
Babylon and the great city are one and the same (18:10, 21).  
The Harlot/Babylon/great city is the one ultimately responsible for the persecution (17:6; 18:20, 24).
- Earlier, this great city is called “Sodom and Egypt” and identified as the place where Jesus was crucified (11:8). This city is Jerusalem.  
Ironically, Jerusalem has become Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon — the sworn enemy of God’s people.
- This city stands in stark contrast to the new, holy city that descends from heaven (21:2, 9-10).  
John (in Revelation) employs the imagery of two women to contrast two cities:  
Faithful Bride vs. Harlot; heavenly city vs. the earthly city; New Jerusalem vs. Old Jerusalem.

The description of the Harlot as “seated on many waters” (17:1) portrays the fact that the Jews were widely dispersed throughout the Roman Empire (17:15).<sup>14</sup>

Jerusalem commanded the loyalty and directed the behavior of Jews throughout the Roman world.

An angel further informs John that the Harlot represents “the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth” (17:18). This statement, more than any other, has led commentators to identify her with Rome.

But this cannot be right. The Roman authorities are symbolized by the Beast and its horns.

The Harlot rides the Beast, and the Beast later turns against her. They have separate identities.

That the Harlot City represents Jerusalem, not Rome, should be obvious from Revelation 11:8 and 18:24.

This latter verse clearly echoes Jesus’ indictment, in Matthew 23:35, of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem in Revelation is named after places that were judged by God for wickedness (Sodom) and for oppressing his people (Egypt and Babylon). See Genesis 19; Exodus 7 – 10; Jeremiah 50 – 51.

Also alluded to is God’s judgment on the city of Tyre, as foretold in Ezekiel 26 – 27.

So, how can Jerusalem be said to exercise dominion over earth’s kings?

In answer, we need to look at the role of the New Jerusalem, the city that supersedes the Harlot:

New Jerusalem is the capital city of the new heaven and earth (the new world order under the rule of Christ).

Within the city Jesus sits enthroned; he rules the surrounding nations (22:3; cf. Ps 2:6-12; Rev 19:15).

Moreover, his people — citizens of the city — share in this rule (22:5).

New Jerusalem therefore serves as the administrative capital of Christ’s kingdom.

The city (as the Church) serves as a light and ministers gospel healing to the nations:

*By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ...*

*The leaves of the tree [of life] were for the healing of the nations.*

(Revelation 21:24; 22:2)

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<sup>14</sup> In the 1st century AD large numbers of Jews resided in Alexandria, Antioch, Mesopotamia, Ephesus, Thessalonica, and Rome (cf. Ac 2:5, 9-11). In fact, far more Jews resided outside Israel than within.

Now, under the Mosaic Covenant Israel bore a similar responsibility towards the heathen nations.

As David Chilton notes (concerning Revelation 17:18):

Israel was a Kingdom of priests (Ex 19:6), exercising a priestly ministry of guardianship, instruction, and intercession on behalf of the nations of the world. When Israel was faithful to God, offering up sacrifices for the nations, the world was at peace; ...

The desolation of the Harlot was God's final sign that the Kingdom had been transferred to His new people, the Church (Mt 21:43; 1Pet 2:9; Rev 11:19; 15:5; 21:3).<sup>15</sup>

Tragically, Israel failed in her role of bringing blessing.

By the time we get to Revelation, her influence has become positively harmful.

She influences kings and peoples through seduction and intoxication (17:2).

She rides — drives and incites — the persecuting Beast (17:3).

She considers herself a queen, wearing royal attire (17:4; 18:7).

John is informed that the Beast and the 10 horns will hate and turn against the Harlot (17:16):

*"They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire."*

All of this being in accordance with God's predestinating purposes (17:17).

So how should we interpret John's visions?

The Harlot's "dominion" (17:18) refers to her widespread but pernicious influence.

Her riding (driving and inciting) the Beast suggests that the Jews throughout the Empire actively incited local Roman administrators to persecute Christians.

We may surmise that, once Nero had proscribed Christianity (in November 64 AD), the Jews would have been the first to haul Christians before the Roman courts to demand punishment.

This strange turn of events, with the Beast turning against the Harlot, pictures Rome's response to the Jewish rebellion — the onset of the War.

The War culminated in the Roman army's siege and destruction of Jerusalem (April to September, 70 AD).

The city's fall is the subject of Revelation 18.

Note that John's "harlot" imagery derives from the OT and connotes Israel's disloyalty to Yahweh and his covenant:

See Deuteronomy 31:16; Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 3:1-14; Ezekiel 16 and 23; Hosea 1, 2 and 3.

Jesus called his contemporaries both an "adulterous generation" (Mt 12:39; 16:4; Mk 8:38) and a "faithless and perverse" generation (Mt 17:17, KJV). Compare such language with Deuteronomy 32:5, 20; Acts 2:40.

Furthermore, fire was the punishment prescribed in the Mosaic Law for a priest's daughter who acted as a harlot (Lev 21:9; cf. Rev 17:16; 18:8-9).

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<sup>15</sup> David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance* (Fort Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1987), pp. 442-443.

In *Paradise Restored* (Tyler, TX: Reconstruction Press, 1985), p. 45, Chilton notes how Israel's Feast of Tabernacles (Ingathering) anticipated the ultimate conversion of the nations. Seventy bulls were to be sacrificed for atonement for the 70 nations of the world (Num 29:12-38; cf. Genesis 10), in anticipation of their final ingathering into God's kingdom (cf. Zec 14:16-19).

## The Millennia (1000-year periods) of Revelation 20

The various schools of eschatology are based on differing views of the so-called “Millennium” (Revelation 20). Each view fails to grasp what John is portraying, and the reason for this failure is simple:

All three views assume that the Millennium is an extended period of time.

Amillennialism holds that the 1000 years refers to the present gospel (or Church) age, with a final rebellion just before Jesus returns. In this view, Jesus rules the world spiritually from his throne in heaven.

Postmillennialism is a variation on the Amillennial view, with a more hopeful view of the victory of the gospel in converting the nations. In this system, Jesus returns after (post-) the golden millennial age.<sup>16</sup>

Premillennialism teaches that Jesus returns before (pre-) his millennial reign. OT promises relating to the kingdom must be fulfilled literally: Jesus will rule the world from a (literal) throne in Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup>

For the millennial view presented here I am wholly indebted to Kurt Simmons.

Kurt’s “bimillennial” interpretation makes a great deal of sense and ought to be better known.<sup>18</sup>

The apostle John shows a keen interest in numbers. Many numbers in Revelation carry symbolic significance.

It is no different with his 1000-year periods in Revelation 20.

Here they serve as a code — a pointer to Hades, the realm of the dead.

They are based on the Greco-Roman notion that the dead dwell in Hades for 1000 years before being reborn to earthly life.

John’s original Greek-speaking readers in the Asian churches would have readily understood his symbolism.<sup>19</sup>

A close reading of Revelation 20 shows that there are actually two separate 1000-year periods:

1. Revelation 20:1-3: Satan is interned in the “bottomless pit” (or “Abyss”; Greek: *abyssos*) for 1000 years, so that he can no longer deceive the nations.
2. Revelation 20:4-6 (my translation):

<sup>4</sup> *[The martyrs beheaded under the Beast] came to life and reigned with Christ for 1000 years.*

<sup>5</sup> *... This is the first resurrection.*

<sup>6</sup> *Blessed and holy is the one participating in the first resurrection! Over these the second death has no power ...*

Since this “first resurrection” precedes the second and final resurrection shown later in chap. 20, in which “Hades” and “Death” deliver up their inmates for judgment (20:11-15), we may assume that these martyrs are reigning in Hades (Paradise). Significantly, John sees their “souls” (20:4), just as he had seen those of the earlier martyrs (cf. 6:9). All these martyrs dwell in Paradise as spirits awaiting their final embodiment.

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<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Gentry provides an overview of postmillennialism here: <https://postmillennialworldview.com/postmillennialism-defined/>.

<sup>17</sup> The Premillennial view can be dismissed out of hand. The New Testament declares that Jesus presently reigns over the world from his throne in heaven: David’s throne was fully restored in Jesus’ ascension (Ac 2:30-36; cf. Ps 2:6); he “sat down with [his] Father on his throne” (Rev 3:21; cf. Ps 110:1); “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to [him]” (Mt 28:18; cf. Eph 1:20-22). The carnal (worldly) expectations of Premillennialism are precisely the sort that led the Jews to reject and crucify their Messiah.

<sup>18</sup> See Kurt M. Simmons, *The Consummation of the Ages*, pp. 362-389. Kurt’s Preterist Central website ([preteristcentral.com](http://preteristcentral.com)) is one of the best and most balanced preterist sites. His series of studies on John’s (two) millennia can be found here: <http://preteristcentral.com/Studies%20in%20the%20Millennia.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Some might object that John would never allude to such a pagan notion, and that we should, instead, look to the OT Scriptures for the source of his imagery. Yet elsewhere John does seem to interact with Greek thought — most notably in the concept of the *logos* in the prologue to his gospel (Jn 1:1ff.). And despite its pagan connotations, the term “Hades” is itself utilized in both the Septuagint scriptures that John’s readers used and by John himself in Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14.



Before AD 70, those who died entered an intermediate abode where they awaited final resurrection and judgment. The saints waited in Hades-Paradise (Lk 16:22; 20:38; 23:43; Rev 6:9); the wicked in Hades-Tartarus (Lk 16:23; 2Pet 2:4). Heaven itself was off-limits before the final Resurrection.

“Death” and “Hades” are paired together four times in Revelation — in 1:18; 6:8; twice in 20:13-14.

There are three ways to understand this pairing:

They might be one and the same — merely alternative names for the (pre-Judgment) abode of the dead.

They might signify death (considered abstractly) together with its realm. (See 1:18 in the AMP, EXB, HCSB, NIV.)

They might be distinct abodes.

The reference to “the keys of Death and of Hades” (in Revelation 1:18, Greek text) might suggest separate abodes needing different keys. Moreover later, in the final Resurrection, John sees “Death and Hades [giving] up the dead who were in them”, with both abodes being finally terminated in the lake of fire (Rev 20:13-14).

If indeed they are to be understood as separate abodes, “Hades” (in Revelation) would denote the pre-Judgment realm of the saved, and “Death” would denote the respective realm of the damned.

Jesus’ use of the keys is implied when, in the General Resurrection, Death and Hades are forced to deliver up their inmates for final judgment (Rev 20:11-15).

The reference to “keys” suggests that both abodes were a sort of prison — even Hades-Paradise, in that it served as a holding-tank to keep the saints from heaven.

In his own resurrection, Jesus overcame the powerful grip of Hades (Ac 2:24, 31).

Now, back to the 1000 years symbolism:

We have already noted that the symbolism derives from the Greco-Roman notion that the dead dwell in Hades for 1000 years before being reborn to earthly life.

So, both Satan and the martyrs are “dead” in Hades, and both (after their respective 1000-year internments) are also “resurrected”.

Satan’s release allows him to deceive and reignite persecution (Rev 20:7-8).

The martyrs’ release (resurrection) leads to final judgment and admittance into heaven.

Here is a schematic representation of these millennia:

**Satan bound → his 1000-year internment in the Abyss → Satan’s release → Nero’s persecution → martyrs beheaded → their 1000-year reign in Paradise (= 1st Res.) → martyrs’ release (= 2nd Res.) → final judgment and heavenly reward.**

Only after the first 1000-year period ends with Satan’s release can the martyrs perish and the second 1000-year period begin.

Therefore, the second millennium (the martyrs’ reign in Hades-Paradise) is a direct consequence of the cessation of the first. The two millennia are successive, not overlapping.

As Kurt Simmons notes, Revelation portrays two distinct persecutions of the Church.

The first persecution (Rev 12:6, 13-16) was that of the Jewish mother-church following Stephen's martyrdom.

The woman's fleeing into the desert refers to the Church's flight from Jerusalem into remote parts of Judea and Samaria and beyond (Ac 8:1; 11:19).

This first persecution ceased with the conversion of Saul/Paul around AD 35.

The second persecution (Revelation 13) was that about to begin under Nero.

The Beast was connected with Nero. Nero was the 6th king and the 666-man (Rev 13:18; 17:10).

Nero himself initiated the persecution — in Rome in November 64 AD.

Yet the Beast, as the Inquisition, also took on an identity of its own as a sort of 8th king (Rev 17:11).

Its 10 horns stand for the Roman provincial governors who locally enforce its demands (Rev 17:12-13).

Accordingly, the Beast can manifest itself in "the great city" — Jerusalem (Rev 11:7-8).<sup>20</sup>

The persecuting Beast has seven heads and 10 horns (Rev 13:1; 17:3, 10).

Kurt Simmons explains the significance of the seven-headed Beast:

In Revelation, the heads take on double meaning. They are *successive* when representing the ruling Caesars (Rev 17:10), but *simultaneous* when they represent the places where the Neronian persecution had a head. The head with the wound that healed (Rev 13:3, 12) likely represents the persecution in Palestine. The head was "wounded" when the persecution over Stephen collapsed, but healed in the renewed power to persecute under Nero. The same facts are represented under other symbolism by the binding of the dragon and beast in Tartarus (Rev 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-6).

The mortal wound to the head causes the beast and dragon to descend to the pit; the healing of the wound allows the beast to revive and ascend from the pit to persecute the church anew.<sup>21</sup>

The Beast (Inquisition) had operated previously. It was out of action when John wrote, but very soon official persecution would again break out:

*"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to ascend out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. And those dwelling on the earth — whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world — will be awestruck when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet will be."*

(Revelation 17:8, my translation)

Therefore the Beast, representing official persecution, existed prior to Nero.

The earlier persecution by the Jewish leaders, which would have required Pilate's permission, was also a manifestation of the Beast.

So, with Nero's persecution, what had earlier "died" suddenly came to life again. The Beast had returned — he had been "resurrected" from the Abyss and his "mortal wound" had been healed (Rev 11:7; 13:3; 17:8).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For the identification of Revelation's "great city" as Jerusalem, see page 6:

<sup>21</sup> Kurt Simmons, *Adumbrations: The Kingdom & Coming of Christ in the Book of Daniel* (Carlsbad, NM: Biblical Publishing Company, 2009). From Kurt's comments on Daniel 7:20, page 172.

<sup>22</sup> That this renewal of persecution is received with universal astonishment and joy and support suggests that Christians were generally hated throughout the Roman Empire (Rev 11:9-10; 13:3-4, 8; 17:8; cf. Mt 24:9).

Interpretation:

John's vision in Revelation 20 of Satan's internment in, and release from, the Abyss recapitulates and serves to reinforce his earlier visions in which the Beast rises from the Abyss to renew persecution (Rev 11:7; 17:8). Same events portrayed with different characters!

Satan's 1000-year internment corresponds with a period of relative peace for the Church.

This began soon after Paul's conversion around AD 35 (Ac 9:31) and continued for nearly 30 years.

During this interval Christians were relatively free to practice and propagate their faith.

Reading through Acts, from chapter 13 on we see Paul and his helpers traveling and openly proclaiming the gospel. From chapter 17 on we see the Roman authorities protecting Paul and his companions in the face of (mainly Jewish) opposition.

This civil protection afforded to Paul and others allowed for the free propagation of the gospel, with the result that a considerable part of the Roman world heard the message (Ac 19:10; Col 1:6; Mt 24:14).

Satan's internment relates to this civil protection, and his release corresponds with its cessation during the latter years of Nero's reign.<sup>23</sup>

The renewal of persecution under Nero is depicted in terms of:

- The Beast's release from the Abyss (Rev 11:7; 17:8).
- The Beast's mortal wound being healed (Rev 13:3).
- Satan's release from the Abyss (Rev 20:7).

Three ways of portraying the same thing!

Satan acts through the Beast to persecute the Church.

When persecution begins anew it is as if both Satan and the Beast have been released from the Abyss.

Nero's persecution broke out around November 64 AD, and probably continued until his suicide in June 68 AD. (A period of about 3½ years or 42 months, as noted in Revelation 13:5.)

## Revelation and Old Testament Prophecy

Revelation draws for its imagery principally from the following OT prophets:

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah.

These (and other) prophets anticipate God's judgment of Israel and of the nations.

Israel herself would be purged of evildoers, and the nations would be judged for their mistreatment of God's people. Israel would thus be saved via judgment and transformation.

And this is precisely what we see in Revelation:

Judgment on Jerusalem the Harlot, followed by a new restored (spiritual) Jerusalem.

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<sup>23</sup> Paul, ca. 52 AD, wrote about Nero (the "man of lawlessness") being restrained by some thing or person (2Thes 2:6-7). Paul was likely referring to the incumbent emperor, Claudius, whose sudden death just 2 to 3 years later (in October 54) cleared the way for Nero's accession. Nero's rule came to an inglorious end when the Roman Senate in June 64 declared him to be a public enemy.

## Revelation's Battles

Four battles are described in the latter chapters of Revelation:

(1) Armageddon; (2) against the Lamb; (3) against the Rider on the white horse; (4) Gog and Magog.

Each battle shows earth's rulers gathered to fight Christ and/or his people, only to be utterly defeated.

Those gathered to fight include kings, the Beast, those receiving his mark, and the nations.

While not specifically mentioned, the Harlot is involved too, if only to incite the protagonists in their fight.

There's good reason to believe these battles are one and the same — that they recapitulate the same events.

They all portray the persecution of the Church under Nero.

We will examine each battle in turn.

Battle #1: Armageddon (Rev 16:13-16).

Three evil spirits resembling frogs "go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty" (16:13-14).

Jesus is coming like a thief. Christians are to remain alert (16:15).

These kings are gathered to Armageddon (16:16).

Interpretation:

Though these enemies gather to do battle, they are equally being gathered for judgment!

And not for any old judgment: "the great day of God the Almighty" (16:14) is the final Judgment.

Of great comfort, Jesus is coming to deliver his people.

Kurt Simmons explains:

The battle is the persecution under Nero ... for 42 months. The [evil] spirits are the lies and slanders against the church that caused the Roman world and provincial governors to combine together for its destruction; like frogs, they catch men with their tongues.<sup>24</sup>

Armageddon means "mountain of Megiddo."

But there is in fact no such mountain!

So, what is John's point?

Megiddo was located in the Jezreel Valley, where numerous important battles had formerly been fought.<sup>25</sup>

John is alluding to these battles, where God had delivered his people from their oppressors:

Barak routed Sisera's Canaanite army near Mount Tabor in the Jezreel Valley (Jdg 4:14).

And just a few miles to the south, Gideon attacked the Midianites from the hill of Moreh (Jdg 7:1).

John is clearly alluding to these ancient battles — especially to that of Gideon (cf. Jdg 6:5; Rev 20:8; Eze 38:21).

Gideon's outnumbered forces defeated the Midianites when "the LORD turned every man's sword against his fellow man throughout the camp" (Jdg 7:22, MEV).

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<sup>24</sup> Kurt M. Simmons, *Revelation Explained: A Contemporary-Historical Analysis of the Apocalypse* (Carlsbad, NM: Biblical Publishing Company, 2010), p. 45.

<sup>25</sup> The town of Megiddo was located on the south side of the Jezreel Valley. The main north-south trade route between Egypt and Mesopotamia passed through this area. The Valley also served as a corridor for invading armies, and, being level ground, it became a favorite site for engagement in battle. So much so that *Jezreel* and *Megiddo* became synonyms for violence and bloodshed. Solomon fortified Megiddo to guard the pass heading southwest from the Jezreel Valley through the hill country and down to the coastal Plain of Sharon (1Kgs 9:15).

Armageddon is therefore to be understood as a symbolic place where the hordes arrayed against the first-century Church would meet their total defeat — their “Waterloo”. And that through self-destruction.<sup>26</sup>

**Battle #2:** Ten Kings against the Lamb and his followers (Rev 17:12-14).

The 10 kings are about to receive authority to rule along with the Beast (17:12).

They will serve the Beast (17:13).

They will make war against Jesus, and against his followers who are “with him” (17:14).

Jesus will win, for he is “Lord of lords and King of kings” (17:14).

Interpretation:

The 10 horns/kings are Roman provincial governors who will serve the Beast (Nero and his inquisition).

The inquisition has not yet started, but when it does, it will behave as if it were itself a king (Rev 17:11).

The Roman governors will implement the Beast through local persecution of Christians.

Thankfully, their reign of terror will be short-lived — “one hour” (17:12).

As aforementioned, all this relates to Nero’s brief but brutal persecution of the Church (64-68 AD).

**Battle #3:** Against the Rider on the white horse (Rev 19:11-21).

John sees Jesus in heaven riding a white horse and leading a heavenly army (19:11-14).

Jesus conquers and judges the nations by means of a “sharp sword” coming from his mouth (19:15).

He is “King of kings and Lord of lords” (19:16).

Yet thus far, earth’s rulers have resisted his rule.

Certain of victory, an angel invites the birds to gather for a feast of human and horse flesh (19:17-18).

The Beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies gather to fight the Rider on the horse and his army (19:19).

The Beast and the false prophet are captured and cast into hell (19:20).

Their allies are killed by the Rider’s sword (19:21).

Interpretation:

Jesus is in heaven (19:11). There is no suggestion that he himself physically returns to earth.

His army, while portrayed as being in heaven, represents his followers on earth:

As in Battle #2, the Beast’s allies fight Jesus by persecuting his followers who are “with him” (Rev 17:12-14).

That is really all they can do!

Moreover, this army is wearing clothing similar to that worn by the Bride — fine linen garments that signify the “righteous deeds of the saints” (Rev 19:8, 14). This army represents the persecuted saints on earth.

The sword from the Rider’s mouth is “the cleaving power of Christ’s word, the deadly blow of his judicial pronouncement” through which he punishes and slays the wicked (cf. Isa 11:4).<sup>27</sup>

He conquers in fulfillment of Psalm 2: “he will rule [the nations] with a rod of iron” (19:15; cf. Ps 2:9).<sup>28</sup>

Among the slain are “both free and slave, both small and great” (19:18). The armies of the Beast and of the kings therefore include those who have received the Beast’s mark (cf. Rev 13:16).

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<sup>26</sup> These enemies ultimately self-destructed through: (1) the onset of the Jewish War (from late 66 AD), as the Jews and Romans turned to fight each other; (2) the destructive infighting between several Jewish factions, both before and during the Roman siege of Jerusalem; (3) Nero’s suicide (on 9 June 68); (4) the civil wars that almost destroyed the Roman Empire (all of 69).

<sup>27</sup> Kurt M. Simmons, *The Consummation of the Ages*, p. 356.

<sup>28</sup> As the ultimate Davidic king, Jesus rules from the heavenly Zion (Ps 2:6; 110:1-2; Ac 2:33-36).

Note that the invitation for the birds to “gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of ... captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders ...” (19:17-18) derives directly from Ezekiel’s vision of Gog (in Ezekiel 39:17-20; especially verse 20), thus linking this battle with the next one (#4).

Battle #4: Gog and Magog (Rev 20:7-10).

Satan is released from the Abyss. Then he goes forth to deceive the nations and gather them for battle (20:7-9).

The nations are called Gog and Magog (20:8).

Vast hordes are gathered: “their number is like the sand of the sea” (20:8).

They surround “the camp of the saints and the beloved city” (20:9).

Fire comes down from heaven and consumes them (20:9).

Satan is cast into hell (20:10).

Interpretation:

John’s description draws on and adapts Ezekiel’s Gog-Magog prophecy (Ezekiel 38 – 39).

In Ezekiel, Gog commands a vast horde from many nations and comes to fight against Israel (Eze 38:1-16).

The Israelites have been gathered from exile and now enjoy safety in their own land (Eze 37:21ff.; 38:8).

Yahweh has forgiven their sins and cured their backsliding; “David” is their king and shepherd; they obey God’s laws; God dwells in their midst and has reestablished his covenant with them (Eze 37:23-28).

God’s Spirit has been poured out upon them (Eze 36:27; 39:29).

Needless to say, these prophecies anticipate the coming of Christ and the blessings of the New Covenant.

From Ezekiel’s prophecy we further note:

Yahweh himself will gather Gog for battle (Eze 38:16; 39:2).

Gog’s troops will turn against each other and self-destruct (Eze 38:21) — an allusion to the victories of Gideon and of Jehoshaphat against overwhelming odds (Jdg 6:5; 7:22; 2Chr 20:22-24).

Yahweh will judge Gog and his army by, among other things, raining burning sulfur upon them (Eze 38:22).

Yahweh will show his greatness and holiness through Gog’s destruction (Eze 38:23).

Yahweh will send fire on Magog (Gog’s country) and other lands (Eze 39:6).

Gog’s hordes will perish on the mountains of Israel, and their bodies will be food for the birds and wild animals (Eze 39:4, 17-20).

In Ezekiel, Gog attacks restored Israel (Eze 38:8).

So, in John’s vision, the attack on the “camp of the saints and the beloved city” (Rev 20:9) is an attack on the Church — the new, restored Jerusalem.

God’s people have recently been gathered from (spiritual) exile via the gospel.

And so, John’s reference is not to the old Judean city, which has become a harlot.

The hordes of Gog and Magog represent the coalition of enemies arrayed against the first-century Church.

Summary:

These 4 battles are one and the same.

They depict the overwhelming forces arrayed against the first-century Church: Nero, the local governors who enforce his inquisition, the Jewish leaders who incite persecution, Satan who acts behind the scenes, and others.

They show Jesus, enthroned in heaven, judging these hordes.

They all have reference to Nero's brutal 42-month persecution of the Church (Rev 13:5-7).

And they anticipate the demise and destruction of the persecutors.

## Appendix 1: The book of Revelation shows the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies

Revelation 22:10:

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

What John is directed to do here is the exact opposite to what Daniel was told some 600 years earlier:

Daniel 12:4:

*"But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. ..."*

Daniel had earlier been told to seal up one of his visions because it concerned the distant future:

Daniel 8:26:

*"The vision ... that has been told is true, but seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now."*

(Daniel's eighth chapter predicts the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire; its conquest by Alexander, whose own Empire will split into four lesser kingdoms; finally, the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes [who ruled 175-164 BC].

Thus, for the most part Daniel's vision concerned events a very long way off.)

The directive to Daniel is reiterated in Daniel 12:9:

*He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end."*

Daniel's visions would remain "shut up and sealed" — their meaning hidden — "until the time of the end."

As Kurt Simmons notes, concerning the sealing in Daniel 12:4:

*"[Daniel's] message was to remain unclear and obscure until the time neared for its fulfillment."<sup>29</sup>*

Daniel's prophecies concerned (among other things):

- the "latter days" and "time of the end" (2:28; 8:17, 19; 10:14; 11:40; 12:4, 9) — what would transpire in the time of the third and fourth empires.
- the coming of the messianic kingdom in the time of the fourth empire (2:44-45; 7:13-27).
- the Tribulation (12:1).
- the resurrection and judgment of the dead (12:2).
- Israel's fate in the latter days (10:14): the nation's destruction (9:26b; 12:7).

John's visions concerned many of the same events that Daniel had foretold, but now the time for fulfillment was fast approaching. Accordingly, John's prophecies were NOT to be sealed up.

All of John's visions were to be fulfilled very soon (Rev 1:1, 3; 22:6, 10).

The following are common to the prophecies of Daniel and John:

1. Both Daniel and John see "one like a son of man" (Dan 7:13; Rev 1:13; 14:14):

In Daniel, he ascends "with the clouds of heaven" into God's presence to be invested with divine authority (Dan 7:13-14). Daniel here is foretelling Jesus' ascension and heavenly coronation.

In Revelation, Jesus (having already ascended) now reigns from heaven and is about to return "with the clouds" as Judge (Rev 1:7; 22:7, 12, 20).

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<sup>29</sup> Kurt M. Simmons, *Adumbrations* (Carlsbad, NM: Biblical Publishing Company, 2009), p. 296.



2. Both prophecies show opposition to Christ's rule and persecution of his people.  
Daniel's "little horn" (Dan 7:8) is to be equated with the Beast of Revelation:  
He blasphemes God; the "saints" are handed over to him for 3½ years (Dan 7:21, 25; Rev 13:5-7).<sup>30</sup>
3. Daniel anticipates the Tribulation; John depicts it as imminent (Dan 12:1; Rev 3:10; cf. Mt 24:21).
4. Both anticipate the 70 AD demise of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation (Dan 9:26b; 12:7; Rev 11:8; 18:9-10).
5. Both anticipate the resurrection and judgment of the dead (Dan 12:2; Rev 20:11-15).
6. Both anticipate the saints reigning with Christ in the messianic kingdom (Dan 7:18, 22, 27; Rev 5:10; 22:5).

Daniel was shown the distant future: his prophecies were to be sealed and their meaning kept hidden.

John saw what was about to be fulfilled: his prophecies were not to be sealed up, for their meaning would soon be evident.

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<sup>30</sup> The horn and Beast refer to Nero, whose persecution began around November 64 AD and continued until his death in June 68.

## Appendix 2: Why did God judge the Harlot?

I have shown that the Harlot represents the Jews both in Judea and scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Here are the reasons why God poured out his wrath on the first-century Jews:

1. Judgment primarily came upon the nation for its murder of the Son of God.  
More than the Romans, the Jews were the ones responsible for Jesus' crucifixion (Ac 2:23, 36; 3:13-15; 5:30; 7:52; 1Thes 2:15; Rev 1:7). While Jesus prayed for their forgiveness (Lk 23:34), and many Jews subsequently came to faith, the bulk of the nation and its leaders remained impenitent.
2. The judgment of the Jews and their city vindicated Jesus as the One he had claimed to be — the "Son of Man" who would return to judge his enemies (Mt 26:64; cf. Ps 110:1; Dan 7:13-14; Mt 24:30 [KJV]).  
Moreover, Jesus was vindicated not just before the Jews, but before the watching world as well:  
By AD 70, the message of Jesus as the long-awaited Jewish Messiah had been proclaimed throughout the Roman world (Mt 24:14). His rejection and crucifixion at the hands of the Jewish leaders, and his promise to return to judge their nation, must have become widely known.  
The dramatic turn of events over several years (64-70 AD), culminating in the bloody siege and destruction of Jerusalem, demonstrated that Jesus was indeed the One he had claimed to be.<sup>31</sup>  
People everywhere could "see" (i.e., perceive) that he was in heaven ruling and judging (Rev 1:7).  
Jesus' followers were also thereby vindicated:  
Jews living throughout the Empire were generally disliked because of their exclusive, monotheistic claims. But with the rise of Christianity, another group laid claim to being the true people of God!  
And so, Christians also came to be disliked and hated — by Gentiles, and by the Jews too (Mt 24:9).  
But through the dramatic turn of events, Christians and not the Jews were shown to be the true people of God. See Revelation 3:9; cf. Isaiah 66:5-6.<sup>32</sup>
3. For their history of persecution.  
The Harlot was judged for her persecution of both Old Testament prophets and New Testament saints (Rev 17:6; 18:20, 24; cf. Mt 23:35).  
Jesus indicted the religious leaders of his day, warning that continued persecution would result in their filling up the measure of their forefathers' sin. Wrath would come upon that generation and on their city (Mt 23:29-38; cf. 22:7).  
And so it proved to be. The Jews actively persecuted their Christian brothers (1Thes 2:14; Heb 10:32-34; 13:3; Jas 2:6-7; 5:1-6; Rev 2:9; 3:9).
4. For their opposition to the proclamation of the gospel.  
For 30+ years the Jews had strongly opposed the apostolic proclamation, both within and outside of Judea (Ac 4:1-21; 5:17-40; 6:9 – 8:3; 13:45, 50; 14:2, 19; 17:5, 13; 2Cor 11:24; etc.).

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<sup>31</sup> Events such as Nero's persecution of Christians (from November 64 AD), which was probably encouraged and supported by the Jews; the Jews and Romans at war with each other (from late 66); Nero's sudden suicide (9 June 68); civil wars and widespread unrest (all of 69); finally, the dramatic destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Roman army (August/September 70).

<sup>32</sup> As Kenneth Gentry notes, the vindication of the persecuted followers of Christ is one of the key concerns of the book of Revelation (1:9; 2:9-10; 3:9-10; 6:9-11; 11:7-8, 11-13, 18; 12:10; 13:10; 14:11-13; 16:5-6; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:2; 20:4, 6).

See: <https://postmillennialworldview.com/2020/01/21/the-kings-of-the-earth-and-psalm-2-10/>.

Note that Paul speaks of the first-century Jews as those:

*<sup>15</sup> who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind <sup>16</sup> 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 wrath has come upon them at last!*

(1 Thessalonians 2:15-16)

5. Jesus returned in order to give relief to his persecuted followers:  
Relief for persecuted Gentile believers (2Thes 1:6-7; cf. 1Thes 2:14), and relief for Jewish believers persecuted and ostracized by their fellow Jews (Jas 5:7-9; cf. 5:1-6).
6. Judaizers and other false teachers had infiltrated and wreaked havoc in the churches (2 Peter 2; Jude; Revelation 2).  
Both Peter and Jude anticipate God's (imminent) judgment upon these imposters.
7. Jerusalem, with its temple and priesthood and rituals, had served its purpose.  
So long as these stood, they served as an implicit denial of the spiritual realities to which they pointed, namely, Jesus as the true high priest and sacrifice; the coming of the spiritual city, temple, and kingdom, etc. The Old Covenant order simply had to be swept away so that the new order might be manifested (Heb 8:13; 12:22, 27-28).