

14 DATING THE BOOK OF REVELATION USING INTERNAL EVIDENCE

Introduction: There are primarily two commonly held dates for the writing of Revelation: around AD 65 during Nero's reign and around AD 95 during Domitian's reign with the Jewish/Roman War occurring between them AD 67-70*. External evidence for dating the book is somewhat tenuous and controversial, but of greater value and interest is the evidence we find internally, within the text itself. We must keep in mind that the language of imminence** is conspicuous throughout the book of Revelation so we must logically look for the fulfillment of the prophecy under consideration in the immediate time period of either the AD 65 date or the AD 95 date.

1. "I know your works, oppression, and your poverty (but you are rich) and the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Don't be afraid of the things which you are about to suffer." Rev 2:9-10

Before the relationship of Rome and Jerusalem turned oppositional in AD 66, Jewish leadership used the legal system of Rome to persecute Christians. Jesus had foretold the persecution believers would suffer: "They will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you up to synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for my name's sake." Lk 21:12. In this Revelation 2 passage, we see Jewish synagogues still active in the persecution of Christians which indicates the book was written before AD 66 because Jewish persecution did not continue after the war. This passage favors the early date.

2. "I give of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie, behold, I will make them to come and adore before thy feet. And they shall know that I have loved thee...behold I come quickly." Rev. 3:9-11

Again, we see the synagogue persecution of Christians. Jesus told the Jewish leadership: "Therefore, behold, I send to you prophets, wise men, and scribes. Some of them you will kill and crucify; and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city." Mt. 23: 34-35. Jewish persecution of Christians was not prevalent after the war of AD 67-70, but certainly was before. This passage favors the early date.

3. "Leave out the court which is outside of the temple, and don't measure it, for it has been given to the nations. They will tread the holy city under foot for forty-two months." Rev. 11:2

This prophecy reminds us of when Jesus foretold the coming war: "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is at hand...Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Lk. 21: 20-24. Forty-two months (spring of 67 to fall of 70) was the duration of the Jewish/Roman war. We are uncertain to what it may apply around AD 95. This passage favors the early date.

4. "My two witnesses... will prophesy one thousand two hundred sixty days." Rev. 11:3

Here again, is the length of the Jewish/Roman war, 67-70. We are not aware of a theory to which the apparently very significant 3.5 years may refer around AD 95. This passage favors the early date.

5. "Their dead bodies will be in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified." Rev. 11:8

We know Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem therefore Jerusalem was the great city. Jerusalem was indeed a prosperous, great city before the war, but most certainly was not after the war. Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us that after the war, "There was nothing left to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited. This is the end which Jerusalem came to ...a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind." [Wars, 7:1:1]. This passage favors the early date.

6. "The woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that there they may nourish her one thousand two hundred sixty days. Two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, so that she might be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time..." Rev. 12:6, 14

Here are two more references to 3.5 years, except in this context, it pertains to the Christians who fled the scene of the conflict as their Lord had counseled them. "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is at hand. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let those who are in the midst of her depart. Let those who are in the country not enter therein. 22 For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 24 They will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Lk. 21:20-24. Historian Eusebius, reported of the Christians' escape.

7. "A mouth speaking great things and blasphemy was given to him. Authority to make war for forty-two months was given to him." Rev. 13:5

Here we have 3.5 years again with the same issues as with #3, #4, #6 above. Where do we find significance in 3.5 years after AD 90? This passage favors the early date. ****

8. "Here is wisdom. He who has understanding, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. His number is six hundred sixty-six." Rev. 13:18

The first century Hebrew spelling of Nero Caesar was Nrwn Qsr which totals 666 using numerical equivalences. Jastrow's lexicon of the Talmud contains this very spelling with the numeral valuation of N = 50, R = 200, W = 6, N = 50, Q = 100, S = 60, R = 200. We need someone to put forward gematria for Domitian or some other explanation to argue for the AD 95. This passage favors the early date. (Reference: preteristarchive.com)

9. "The great city was divided into three parts." Rev. 16:19

This passage states that the Great City (Jerusalem), was split into 3 parts. Jewish historian Josephus, reports that there were 3 factions of Jewish rebels in Jerusalem fighting each other to gain the ascendancy during the war. They were led by John of Gischala, Eleazar ben Simon, and Simon son of Gioras. [Wars, 5:1:1] As in #5, Jerusalem was no longer "great" in AD 90s. This passage favors the early date.

10. "The seven heads are seven mountains, upon which the woman sitteth, and they are seven kings: Five are fallen, one is, and the other is not yet come: and when he is come, he must remain a short time." Rev. 17:9-10

Rome had had 5 past kings (Caesars) in AD 65: Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius.*** Nero (ruled 54-68 AD) would have been the current 6th king when we consider the early date. Galba was the 7th emperor and ruled only 7 months. If we assume Domitian to be on the throne during the writing of Revelation, we count: Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian would be the twelfth. There is no mention of twelve kings in Revelation. This passage favors the early date.

11. "The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth." Rev. 17:18

Again, Jerusalem is the Great City identified in 11:8, but was not great in AD 90s after the war, when the city was in ruin. She was indeed great during the first half of the AD 60s. This passage favors the early date.

12. "I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her [the great city 18:10], my people, that you have no participation in her sins, and that you don't receive of her plagues, for her sins have reached to the sky, and God has remembered her iniquities." Rev 18:4-5

To people living in AD 65, this would echo Jesus's admonition to leave Jerusalem."Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let those who are in the midst of her depart. Let those who are in the country not enter therein..." Lk. 21:21 It also points at Jerusalem's history of persecution. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets, and stones those who are sent to her!" Mt. 23:37. This passage makes no sense in an AD 90s context due to Jerusalem's ruin at that time. This passage favors the early date before Jerusalem's destruction.

*Technically, the duration of the war was seven years, but the decisive covenantal and political blow was made at the half-way mark in AD 70 with the destruction of the holy city and the temple. Duration: spring 67 to fall 70.

****Book of Revelation Demands First Century Fulfillment**

1. Rev. 1:1 "what must happen soon "
2. Rev. 1:3 "for the time is at hand"
3. Rev. 1:11 (written to first century churches)
4. Rev. 1:19 "things which are, and the things which will happen hereafter;"
5. Rev. 2:10 "things which you are about to suffer"
6. Rev. 2:10 "devil is about to throw some of you into prison"
7. Rev. 3:11 "I am coming quickly"
8. Rev. 10:6 "no longer be delay"
9. Rev. 22:6 God is showing..."things which must happen soon."
10. Rev. 22:7 "I come quickly"
11. Rev. 22:10 "The time is at hand"
12. Rev. 22:12 "I am come quickly"
13. Rev. 22:20. "Surely, I come quickly"

***Some argue that Augustus was the first true emperor, however, historians Josephus and Suetonius, counted the emperors starting with Julius Caesar as the first.

**** The 42 months (3.5 years) of Rev. 13 appears to pertain to the persecution of Christians by Nero AD Nov. 64 to June 68.