

# AN INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION

## PART 2: THE DATE OF REVELATION

Some may wonder why discerning the date in which Revelation was written is important. The date in which it was written affects how the book can be interpreted. The same is true with the Old Testament prophetic books. There are three main dates (better yet, three main time periods) that are suggested for the writing of Revelation:

- During the Reign of Domitian (AD 81-96)
- During the Reign of Vespasian (AD 69-79)
- During the Reign of Nero (AD 54-68)

## MIRACLES AND THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES COMPLETED AT THE SAME TIME

- I Corinthians 13:8-10 – When that which is perfect comes, that which is in part (prophecy, tongues, supernatural knowledge) would cease.
- The "perfect" is the New Testament writings, which one could "look into" (James 1:25 – the Perfect Law of Liberty) and is also called the "will of God" (Romans 12:2).
- According to the apostle Paul, when the written will of God (the New Testament Scriptures) was completed, miracles would cease.
- Therefore, if we can know when miracles ceased, we can know when the New Testament Scriptures were completed, because both happened at the same time.

Other notes:

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## OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES ABOUT THE END OF MIRACLES

- Zechariah 13:2 – "I will cause the prophets...to pass out of the land"
  - This is said in the context of the death of Christ (12:10), forgiveness of sins (13:1), the abandonment of the disciples of Jesus (13:7), and the destruction of Jerusalem (14:1-2).
  - Sometime in the time period ("in that day" – 12:11, 13:1, 13:2, 13:4) described in this section, miracles would cease.
- Micah 7:15 – "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt I will shew unto him marvelous things."

- This is said in the context of forgiveness of sins to Jew and Gentiles (7:19) and of fulfilling the promise made to Abraham and Jacob (7:20) which both were fulfilled in Christ (Galatians 3:14-16).
- Micah 7:15 describes the time of miracles in the church, which was "according to the days of the coming out of Egypt (Hebrews 3:9-10 says it was forty years).
- Joel 2:28-32/Acts 2:16-21 – "In the last days...I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh, and ... [they] shall prophesy...dream dreams...see visions"
  - "The last days" was a reference to the last days of Judah/Jerusalem (See Micah 3:12-4:2, Isaiah 2:1-4).
  - This prophecy included the overthrow of a nation – Judah (Acts 2:20), from which they were told to "save yourselves from THIS untoward GENERATION" (Acts 2:40).
  - Miracles were prophesied to take place in the last days of Jerusalem/Judah, prior to its overthrow, which would happen in that same generation (see Acts 2:40, Matthew 23:34-36, 24:34).
- The Scriptures foretold that miracles would take place in the last days of Judah/Jerusalem, that they would "pass from the land" before the destruction of Jerusalem, and that they would last 40 years – all of which are ways of saying the same thing: miracles would cease by AD 70.
- Because miracles would cease by AD 70, we have the apostle Paul's word that the New Testament Scriptures were completed by AD 70 as well, Revelation included.

Other Notes:

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## EVIDENCE FOR THE DATE FROM WITHIN REVELATION

Though there is MUCH, MUCH more that could be added (and we will cover them as we go through the book), the following passages should be enough to convince any honest student of the period in which Revelation was written. Note that these verses tell us very clearly that the events in Revelation were going to happen in their near future.

- Revelation 1:1 – "...to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass."
- Revelation 1:3 – "the time is at hand."
- Revelation 22:6 – "...to show unto His servants things which must shortly be done."
- Revelation 22:10 – "the time is at hand."

Notice now in which city some of these things, which are about to happen, will take place:

- Revelation 11:8 – "...in the street of **that great city**, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, **where also our Lord was crucified.**"

- Luke 13:33 – Jesus specifically said He had to go to Jerusalem, because "it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem."
- Jerusalem is the ONLY city in which Jesus was crucified.
- We could also notice that Jerusalem was called "Sodom" in the Old Testament on multiple occasions (see Isaiah 1:1, 10, Jeremiah 23:14, Ezekiel 16:46).
- No events can take place in a "great city" if that "great city" doesn't exist anymore.
- Because John records that some of the events in Revelation that were about to happen would take place in Jerusalem, it proves that Jerusalem still existed when Revelation was written.
- Therefore, Revelation was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Other Notes:

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Questions:

1. What event did both Zechariah and Joel mention in connection with the timeframe of miracles?  
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2. Biblically speaking, by what date must the book of Revelation (and the rest of the New Testament) have been written? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What "great city" was still in existence when Revelation was written, according to Revelation 11:8? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Which evidence should we go to in order to tell us when the book of Revelation was written: the Bible, or uninspired writers? \_\_\_\_\_
5. The majority of "scholars" in the 1800s and early 1900s believed the book was written prior to AD 70. The majority of "scholars" today believe the book was written in AD 95-96. Is putting your trust in "scholars" a safe guide? \_\_\_\_\_

## BONUS MATERIAL

The material contained here is not given as proof for the pre-AD 70 writing of Revelation, but to give you some thoughts of ancient writers on the subject. That they said it does not make it true, for many of these writers were horribly mistaken about various things in the Bible. These are included only for informational purposes.

### **IRENÆUS (c AD 135-202)**

Speaking of the book of Revelation, and the number 666, Irenaeus said that "Such, then, being the state of the case, and this number being found in all the most approved and *ancient copies* [of the Apocalypse]..." (*Against Heresies* Book 5, Chapter 30, Section 1). Since he later in the same chapter said that something was "was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign," it seems obvious that he considered Domitian's reign (81-96) to be relatively recent, historically speaking (*Against Heresies* 5.30.3). Since he knew of "ancient copies" of Revelation, it stands to reason that these copies existed from before Domitian's reign, which wasn't ancient, but very recent to him.

### **THE MURATORIAN CANON (c AD 170-210)**

Contained in this listing of the books of the New Testament comes these words, "Paul, following the order of his own predecessor John, writes to no more than seven churches by name." Paul died, by all accounts, in AD 68. If he was "following the order" of John's writing to seven churches (see Revelation 1:4), then Revelation had to have been written before Paul finished writing his letters.

### **THE SYRIAC TRANSLATIONS (LATE 1<sup>ST</sup>/EARLY 2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY)**

The Syriac (Aramaic) translations of the New Testament contain the following words as the title to the final book of the New Testament: "The Revelation, which was made by God to John the Evangelist, in the island of Patmos, to which he was banished by Nero the Emperor." It was the opinion of the earliest translators of the New Testament that Revelation was written during the time of Nero (AD 58-64).

### **CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (AD 150-215)**

Regarding the completion of the ministry of Christ and His apostles, this second-century writer said, "For the teaching of our Lord at His advent, beginning with Augustus and Tiberius, was completed in the middle of the times of Tiberius. And that of the apostles, embracing the ministry of Paul, end with Nero" (*Miscellanies* 7:17).

### **SIR ISAAC NEWTON**

Isaac Newton insisted that the book of Revelation was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. One of his proofs was the amount of fake "Revelations" or "Apocalypses" that existed in imitation of the real thing (which obviously must have existed early on in order for the fake ones to exist when they did). His commentary on Revelation includes the following interesting information: "Caius, who was contemporary with Tertullian, tells us that Cerinthus wrote his Revelations as [though he was] a great Apostle, and pretended the visions were shown him by Angels, asserting a millennium of carnal pleasures at Jerusalem after the resurrection; so that his Apocalypse was plainly written in imitation of John's: and yet he [Cerinthus] lived so early, that he resisted the Apostles at Jerusalem in or before the first year of Claudius, that is, 26 years before the death of Nero, and [he] died before John."