

Early Date of Revelation (Summer AD 62)

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- Aug. 19, 2012

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Last time we looked at the arrest and death of James and some of his companions which happened in the Spring of AD 62 while Paul was in prison (or house-arrest) in Rome for two years (AD 61-63).
- B. We also looked at the evidence for the early date (Summer 62) of the Book of Revelation, written while John was on the island of Patmos, and while Paul was still in prison in Rome.
- C. In this lesson, I want to finish our discussion on the date of Revelation, and look at some of the signs that began appearing in Jerusalem at the time Revelation was written (e.g., Jesus b. Ananus crying out "Woe, Woe to Jerusalem").

Early Date of the Book of Revelation

Summer 62 – The Book of Revelation was most likely written sometime between John's arrival on Patmos in the late Spring or early Summer of 62 and the Neronian persecution in late 64 when he was most likely killed. My best guess is that it was written in late 62 soon after John had arrived on Patmos (Summer 62), almost a year before Paul was released from his first imprisonment (Spring 63). That would explain how both Peter and Paul were seemingly familiar with the contents of Revelation when they wrote their epistles (1 & 2 Peter and Hebrews) in AD 63-64.

One of the best arguments for the early date of Revelation is Peter's mention of "Babylon" in 1 Pet. 5:13, which implies that Peter had read the book of Revelation before he wrote his first epistle in AD 63-64. The same may be implied by Peter's references to the New Heavens and Earth in 2 Peter 3 (written in AD 64), and Paul's references to the Heavenly City, New Jerusalem, and unshakable new heavens and earth in his epistle to the Hebrews (ch. 12) which was written just before he was released from his first Roman imprisonment (March AD 63).

We need to look at those three texts before going any further. Note the references to "Babylon" (1 Pet. 5:13), plus Paul's statements about the heavenly Jerusalem and New Heavens and Earth (Heb. 12), and the discussion about the heavens and earth in 2 Pet. 3.

These references to Babylon and the New Heavens and Earth do not prove that Paul and Peter had seen the book of Revelation by the time they wrote their epistles in AD 63-64, but they do suggest at the very least that these things were known to Paul and Peter by this time, either by direct revelation to them at the same time John had received it, or by reading the book of Revelation. What are the chances that these things could be mentioned in three separate epistles, using the same kind of description as we find in Revelation, without Peter and Paul having read or known about the statements in Revelation, and without them having already been revealed to John? And if Peter and Paul had already received independent revelations about this before AD 70, why would John need to have it all revealed to him again after AD

70? Why didn't Paul and Peter just give us all the details in their epistles? The obvious answer to that is because John had already given those details in the book of Revelation which was written before Paul and Peter wrote. Paul and Peter had seen the Apocalypse and did not need to give the details. By alluding to it in their three epistles, they were showing not only that they were aware of John's Apocalypse, but were in full agreement with it. It was Peter's way of putting his stamp of canonical approval on the Apocalypse.

Notice also the similarity between Paul's statements in Heb. 13:13-14 ("Let us go out to Him outside the camp") and John's statements in Rev. 18:4 ("Come out of her my people"). Paul was evidently aware of the warning in Revelation to get out of Jerusalem before the End came "in a very little while" (Heb. 10:37). It is no coincidence that Paul says this right after he had discussed several other ideas that appear to have been likewise drawn from the book of Revelation (Heb. ch. 12). This again implies that Revelation was written and in circulation before Paul wrote his epistle to the Hebrew Christians (i.e., before March AD 63).

Here we have three separate witnesses to the material that is found in Revelation, all three of which were written in AD 63-64 (well over six years before the destruction of Jerusalem). If Paul was aware of the book of Revelation when he wrote Hebrews, then that would allow for the writing of Revelation as early as late AD 62 a few months after John arrived on Patmos. If Paul and Peter merely received an independent revelation of these things at the same time John did, then that would allow the writing of Revelation anytime before the Neronian persecution broke out in late AD 64, when Peter, Paul and John would have been killed. The book of Revelation predicts the Neronian persecution and all the martyrs that went to heaven as a result of that "great tribulation" (Rev. 7:14). This for sure dates the book before the Neronian persecution in late AD 64.

Many have asked me about the **seven churches of Asia** that are mentioned in Rev. 2-3. What happened to them? Since the book of Revelation (written in AD 63) warned them to repent, or else they would be destroyed soon, it seems that they must have been destroyed soon after the book was written. The event which caused their candlesticks to be removed was probably the Neronian persecution (AD 64), which evidently spread quickly to the cities on the Mediterranean rim. This indeed occurred not long after the book was written. This again points to the book of Revelation being written and in circulation before the outbreak of the Neronian persecution in late AD 64. We will deal more with this when we get to **Sept AD 64** ("**What happened to the seven churches of Asia?**").

Sep - 62 – After Albinus the Procurator had rounded up some of the Sicarii, then the Sicarii took hostages to trade for their comrades that Albinus had imprisoned.

Eleazar b. Ananias (scribe of the Temple governor) was one of the hostages captured by the Sicarii at the Feast of Booths (Sept 62).

Oct - 62 – **Jesus b. Ananus** began crying out "**Woe, Woe to Jerusalem!**" Four years before the war began, at the Feast of Booths (October) in AD 62, this commoner, a farmer, suddenly began crying out these words of woe against Jerusalem and the whole Jewish people. Here is what Josephus said about it:

War 6:300 (6.5.3) ...But, what is still more terrible there was one **Jesus, the son of Ananus**, a plebeian and a **husbandman**, who, **four years before the war began [i.e., AD 62]**, and at a time when the city was in very great peace and prosperity, came to that feast whereon it is our custom for everyone to make tabernacles to God in the temple,

War 6:301 (6.5.3) began on a sudden cry aloud, “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!” This was his cry, as he went about by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city.

War 6:302 (6.5.3) However, certain of the most eminent among the populace had great indignation at this dire cry of his, and took up the man, and gave him a great number of severe stripes; yet did not he either say anything for himself, or anything peculiar to those that chastised him, but still he went on with the same words which he cried before.

War 6:303 (6.5.3) Hereupon our rulers supposing, as the case proved to be, that this was a sort of **divine fury in the man**, brought him to the Roman procurator;

War 6:304 (6.5.3) where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare; yet did he not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable tone possible, at every stroke of the whip his answer was, “Woe, woe to Jerusalem!”

War 6:305 (6.5.3) And when **Albinus** (for he was then our procurator) asked him who he was, and whence he came, and why he uttered such words; he made no manner of reply to what he said, but still did not leave off **his melancholy ditty**, till Albinus took him to be a madman, and dismissed him.

War 6:306 (6.5.3) Now, during all the time that passed before the war began, this man did not go near any of the citizens, nor was seen by them while he said so; but he every day uttered these lamentable words, as if it were his premeditated vow, “Woe, woe, to Jerusalem!”

War 6:307 (6.5.3) Nor did he give ill words to any of those that beat him every day, nor good words to those that gave him food; but this was his reply to all men, and indeed no other than a **melancholy presage of what was to come**.

War 6:308 (6.5.3) This cry of his was the loudest at the festivals; and he continued this ditty for seven years and five months, without growing hoarse, or being tired therewith, until the very time that **he saw his presage in earnest fulfilled in our siege**, when it ceased;

War 6:309 (6.5.3) for as he was going round upon the wall, he cried out with his utmost force, “Woe, woe, to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house!” And just as he added at the last, “Woe, woe, to myself also!” there came a stone out of one of the engines, and smote him, and killed him immediately; and as he was uttering the very same presages, he gave up the ghost.

Sounds like the woes mentioned in the book of Revelation (Rev 8:13, cf. Rev. 18:10-19). Notice the similarities boldfaced below:

Rev. 8:13 And I saw, and I heard one messenger, flying in the mid-heaven, saying with a great voice, ‘Woe, woe, woe, to those dwelling upon the land from the rest of the voices of the trumpet of the three messengers who are about to sound.’ [YLT]

Rev. 18:10 from afar having stood because of the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city! Babylon, the strong city! because in one hour did come thy judgment. [YLT]

Rev. 18:16 and saying, Woe, woe, the great city, that was arrayed with fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and gilded in gold, and precious stone, and pearls — because in one hour so much riches were made waste! [YLT]

Rev. 18:19 and they did cast dust upon their heads, and were crying out, weeping and sorrowing, saying, Woe, woe, the great city! in which were made rich all having ships in the sea, out of her costliness — for in one hour was she made waste. [YLT]

If the book of Revelation had been written and was in circulation by this time, it would surely have made a lot of sense to the Jewish Christians who were present for that Feast of Booths and heard Jesus the Farmer pronounce his woes. They would have recognized the similarities with the woes pronounced in the book of Revelation (Rev 8:13, cf. Rev. 18:10-19), and would have seen this as a signal to get out of Jerusalem right then (AD 62). Eusebius (Eccl. Hist. 3.5.3) says that the saints were indeed warned "before the war" (which started in AD 66) to get out of Jerusalem:

3Euseb. 5:3 But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come thither from Jerusalem, 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.

It is important to note here that both Apostles John and Paul (Rev. 18:4, and Heb. 13:13-14) warned them to get out of Jerusalem before the "Great Tribulation" (Neronic persecution in AD 64). Quoted below are their warnings to get out of Jerusalem before the Neronic persecution started:

Rev. 18:4 And I heard another voice out of the heaven, saying, 'Come forth out of her, My people, that ye may not partake with her sins, and that ye may not receive of her plagues,

Heb. 13:13 So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

Heb. 13:14 For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking *the city* which is to come.

We noted also that Peter in his first epistle (1 Pet. 5:13) stated that he was writing from the church in Babylon (code name for Jerusalem), showing that he was familiar with the material in the book of Revelation before he wrote in AD 63. So it seems appropriate for the book of Revelation to have been written and in circulation by the time *Jesus the Farmer* pronounced these similar woes in October 62 AD. Indeed, if John was exiled in April of 62, he would have had four or five months to have written it and put it into circulation before Jesus the Farmer started declaring doom on Jerusalem. That is exactly the date that I prefer (Summer of AD 62).

Jesus the Farmer continued his doomsayings for seven years and five months until one of the stones from the stone throwing engines (ballistae) struck him dead during the siege [March of AD 70]. [*Wars* 6.300-309 (6.5.3)] Josephus seems to relate firsthand details regarding this prophet's ministry, so it seems likely that this prophet began his pronouncements before Josephus went to Rome to free the hostage priests. We also notice that Josephus doesn't give any further details about this except to say that the prophet continued his sayings until the [Roman] siege began and a stone from the "stone throwers" struck him dead.

If any of this material has raised any questions for you,
or if you need more information, do not hesitate to email me at:
PRETERIST1@PRETERIST.ORG

There are a lot of great supplementary articles posted on our website,
plus books and audio/video media for purchase. Here is the link:
<http://preterist.org>

If you would like a couple of great books which detail all of these events, I would recommend **ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS** by F. F. Bruce, which is available for order at our website (www.preterist.org), and **JEWISH BACKGROUNDS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT** by J. Julius Scott, which is available from Amazon.com. Be sure to get a copy of my book, **First Century Events**, which deals with the Roman, Jewish, and Christian events of the first century. We will be using it as a study guide here in our studies of the first century. You can purchase it from our website: www.preterist.org

Some further recommended reading: (both available at website above)
Josephus *Antiquities* and *Wars* (sections which deal with the Herodian rulers)
Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*