

# Understanding “The Revelation”

## Part 2

### Revelation 13:11-21



We began last week to introduce the book of Revelation. We discussed two basic issues that are keys to this book: When was it written? What is the proper approach?

We explored the question of the **date** that Revelation was written. The interpretation of Revelation hinges on whether it was written before or after [the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70](#). Strong internal evidence points to an [early date view](#): Revelation was written in A.D. 65-66. According to the early date view, Revelation speaks of the birth pangs of the Kingdom, the end of Old Covenant Israel, and the beginning of Church history.

We also explored the **proper approach** to the book of Revelation. There are four basic views as to how to approach the book of Revelation. We focused our discussion



on the two most popular views, the **Futurist** and **Preterist** views. The Futurist view is undoubtedly the most popular today due to the influence of Dispensationalism. This view holds that the prophecies in the book of Revelation are yet to be fulfilled.

We are looking at Revelation from [the full Preterist view](#). This view understands all of the prophecies in Revelation as having already been fulfilled. This view says that the [Great Tribulation](#), [the Rapture](#), [the Resurrection](#), [the Judgment](#) and the [Second Coming of Christ](#), are all behind us. According to Preterists (full and partial), the Great Tribulation was [the destruction of Jerusalem](#) by the Roman army in A.D.70. This has been the belief of Christians throughout the history of the Church until the last hundred years or so. We based our approach on the hermeneutical principle of [audience relevance](#), which asks, “What did the original readers understand the passage to mean.” If the book of Revelation was written to the Berean Bible Church, which is in Hampton Roads, Virginia, what would you think when you read Revelation 1:1?

***The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, (Revelation 1:1 NASB)***

***Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near. (Revelation 1:3 NASB)***

Would you expect the events in the book to happen soon? Yes, you would and so did the original audience.

This brings us to the third key to Revelation, the **theme**. We began to touch on this last week; almost every commentary agrees that Revelation 1:7 is the theme of Revelation:

***BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. (Revelation 1:7 NASB)***

This passage speaks of **Christ's Second Coming in judgment on Israel**. We noticed that cloud comings in the First Testament

are frequently prophetic emblems of God's judgment on the nations. The coming spoken of in Revelation is to be upon those **"who pierced Him."** Who is that? The New Testament continually points out that those who pierced Christ were the first century Jews. Also those who pierced Christ are **"the tribes of the earth"** (or the land), which refers to the Promised Land, or Israel. This book introduces its readers to the theology of **judgment** and, specifically, God's judgment sanctions against the nation of Israel.

Israel had crucified the Lord and publicly called God's judgment down on themselves:

***And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!" (Matthew 27:25 NASB)***

God's judgment on Israel in AD 70, matched their crime, the crucifixion of Christ. This crime was the worst in history, so their punishment was also the worst in history. To call anything else **"the Great Tribulation"** is to downplay the immensity of that generation's crime.

The [Olivet Discourse](#) contains Christ's prophecy of the destruction of the temple and the Tribulation. A number of Biblical scholars note that Revelation seems to be John's ([John Eleazar or Lazarus](#)) version of the Olivet Discourse and his expansion on it. Let us look first at a comparison of the Olivet Discourse and the Revelation. First of all, Revelation 1:1 says the events of the book are **shortly** to come to pass. In the Olivet Discourse Christ says:

***"Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. (Matthew 24:34 NASB)***

Secondly, both mention the Great Tribulation:

***"For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. (Matthew 24:21 NASB)***

***I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:14 NASB)***

Finally, both mention the temple and its approaching destruction, even using the same terms:

***"Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. (Revelation 11:2 NASB)***

The word **"tread"** here is the Greek word [pateho](#), and the word **"nations"** is [ethnos](#):

***and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:24 NASB)***

The word **"trampled"** here is also the Greek word [pateho](#), and the word **"Gentiles"** is the word [ethnos](#). John and Luke are talking about the same subject, and they use the same words.

The Olivet Discourse, which forms the foundation of Revelation, has a strong focus on **Israel's fate**. The Fourth Gospel is the only one of the four Gospels that doesn't include the Olivet Discourse, because Lazarus deals with it in the book of Revelation.

The theological context of the Olivet Discourse begins in [Matthew 21:19](#) where Christ curses the fig tree as He enters Jerusalem. Shortly thereafter He gives the parable of the householder in [Matthew 21:33](#). In this parable he prophesies:

***"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. (Matthew 21:43 NASB)***

They knew that He spoke of Israel:

***When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. (Matthew 21:45 NASB)***

In Matthew 23 Jesus reproaches the scribes and Pharisees by calling them hypocrites ([Matthew 23:13-15](#)); in [Matthew 23:31-36](#)

He notes that Israel historically killed the prophets and now she is about to kill the Son of God. Matthew 23:36 speaks of **"this generation,"** and in verses 37-38 the focus on Israel is indisputable. This is the context building up to the Olivet Discourse.

The very question that opens the Olivet Discourse concerns the temple:

***Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."*** (Matthew 24:1-2 NASB)

The disciples respond by asking:

***As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"*** (Matthew 24:3 NASB)

They are asking, "When will the Temple be destroyed?" The Jewish Temple is at the heart of the Olivet Discourse:

***"Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),*** (Matthew 24:15 NASB)

The **"holy place"** is the Jewish Temple. Now notice what Jesus says in:

**Pax Romana** (Latin for "[Roman peace](#)") was the long period of relative peace and minimal expansion by military force experienced by the [Roman Empire](#) in the [first](#) and [second centuries AD](#). Since it was established by [Caesar Augustus](#) it is sometimes called **Pax Augusta**. Its span was approximately 200 years (27 BC to 180 AD).

***"You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.*** (Matthew 24:6 NASB)

When have we not had wars and rumors of wars in history? What kind of sign is that? If you had lived in the era known as the ["Pax Romana,"](#) the era of the peace of Rome, this would have been a significant sign. Augustus inaugurated an "Age of Peace" in 17 B.C. In the Roman Empire proper; this period of peace

remained comparatively undisturbed until the time of Nero. The wars and rumors of wars in the Pax Romana immediately preceded the Tribulation.

***"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.*** (Matthew 24:14 NASB)

Here Jesus says that the Gospel would be preached to all nations before the end comes. Remember, Jesus was a Jew speaking to Jews, and salvation was of the Jews. The early Christian church was made up of only Jews, it was approximately ten years after Pentecost when the first Gentiles were brought into the church without first becoming Jewish proselytes. It was the movement at Antioch that decided to begin Christian missions to **"all the world"** ([Acts 11:19-30](#)). The Gospel was to go beyond Judaism before the end came. Scripture shows us that the Gospel was preached to all the world before the age ended in A.D. 70.

***because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;*** (Colossians 1:5-6 NASB)

Colossians is one of Paul's four "prison Epistles." The general consensus is that these Epistles were written during Paul's imprisonment at Rome. If such is truly the case, then Paul wrote Colossians around A.D. 60-63 from Rome. So by A.D. 63 the Gospel had come to the Colossians and to **"all the world."**

***First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.*** (Romans 1:8 NASB)

At the time of Paul's writing to the Romans, which was most likely around A.D. 58, their faith was being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

***"Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),*** (Matthew 24:15 NASB)

Here Jesus speaks about the **"Abomination of Desolation."** [Josephus](#) wrote, **"When the temple was destroyed, Titus' army took the Roman emblem, an eagle with "SPQR," [the senate and population of Rome] on it into the Holy of Holies and set it up and bowed down in worship of Caesar."** (*Wars, book 6, chapter 6, paragraph 1*). This was the final act of the Abomination that makes desolate, but it began in the encircling of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, according to Luke:

**"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. (Luke 21:20 NASB)**

Jesus warns those in Judea to flee when the Abomination of Desolation began:

**then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. (Matthew 24:16 NASB)**

Nero died in the middle of the war in June A.D.68, and Vespasian went back to Rome to fight to become the new emperor. During this time the Christians fled Jerusalem, because they heeded the warning of Matthew 24:16; the Jews thought the respite was a sign from God of victory, and they gathered in Jerusalem in great numbers. The Romans came back and destroyed the city.

**"For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. (Matthew 24:21 NASB)**

When the Romans resumed the Jewish war, they were furious and came in with a vengeance. There was so much blood shed that it put out fires in the buildings. The people were cutting each other open to get the food that they had eaten, and mothers were roasting their own children. Notice what is said about this Tribulation, **nothing** will ever equal it. The destruction of Jerusalem was far more than the fall of a Jewish city; it was the destruction and conclusion of Old Covenant Israel.

Verse 28 refers to the gathering of the eagles:

**"Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. (Matthew 24:28 NASB)**

The eagle was the symbol of Rome. In other words, when Rome started gathering, Israel was a corpse.

Then verse 29 speaks of falling stars and darkened skies:

**"But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (Matthew 24:29 NASB)**

This is common [apocalyptic](#) terminology taken from the Hebrew Bible. [Stars](#) represent governments: Israel is fallen.

Verse 30 tells us that the destruction of Jerusalem was a sign that Jesus had returned and was reigning with His saints in the kingdom:

**"And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:30 NASB)**

Propheisied	Fulfilled
"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the <u>world</u> (Greek <u>oikoumene</u> ) for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14)	"But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to <u>all the earth</u> , and their words to the ends of the <u>world</u> (Greek <u>oikoumene</u> )" (Romans 10:18)
"And the gospel must first be published among <u>all nations</u> (Greek <u>ethnos</u> )" (Mark 13:10)	"...My gospel... has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures <u>has been made known to all nations</u> (Greek <u>ethnos</u> )..." (Romans 16:25-26)
"And He said to them, 'Go into <u>all the world</u> (Greek <u>kosmos</u> ) and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15)	"...of the gospel, which <u>has come to you</u> , as it has also in <u>all the world</u> (Greek <u>kosmos</u> ), as is bringing forth fruit..." (Colossians 1:5-6).
And he said unto them 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to <u>every creature</u> (Greek <u>ktisis</u> )" (Mark 16:15)	"...from the gospel which you heard, which <u>was preached to every creature</u> (Greek <u>ktisis</u> ) under heaven, of which I, Paul became a minister" (Colossians 1:23)
"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the <u>end of the earth</u> (Greek <u>ge</u> )" (Acts 1:8).	"But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to <u>all the earth</u> (Greek <u>ge</u> ), and their words to the ends of the world" (Romans 10:18)

Then verse 31 refers to what many call the Rapture:

***"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. (Matthew 24:31 NASB)***

If you compare this with [1 Thessalonians 4:15-17](#) you will see it is the same event. This is the spiritual gathering of the elect into the [Kingdom of God](#).

In Matthew 24:32-34 Jesus said that these things would all take place in this generation—the one He was speaking to:

***"Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. (Matthew 24:32-34 NASB)***

Some commentators have tried to make this say that this race (instead of generation) shall not pass until these things take place. Linguistically that is a stretch to say the least. The temple was destroyed within forty years (a Biblical generation) of the Olivet Discourse. Notice that He says ***"all these things"*** would take place in that generation: the Rapture, [24:31](#); [heaven and earth passing away](#), 24:34; and the Lord's Second Coming, [24:44](#).

The focus of the Olivet Discourse is the destruction of Jerusalem at the Second Coming of Christ. Revelation is simply John's timely expansion of the Olivet Discourse. Not only is Israel's destruction the focus of Revelation, but her destruction is set forth in an interesting fashion. She is being punished for adultery. In the First Testament, Israel was considered the wife of Yahweh:

***"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 31:31-32 NASB)***

Often the prophets mentioned the marital relationship between God and Israel. But Israel chased after foreign gods and was consequently accused of spiritual adultery. Finally, Israel killed God's Son while crying, ***"We have no king but Caesar. His blood be on us and on our children."***

Revelation represents God's divorce decree against Israel as His unfaithful wife for spiritual adultery. In [Revelation 4](#), we see God seated upon a judicial throne. God's throne is mentioned in eighteen of Revelation's twenty-two chapters. In fact, "throne" occurs 52 times in the New Testament; [37 occurrences are in Revelation](#). There is a strong judicial undercurrent in Revelation.

In [Revelation 5](#) God has in his hand a seven-sealed scroll, which represents God's divorce decree against Israel. In [Deuteronomy 24](#), God's law required that a writing of divorcement be presented in case of divorce. Here God presents the divorce papers to Israel. The scroll, which is written on front and back, reflects the imagery of [Ezekiel 2](#) where Ezekiel is handed a scroll that is written on front and back. In Ezekiel 2 this scroll has to do with lamentation and mourning upon Jerusalem. These two scrolls in Ezekiel and Revelation seem to be related.

The seven seals of the scroll reflect the seven-fold judgment of God that He warned Israel about in:

***then I will act with hostility against you; and I, even I, will strike you seven times for your sins. (Leviticus 26:24 NASB)***

The seven-fold judgments in Leviticus have a strong influence in the judgment language of Revelation throughout the book. God's prescribed punishment for adultery is death by stoning ([Leviticus 20](#)). In Revelation 16, we read:

***And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, \*came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague \*was extremely severe. (Revelation 16:21 NASB)***

This imagery is of Israel being stoned to death as an adulterous wife.

Israel is not only Yahweh's wife in the First Testament, but she is also to serve Him as a priest. Thus in Revelation, Israel is

represented as a harlot dressed in priestly garments. Since she is a priest, another First Testament law comes into effect:

*'Also the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by harlotry, she profanes her father; she shall be burned with fire. (Leviticus 21:9 NASB)*

We see Israel being burned with fire in:

*"And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. (Revelation 17:16 NASB)*

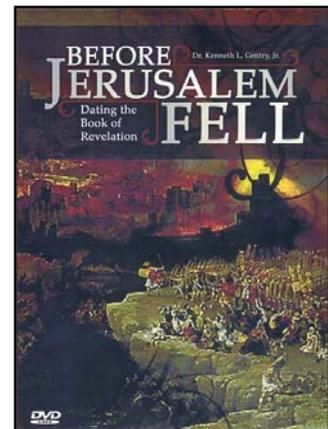
Having legally disposed of Israel at the end of Revelation, God takes a new bride, the Church of Jesus Christ. In [Revelation 21](#), after Israel's death, we see a city coming down out of heaven adorned as a spotless virgin bride for her husband. Then we read of the marriage supper of the Lamb. This New Jerusalem is the Church according to Hebrews:

*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, (Hebrews 12:22-23 NASB)*

Thus the theme of Revelation is the execution of God's divorce decree against Israel for her harlotries and adulterous relationships with other gods. She is put to death, and God turns to take a new bride, which is the Church, the spiritual Israel of God.

We have settled three keys to the book of Revelation:

1. It was written before the destruction of Jerusalem and most of the prophecies refer to this event
2. The book centers on God's judgment of Israel by destroying it.
3. The identities of the two main enemies in Revelation, the **beast** and the **harlot**, provide other clues to the interpretation of Revelation.



The beast is one of the most dreaded images in Scripture. Everyone knows about his number, 666. Most commentators agree that the beast imagery in Revelation shifts between the **generic** and the **specific**. The beast in some contexts is a kingdom generically considered, and elsewhere it is a particular individual in that kingdom. In Revelation 13:8 John says the beast is a man, but in 17:11 the interpretive angel says that the beast is not only seven kings, but an eighth.

The generic identity of the beast is the Roman Empire of the first century. Jesus was crucified under the authority of the Roman Empire and the seven churches that Revelation is addressed to lived in the Roman Empire.

What about the specific identity of the beast? Who is Mr. 666 of Revelation 13:18?

*Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six. (Revelation 13:18 NASB)*

The beast of Revelation is none other than [Lucious Domisus Ahinabarbus](#), who is better known by his adoptive name [Nero Claudius Caesar](#). He is the only man who fits the bill as the specific and personal expression of the beast. Let us look at his qualifications.

The beast is identified by the number 666. In the ancient days alphabets served a two-fold purpose. Their first and foremost purpose was, of course, their service as letters. But letters were also assigned numerical values and thus served as numerals. The most familiar example of this dual function of alphabets can be found in the Roman numeral system. The Greek and Hebrew languages operated similarly. Nero Caesar, if spelled according to a Hebrew spelling (John and most of first century Christians were of Hebrew extraction), gives us precisely the value 666. Is it not remarkable that this most relevant emperor, who lived while those seven churches lived, and lived while John wrote, had a name that fit the required sum precisely? Is this a sheer coincidence, or a historical accident? **Remember audience relevance.** What would have been the purpose of frustrating readers for two millennia who could not possibly identify a twenty first century (or later) beast? Isn't it far more reasonable to assume that John's original readers understood him very well in his identification of the beast?

The character of the beast qualifies Nero for this role. He possessed a bestial nature. Nero often acted in horrible viciousness.

According to Suetonius, Nero was a sodomite who is said to have castrated a boy named Sporus and married him. He enjoyed homosexual rape and torture. He killed his parents, brother, wife, aunt, and many others close to him. He so prostituted his own chastity that after defiling almost every part of his body, he at last 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.



[Revelation 13:7](#) speaks of the power given to the beast to make war with the saints. Nero was the first of the imperial authorities to persecute Christianity. Tacitus records the scene in Rome when the persecution of Christians broke out: "*And their death was aggravated with mockeries, insomuch that, 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.*"

[Revelation 13:5](#) says that the beast would continue 42 months. The Neronic persecution was instituted in A.D.64 and lasted until his death in June, A.D. 68, which is three and a half years, or 42 months. Nero fits the bill for the role of the beast.

The beast was to die by a sword, according to [Revelation 13:10 & 14](#). Do you know how Nero died? According to Suetonius, he "*drove a dagger into his throat, aided by Epaphroditus, his private secretary.*" Nero killed with the sword and was killed by the sword.

[Revelation 17:3](#) tells us that the beast is red. The red color may be indicative of the bloodshed caused by the beast. But Suetonius writes of the legend associated with Nero's ancestral parentage, which explains why he had a red beard.

1. The beast's number is 666; in Hebrew, Nero's name adds up to 666.
2. The beast is an awful character; Nero had a beastly character.
3. The beast made war with the saints for 42 months; Nero persecuted Christians for three and a half years (42 months).
4. The beast dies by the sword; Nero killed himself with a dagger.
5. The beast is red; Nero had a red beard, which was very unusual in those times.



Evidently the beast of Revelation is Nero. Remember, John told his readers (those first century Christians who lived in Asia Minor) that these things were to "*soon take place.*" We, twenty first century Christians, should not be looking for some terrible beast to arise and bring great tribulation to believers. This has already happened during the time of Nero and the first-century Christians.

The second enemy in Revelation is the **Harlot**:

*And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly. (Revelation 17:3-6 NASB)*

Since the woman is seated upon the seven-headed beast and is called Babylon, some have thought she represents the city of Rome. But since the beast itself is Rome, this would be redundant. Babylon is used to refer to an enemy of God, which in this case is **Israel**.

There are several reasons to identify the harlot as Jerusalem. The Harlot is called Babylon. Babylon is called the great city in [Revelation 14:8](#); [Revelation 11:8](#), which is the first mention of the great city, refers to the place where our Lord was crucified, which was Jerusalem. She is great because of her covenantal status in the First Testament. Jerusalem had previously been called

by pagan names comparable to Babylon, as in Revelation 11:8, "*spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt.*" This is because she acts like God's enemy. In Isaiah 1:9-10 God calls Jerusalem "Sodom and Gomorrah" because of her sinfulness.

The harlot is filled with the blood of the saints, according to [Revelation 17:6](#), [16:6](#), and [18:21 & 24](#). Throughout the book of Acts, Jerusalem is portrayed as the persecutor of Christianity.

*"You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; (Acts 7:51-52 NASB)*

In the Olivet Discourse context Jesus said of Israel:

*"Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and 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, (Matthew 23:34 NASB)*

The harlot is arrayed in Jewish priestly colors according to [Revelation 17:4](#). [Exodus 28](#) prescribes these colors for the High Priest. The High Priest also wore a tiara on his forehead that said, "*holiness unto the Lord*" ([Exodus 28:36-38](#)). This harlot has a blasphemous tiara on her forehead ([Revelation 17:5](#)). She was supposed to be holy to the Lord, but she has become the mother of harlots.

There is an obvious literary contrast between the harlot and the bride that comes down out of heaven. If we compare Revelation 17 & 21, we see two women: one is a harlot, the other a bride; one is Jerusalem that is above, the other is Jerusalem from below. Paul talked about these two Jerusalems in [Galatians 4:25-26](#).

Notice how John is introduced to the harlot, and notice how he is introduced to the bride. They are negative mirror images:

*Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, (Revelation 17:1 NASB)*

*Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." (Revelation 21:9 NASB)*

The harlot is seated on the seven headed beast, which obviously represents Rome. This indicates not identity with Rome, but some form of alliance with Rome. The Jews were the ones that demanded Christ's crucifixion. When Pilate wanted to turn Jesus loose because he found no guilt in him, the Jews said in John:

*So they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." (John 19:15 NASB)*

The Jews were siding with Caesar against Jesus. The Jews constantly agitated the Christians to get the Romans involved in their persecution. In [Acts 17:7](#) the Christians were accused by the Jews as those who preached another king contrary to the decrees of Caesar. The harlot is seated on the beast because Jerusalem depended upon Rome to persecute the Christians.

Revelation was obviously [written](#) before Nero's death in A.D.68. The prophecies of this book have been fulfilled. It was written about things that would take place **soon** after its writing. It deals with the persecution of believers under Judaism and Rome, and predicts God's judgment upon these enemies of the church. Its purpose, therefore, is to strengthen and encourage believers in time of trial.

This book is to be understood Preteristically rather than Futuristically. In doing so, you avoid the wild speculation of interpreting everything in the daily news as a sign of the times. Our country is not getting worse because we are living in the end times, it's getting worse because Christians are neglecting their calling. We are to be salt and light. We are to call our world to faith in Jesus Christ. I think that Futurism causes a pessimistic attitude about the future, and it blinds believers to the wonder of the New Covenant. Those believers who continue to look for a future Second Coming that will be "soon" set themselves up for disappointment and heart ache:

*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life. (Proverbs 13:12 NASB)*

Our hope and desire has been realized in the Second Coming of Christ, the tabernacle of God is with men, He dwells with us. We live in the glories of the New Covenant age.

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