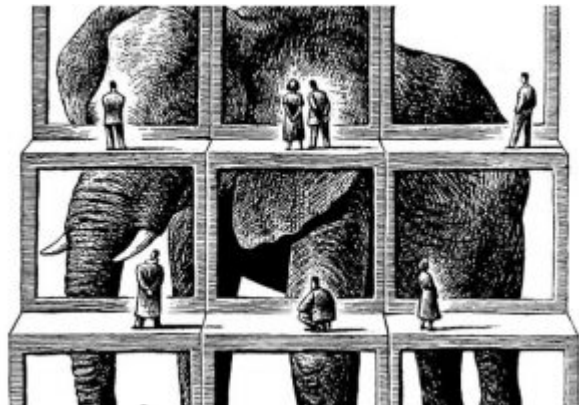


Revelation, Matthew 24 and Why Context is Crucial

Description

In my opinion, the biggest mistake that most people make when interpreting the bible is not considering the context.



There is an old joke that conveys this pretty well. A Sunday school teacher asks his class to recite some verses that they can learn from. Two troublemakers get an idea to disrupt the class. The first troublemaker says “*And Judas hanged himself*” then the second troublemaker says “*Go though and do likewise.*”

A silly joke to be sure, but it illustrates the point quite well.

You can make the Bible say almost anything you want if you ignore the context. There are a few places in the Bible where very little context is needed. (*Proverbs for example*) But the rest of the Bible doesn't exist in a vacuum.

The same is true of the Book of Revelation.

A cursory read – without any context – would be confusing to anyone. It was especially confusing to me when I first read it a long time ago. Since then, I have done a lot of study and learned a simple lesson: **the Book of Revelation cannot be properly understood without taking the rest of the Scriptures into account.**

Further, it can't be understood without taking history and 1st century culture into account.

In my opinion, there are three types of Context:

1. Biblical Context
2. Historical Context
3. Cultural context

Biblical Context means taking any particular passage or verse and viewing it the light of the rest of Scripture. For example, Reading James 2 alone – without the rest of Scripture – could lead to thinking your works will earn your salvation. However, reading it in context with books like Ephesians and Galatians makes it clear James is talking about “*knowing them by their fruit*” like Jesus taught.

Wrong doctrine is easy to derive from a single passage alone. In Deuteronomy 19, God commanded that “*on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.*” Likewise, I prefer a doctrine being confirmed by the testimony of two or three passages.

Historical Context. The events in the Bible were not separate from world events. Quite the contrary; they were essential to them. For example, in the Beginning of Esther the King throws a huge party. We know from history that King Ahasuerus is also known as king Xerxes I. This is the same king who fought the 300 Spartans at the battle of Thermopylae.

The party was arguably to impress other kings so they would join him in his conquest of Greece. Queen Vashti humiliated him in front of those kings by disobeying him by making it look like he couldn't control his own house. That was probably part of the reason he was so upset with her. My point is simply that if you don't consider the historical context in which a book was written, the true meaning can easily be missed.

Cultural Context. The entire Old Testament and most of the New Testament was written by Jews. Additionally, it was written to an audience where Jewish culture was a part of everyday life. Without some understanding of the Jewish (*and Greek*) cultures, many things can be easily missed or misinterpreted.

One example is the everyday expressions they used. For example, being “lifted up” is an expression to mean being hung on a cross. It would've been used much like our expression of being “given the chair” to talk about some being put to death by the electric chair.

(Random sidenote: All those Christian songs about “lifting Jesus higher” always make me chuckle. I understand the heart is to exalt Him higher, but it still makes me smile when I think about what the phrase meant in the 1st century.)

With the Book of Revelation, context is even more important because it is loaded with Symbolism that is often quite literal. However, very few of the symbols are unique to Revelation. Most of them can be found in other books of the Bible, especially in the Old Testament Prophets.

But before we look at those, we need to get a firm understanding of the context surrounding the Book of Revelation. In my opinion, the best way to do that is to talk about another place in the Bible that gives us that context.

Matthew 24 is often considered a companion passage to the book of Revelation because it shares a lot of the concepts and symbolism. It's also very useful because it can help us discover some of the context for Revelation itself. Let's take a look.

To Matthew 24... And Beyond!

My theme throughout this whole article will be context, so before we can talk about Matthew 24, we must first back up and look at the context.

I will spend a LOT of time on context, but please trust me when I say it's worth it. Without this context, it's hard to grasp what Revelation is truly talking about.

This whole thing begins the day before. Chapter 21 records Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, then Jesus cleansing the temple, then He goes to Bethany to spend the night. Jesus goes back to Jerusalem the next day (*cursing a fig tree on the way*) and starts teaching in the temple.

Very important: everything below happens on the same day as Matthew 24.

Now here's where things get interesting.

(NOTE: all scripture quotations will be from the NASB unless otherwise noted)

Matthew 21:23-27

23 When He entered the temple, **the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching**, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?"

24 Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.

25 "The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, "**If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?'**

26 "**But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet.**

”

27 And answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know.” He also said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

This is a classic case of the “*chief priests and the elders of the people*” trying to trap Jesus. They do it all over the Gospels and this is nothing new. What is interesting is Jesus response. After they admitted defeat, Jesus then goes on to tell two parables. The first parable sets up the second rather nicely, and notice Jesus is talking about obedience here.

Matthew 21:28-32

28 “But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard.’

29 “And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it and went.

30 “The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, ‘I will, sir ‘; but he did not go.

31 “Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “**Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.**

32 “**For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him.**

Jesus again points out the disobedience of the people/leaders of Israel. The parable points out how they have been disobedient and Jesus says because of this, the Kingdom of Heaven will be given to another. Jesus then illustrates this point with the next parable.

Please pay close attention to this next parable because I believe it’s a key part of the context for the Book of Revelation.

(Note: the words in **BOLD** are a quotation of the Old Testament. We will talk about them in a minute.)

Matthew 21:33-41

33 “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who **PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER,** and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey.

- 34 “When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce.
- 35 “The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third.
- 36 “Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them.
- 37 “But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’
- 38 “But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’
- 39 “They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.
- 40 “Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?”
- 41 They said to Him, “**He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons.**”

The meaning of this parable isn't disputed at all. Obviously the Man who owns the vineyard is God the Father, the murdered slaves are the prophets in the Old Testament and the Son is Jesus. The obvious conclusion is that the vine-growers are the Jews.

The Prophet Isaiah confirms this in a round-about way. The bold portion in verse 33 is a quotation of Isaiah 5, which also tells a parable of vine-growers. Like Jesus' parable, the wine-growers suffered judgment for their behavior.

Isaiah 5 also gives of a picture of the “wretched end” that the vine-growers will meet. It's worth reading the whole of chapter 5 (*and I recommend it*) but I'm going to paste the relevant portion concerning the vine-growers judgment here.

Isaiah 5:25-30

- 25 **On this account the anger of the LORD has burned against His people, And He has stretched out His hand against them and struck them down.** And the mountains quaked, and their corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the streets. For all this His anger is not spent, But His hand is still stretched out.
- 26 He will also lift up a standard to the distant nation, and will whistle for it from the ends of the earth; And behold, it will come with speed swiftly.

27 No one in it is weary or stumbles, None slumbers or sleeps; Nor is the belt at its waist undone, Nor its sandal strap broken.

28 Its arrows are sharp and all its bows are bent; The hoofs of its horses seem like flint and its chariot wheels like a whirlwind.

29 Its roaring is like a lioness, and it roars like young lions; It growls as it seizes the prey And carries it off with no one to deliver it.

30 And it will growl over it in that day like the roaring of the sea. If one looks to the land, behold, there is darkness and distress; Even the light is darkened by its clouds.

Notice that all of this judgment is dished out in punishment for the vine-growers treatment of the master's servants and Son. Notice also the response of the "vine-growers" to Jesus parable:

Matthew 21:45

45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them.

Jesus then drives the point home a third time with yet another parable.

Matthew 22:1-7

- 1 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying,
- 2 “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king * who gave a wedding feast for his son.
- 3 “And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come.
- 4 “Again he sent out other slaves saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited, “Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.”’
- 5 “**But they paid no attention and went their way**, one to his own farm, another * to his business,
- 6 **and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them.**
- 7 “**But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire.**

Again, the King was “enraged” and so he killed all of the people who had murdered his servants. Judgment for killing God’s servants is going to become a very clear theme in these chapters. It’s also a huge theme in Revelation.

We’ll take a quick detour from Matthew to visit Revelation for two verses.

Revelation 6:9-10

- 9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, **I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;**
- 10 **and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”**

The souls of God’s faithful are depicted here crying out for justice against the people who have murdered them. Again, God’s vengeance against those who murdered the faithful is great and terrible. In Jesus day, He was referring to the Prophets in the Old Testament who were killed by evil Kings and the mob of Israel when they fell into idolatry.

Now, the Pharisees didn’t like these parables because they tried to trap him again by asking about

paying taxes. Jesus cleverly evades their trap. So the Sadducees try their hand next and verse 23 makes it clear that this is still the same day.

Matthew 22:23

23 **On that day** some Sadducees (*who say there is no resurrection*) came to Jesus and questioned Him,

Jesus slaps them down just as easily as He did the Pharisees and the chief priests. Then the Pharisees try again with similar results. Those events get us to the end of chapter 22. Chapter 23 is where things start getting REALLY interesting.

The Chief Priests, the Pharisees and the Sadducees have just spent the whole day (and 2 chapters) attacking Jesus. It seems like He's finally had enough and just blasts their blatant and overt sin in return.

It's worth reading the whole of chapter 23 because it contains the eight woes to the Pharisees. We'll pick it up at verse 29

Matthew 23:29-39

29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,

30 and say, 'If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.'

31 **"So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.**

32 "Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers.

33 **"You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?"**

The word that's translated as "hell" is the word "[Geenna](#)", which is more commonly known as "Gehenna". Strong's definition is:

Hell is the place of the future punishment called "Gehenna" or "Gehenna of fire". This was originally **the valley of Hinnom**, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned; a fit symbol of the wicked and their future destruction.

When I learned this I just about had a fit.

Gehenna (Hell) is a PROPER NOUN!!!

It's like the Sahara Desert, the Mediterranean Sea, or the Great Barrier Reef. You just saw in the definition from Strong's that it refers to a valley south of Jerusalem. If you Google the Valley of Hinnom, you can find maps with its location.

In fact, here's a picture of the Valley of Hinnom (*Gehenna*) in present day Israel.



It's a real place in Israel today.

So what we have here is HUGE problem with the translation. Pretend you were translating a novel into a new language? You wouldn't just turn every instance of "the Sahara Desert" into "Hell" would you?

But that's what our Bible translators have done.

The Valley of Hinnom is also known as the "Valley of Ben-Hinnom" (*or the "Valley of the sons of Hinnom", which is basically the same thing*). It first appears in the book of Joshua where it's used as a landmark for determining the boundaries of the twelve tribes' territories.

The common perception of the Valley of Hinnom is that it was a burn trash heap. Most people (*Strong's included*) say all the garbage from Jerusalem was thrown there so it stunk to the high heavens and was always burning. However, That description cannot be found earlier than the 12th century and there's zero archeological evidence to support it.

Further, [Archeologists recently found an orderly – almost modern – landfill outside Jerusalem](#) in the Kidron valley. (*which is very close to the Valley of Hinnom.*) Why would they have a high-tech landfill that didn't stink on one side of the city and a stinking burning trash heap on the other? That makes no sense.

The Pharisees and Jews knew the Valley of Hinnom for what went on there during the time of Kings.

2 Chronicles 28:1-31

- 1 Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do right in the sight of the LORD as David his father had done.
- 2 But he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel; he also made molten images for the Baals.
- 3 Moreover, he burned incense in **the valley of Ben-hinnom** and burned his sons in fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel.

Ahaz' grandson Manasseh did the exact same thing a few chapters later.

2 Chronicles 33:6

- 6 He made his sons pass through the fire **in the valley of Ben-Hinnom**; and he practiced witchcraft, used divination, practiced sorcery and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger.

The prophet Jeremiah leaves us with no doubt about God's opinion of these detestable practices

Jeremiah 32:35

- 35 "They built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-Hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which **I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination** , to cause Judah to sin.

And also:

Jeremiah 7:30-31

30 “The people of Judah have done evil in my eyes, declares the Lord. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears my Name and have defiled it.

31 They have built the high places of **Topheth** in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire—something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind.

So now that you know what the Valley of Hinnom is, let’s look at Matthew 23 again.

Matthew 23:33

33 “You serpents, you brood of vipers, **how will you escape the sentence of hell the Valley of Hinnom?**

Notice that Jesus talks about the “Sentence of the Valley of Hinnom”. Many other translations say the “judgment” or “condemnation” of the Valley of Hinnom. It’s all the same thing and refers to a sentence being handed down by a judge for a crime.

So...

What was the Sentence/Judgment of the Valley of Hinnom?

In this verse, Jesus is talking about a real place the Pharisees were familiar with. It has a real place in Israel’s History and by reading the Bible, you can see what that place is. This is the word of the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah:

(Note: Topheth is a location in the Valley of Hinnom. It was where the children were sacrificed.)

Jeremiah 19:1-11

1 Thus says the LORD, “Go and buy a potter’s earthenware jar, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests.

2 “**Then go out to the valley of Ben-Hinnom**, which is by the entrance of the potsherd gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you,

3 and say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of

Jerusalem: thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Behold I am about to bring a calamity upon this place, at which the ears of everyone that hears of it will tingle.

4 “Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods, that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had ever known, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent

5 and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind;

6 therefore, behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter.

7 “I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their life; and I will give over their carcasses as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth.

8 “I will also make this city a desolation and an object of hissing; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its disasters.

9 “I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they will eat one another’s flesh in the siege and in the distress with which their enemies and those who seek their life will distress them.”

10 “Then you are to break the jar in the sight of the men who accompany you

11 and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter’s vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place for burial.

So there you have it.

That’s the sentence of the Valley of Hinnom. God prophesied through the prophet Jeremiah that Jerusalem would be destroyed and that He would “*break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter’s vessel*”

Verses 4 and 5 make it very clear the child sacrifices in the Valley of Hinnom were the main reason for this judgment.

To no one’s surprise, this prophecy came true.

About 20 years later, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem. The city fell after a long siege and the Babylonians basically laid waste to Jerusalem. 2 Kings 25:1-7 tells the story of the siege, but here are the results:

2 Kings 25:8-10

8 Now on the seventh day of the fifth month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.

9 He burned the house of the LORD, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; even every great house he burned with fire.

10 So all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard **broke down the walls** around Jerusalem.

Didn't Jeremiah say something about breaking the city like a clay pot? And what happened to the walls?

So, there you go.

That's the Sentence/Judgment of the Valley of Hinnom: **The complete destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and the death of most of the people who lived there.**

So if Jesus said that the Pharisees were going to suffer the "sentence of the Valley of Hinnom", what did He mean? Again, this is where I say that having the context is crucial. In this case, I'm referring to the Historical context.

So let's take a look.

In 70 AD (*less than 40 years after Christ died*) the future Roman Emperor Titus laid siege to Jerusalem. The city fell and the Romans basically laid waste to Jerusalem. The first Century Historian Flavius Josephus – who was present for these events – wrote this in [Wars 7:1:1](#):

Now as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be the objects of their fury (*for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other work to be done*), [Titus] Caesar gave orders that they should now **demolish the entire city and Temple...**

...it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it [Jerusalem] had ever been inhabited.

So the result of the siege of 70 AD: **The complete destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and the death of most of the people who lived there.**

Does that sound familiar?

It's the sentence of the Valley of Hinnom... which Jesus said the Pharisees would suffer. (*and many would've been alive to suffer it*)

Josephus estimated that 1.1 Million Jews died during the siege. Interestingly, Titus reportedly refused to accept a wreath of victory. He said that the victory did not come through his own efforts but that he had merely served as an instrument of God's wrath

So let's back up and recap.

Matthew 23:29-38

- 29** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,
- 30** and say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’
- 31** “So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.
- 32** “Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers.
- 33** “**You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell the Valley of Hinnom?**
- 34** “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,
- 35** so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.
- 36** “**Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.**
- 37** “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.
- 38** “Behold, **your house is being left to you desolate**
- 39** “For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘**BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!**’ “

Remember way back at the beginning of this section when we talked about the parable of the vine-growers? Jesus seems to be reiterating the same thing only applying it directly instead of through a parable.

Remember also that everything we’ve covered all happened on the same day.

Jesus is pronouncing judgment on the Jews for their wickedness throughout Israel’s history. Specifically, for their treatment of the Prophets and the faithful Jews who didn’t worship idols. Jesus said that because of their sin, they would suffer the “sentence of the Valley of Hinnom”. And again, this is all happening on the same day.

Further, Jesus said “*all these things will come upon this generation*“. Jesus said that the people He was speaking to would see this judgment.

Now, one more thing to cover before we get to chapter 24. Let's talk about what “coming” in the name of the Lord means.

Now, when Christians hear about the “coming of the LORD” they immediately think of Christ's second coming. There are places in the Bible where that's a correct interpretation. However, it doesn't have to refer to the second coming.

Again, Biblical context is very important and often forgotten.

The idea of the Lord “coming” is used many times in the Bible and rarely refers to Christ's second coming. It usually refers to judgment.

Two quick examples:

Isaiah 19:1-2

1 The oracle concerning Egypt. Behold, **the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and is about to come to Egypt**; The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence, And the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.

2 “So I will incite Egyptians against Egyptians; And they will each fight against his brother and each against his neighbor, City against city and kingdom against kingdom.

Malachi 3:1-3

1 “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts.

2 “**But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?** For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.

3 “He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness.

It's even used in Revelation several times with no reference to the Second Coming. For instance, in Revelation chapters 2-3 we have the letters to the seven churches. Several of them were warned to clean up their act or Jesus would “come” to them in judgment.

Revelation 2:4-5

4 'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

5 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and **repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place - unless you repent.**

(There is no church in this location today)

Revelation 2:16

16 'Therefore repent; or else I am **coming** to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

(The sword of the mouth is an obvious reference to judgment and it's seen later in Revelation.)

Revelation 3:3

3 'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. **Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief,** and you will not know at what hour I will **come** to you.

Revelation 3:10-11

10 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

11 '**I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.**

Obviously Christ is coming back, but that doesn't mean that every reference to his "coming" is a reference to His second coming. In the verses above, Jesus is said to be "coming" in judgment.

Again, remember the context.

Since the beginning of chapter 21 Jesus has been talking about judgment so there is no reason to assume He has switched gears. Remember this is all happening on the same day. Many other places in Scripture God's "coming" refers to judgment and there's no reason to think that's not the case here. Even in Revelation, Jesus' "coming" doesn't always refer to His second coming.

Jesus basically just told the Pharisees they would suffer the “Sentence of the Valley of Hinnom” which was the destruction of Jerusalem.

Again, Jesus is telling the Pharisees that God will judge them for killing the Old Testament Prophets and the faithful Jews. And shortly, Jesus Himself will be added to that list of martyrs.

Now that we’ve got a LOT of context under our belt, let’s finally get to Chapter 24.

Here goes:

Matthew 24:1-3

- 1 Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.
- 2 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.**”

Notice first that this takes place on the same day. Jesus entered the temple way back in Matthew 21:23 and only now are we being told He has left.

It’s still the same day.

In verse two, Jesus basically says the temple will be entirely destroyed. Not one stone will be left upon another. This prophecy was fulfilled literally after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The 1st century historian Flavius Josephus recorded this in [Wars 7:1:1](#) about the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies.

...it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it [Jerusalem] had ever been inhabited.

It sounds like not one stone was left upon another doesn’t it? Now, please remember that all of the things on the list below happened during just one day in Jesus’ life.

- In two different parables, He told the Chief Priests, Pharisees, and Sadducees that he was going to judge them for killing all of His Prophets (*the servants/slaves in the parables*).
- He spoke at length (3 chapters) about how evil the Pharisees have been.

- Jesus says they won't escape the Sentence of the Valley of Hinnom (*which was the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple*)
- He said that the "*guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth*" would fall on them. (23:35)
- He also said "*all these things will come upon this generation*"
- Further, He has said that the temple would be completely destroyed (*Probably alluding to the sentence of the Valley of Hinnom, which was carried out in 70 AD with the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem*)

Now, with all of that Biblical and historical context in place, let's look at Matthew 24:3

Matthew 24:3

3 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?**"

Now, some people want to make this verse the start of a whole new section of Scripture. They say there's a break and it's a different passage from the previous chapters. I disagree for two reasons:

First, looking at the Biblical context of parallel passage in Luke we know it's not a different section.

Luke 21:5-7

5 And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said,

6 "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will **not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down.**"

7 They questioned Him, saying, "**Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?**"

Luke omits the fact that this conversation happen on the Mount of Olives. However, if you read the context for Luke 20-21 and Mark 12-13, you'll see He's covering the same territory that Matthew covered in chapters 21-23.

The second reason is this: **When the disciples ask "*when will these things happen*", the obvious question is "*What things?*"**

For me – taking the context into account – the obvious answer is the things that Jesus prophesied earlier that same day. You are welcome to disagree, but then you need to explain the parallel passage in Mark and Luke and ask yourself: what are the “*these things*” that the disciples asked about? I see no other option than the things that Jesus prophesied about earlier that same day.

Remember, that Jesus hasn’t died yet.

The disciples were shocked when Jesus died even though He repeatedly warned them He would die. Further, they were shocked when He came back to life. At this point, they have absolutely no reason whatsoever to ask about a “second coming” because they didn’t think Jesus would ever leave/die.

To get some cultural context, the Jews thought Jesus would conquer the Roman Empire and establish a Theocracy where the Jews would reign with the Messiah.

Even a cursory glance of the Gospels reveals that even the disciples didn’t “get it” until after Christ died. They weren’t expecting a Second Coming because they thought the Messiah would only come once.

Matthew 16:21-22

21 From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that **He must go to Jerusalem,** and **suffer many things** from the elders and chief priests and scribes, **and be killed,** and be raised up on the third day.

22 Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “**God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.**”

Peter actually tried to rebuke Jesus (*God*) for saying He would die!

As we’ve already talked about, “coming” can – and usually does – refer to judgment. **They were simply asking Jesus when he was “coming” in judgment like He had prophesied about almost the whole day.**

A natural question if you ask me.

Again, it’s about context.

So given the biblical context of the passage plus the “sentence of the Valley of Hinnom”, the historical context of the destruction of Jerusalem 40 years later, and the cultural context of the disciples not expecting a Second Coming, I don’t think this passage refers to some distant event.

I take Jesus at His word when He said:

Matthew 23:36

36 “Truly I say to you, **all these things will come upon this generation.**

So the question is this:

Is there a specific event that took place within one generation of Jesus’ death that fulfills – both literally and symbolically – Matthew 24 (and the Book of Revelation?)

The answer is yes. (*In my opinion*)

If you look at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the war surrounding it, you can find specific and literal fulfillment of virtually every single prophecy in Matthew 24 and the Book of Revelation.

Yes that’s a bombshell, but it’s also an old bombshell. This interpretation of Revelation has existed for centuries. It’s nothing new and the street name for it is “[Preterism](#)” (*from the latin “praeter” which indicates something is in the past.*)

There are two type of Preterism. The first is called “Classical Preterism” or “Partial Preterism”. Classical Preterism says that most Revelation is fulfilled, but the Great white throne judgment and New Jerusalem, etc. are still in the future. Some also believe the Millennium is still in the future.

The second is called “Full Preterism” or “Hyper Preterism”. They say that all prophecy in the Bible if fulfilled. Personally, I think that idea is slightly insane/heretical because Christians aren’t dancing on streets that are golden.

SIDEBAR: But wasn’t Revelation written in 95-96 AD, after the destruction of Jerusalem?

This is actually a much debated topic.

Some argue for 95-96 AD, but many others argue that John wrote Revelation during the reign of Nero (54-68). Many study Bibles mention both dates. (*mine does*) There is evidence for the later date, but most of it comes from historians not the Bible. (*For completeness, you can see the evidence for the later date [here](#).*)

Biblical evidence for the earlier date includes things like Jesus saying “*all these things will come upon this generation*” in Matt 23:36. Also, Jesus saying “*this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*” in Matt 24:34.

Also, Revelation 11:8 clearly speaks about Jerusalem as still standing, but Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD.

There's also the parallel text in Luke 21:20 which talks about Jerusalem being surrounded by armies. (*we'll get to that in a few minutes*) Obviously that would be impossible after 70 AD because Jerusalem was gone.

Further evidence comes from the title of the second century Syrian version of Revelation. It is titled "*John the Evangelist in the Isle of Patmos, where he was thrown by Nero Caesar.*" Nero died in 68 AD, making 95-96 AD impossible.

There's plenty more evidence in Revelation, but we'll get to it later.

End SIDEBAR

First let's continue with Matthew 24 while we still have the biblical context fresh in our minds.

Matthew 24:4-5

- 4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you.
- 5 "**For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.**

Anyone who has read the Epistles knows that false prophets were a HUGE problem for the 1st century church. The warnings are so numerous I'm not even going to quote them here. Likewise, we know from Paul's epistles and Acts about false prophets who arose from the people. Further, we know many arose from history.

Josephus records in [Wars 2:13:4](#)

These were such men as deceived and deluded the people under pretence of divine inspiration, but were for procuring innovations and changes of the government; and these prevailed with the multitude to act like madmen, and went before them into the wilderness, as pretending that God would there shew them the signals of liberty.

And in the following paragraph in Wars 2:13:5

But there was an Egyptian false prophet that did the Jews more mischief than the former; for he was a cheat, and **pretended to be a prophet** also, and got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him

And in [Antiquities 20:5:1](#)

Now it came to pass, while Fadus was procurator of Judea, that a certain magician, whose name was **Theudas**, persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them, and follow him to the river Jordan. **For he told them he was a prophet**: and that he would, by his own command, divide the river, and afford them an easy passage over it.

Also in [Antiquities 20:8:5](#)

Now as for the affairs of the Jews, they grew worse and worse continually, **for the country was again filled with robbers and impostors, who deluded the multitude**. Yet did Felix catch and put to death **many of those impostors every day**, together with the robbers.

Need I go on?

Moving on to the next verse in Matthew.

Matthew 24:6-7

6 “**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.

7 “**For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom**, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.

Jesus made this prophecy while the Roman Empire was in relative peace. However, by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, things couldn't have been different.

In the Annals of Tacitus, a Roman who wrote a history which covers the period prior to 70 A. D., we find such expressions as these: “Disturbances in Germany,” “commotions in Africa,” “commotions in Thrace,” “insurrections in Gaul,” “intrigues among the Parthians,” “the war in Britain,” “war in Armenia.”

Among the Jews, the times became turbulent. In Seleucia, 50,000 Jews were killed. There was an uprising against them in Alexandria. In a battle between the Jews and Syrians in Caesarea, 20,000 were killed. During these times, Caligula ordered his statue placed in the temple at Jerusalem. The Jews refused to do this and lived in constant fear that the Emperor's armies would be sent into Palestine. This fear became so real that some of them did not even bother to till their fields.

(Source)

That sounds like “*wars and rumors of wars*” to me.

Moving on.

Matthew 24:7

“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and **in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.**”

The famines and earthquakes are historical fact and the Bible confirms the famines.

Acts 11:28-29

28 One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that **there would certainly be a great famine all over the world.** And this took place in the reign of Claudius.

29 And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.

Paul gives instructions for collecting this at the end of Romans and 1 Corinthians. The Historian Tacitus writes in [“The Annals” book XII](#):

Several prodigies occurred in that year. Birds of evil omen perched on the Capitol; **houses were thrown down by frequent shocks of earthquake**, and as the panic spread, all the weak were trodden down in the hurry and confusion of the crowd. **Scanty crops too, and consequent famine were regarded as a token of calamity.**

Tacitus also records earthquakes in other parts of the world, mostly as a reason for reduced tribute

payments. In the year 58 AD, Seneca the Younger wrote about the Earthquakes in his day:

How often have cities of Asia and Achaea fallen with one fatal shock! how many cities have been swallowed up in Syria! how many in Macedonia! how often has Cyprus been wasted by this calamity ! how often has Paphos become a ruin! News has often been brought us of the demolition of whole cities at once.

So we have earthquakes and famines too.

Moving on.

Matthew 24:8-13

8 “But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

9 “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.

10 “At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.

11 “Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.

12 “Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.

13 “But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

(Please note this is not the “Great Tribulation” yet. That’s not until verse 21)

We’ve already covered the false prophets in verse 11. The “tribulation” that Jesus speaks of here is well documented in Acts and the Epistles. It seems like they were attacked in every city they entered and the Jews were a constant enemy.

Nero began persecuting the church in 64 AD. He inflicted some of the most extreme tortures ever devised on Christians and killed them in the most barbaric ways. *(We’ll talk more about them when we get to Revelation.)*

So yeah, there was definitely tribulation and killing of Christians.

Moving on.

Matthew 24:14

14 “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.

Again, we need to talk about cultural context.

For instance, if someone from the first century overheard you saying “*George will be given the chair.*” He would probably assume that George was being given something to sit on. That’s because they would lack our cultural context, just like we lack theirs.

When we say world today, we mean the planet. But the word meant something a little different in the 1st century. The word that’s translated as “world” in the verse above is “Oikoumene”. Strongs Concordance defines Oikoumene as:

1). The inhabited earth

- a) the portion of the earth inhabited by the Greeks, in distinction from the lands of the barbarians
- b) the Roman empire, all the subjects of the empire
- c) the whole inhabited earth, the world
- d) the inhabitants of the earth, men
- e) The universe, the world

The primary meaning is not “the whole planet” but rather the known and inhabited world. It could also include only the Roman Empire at that time. The bible bears this definition out.

Romans 1:8

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

Romans 16:25-26

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,

26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, **has been made known to all the nations**, leading to obedience of faith

Colossians 1:23

23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of **the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven**, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

If you ignore the biblical context and cultural context it's easy to think this means that the gospel must be preached over the entire planet. But we've just seen that by the time Romans and Colossians were written, Paul ALREADY considered the Gospel to have been preached in "the whole world" and "all creation under heaven". Paul had a different cultural context. We need to adopt their cultural context if we are to understand what they meant.

To reiterate, the apostle Paul said the Gospel had been preached in the "whole world" by 70 AD. Would anyone like to disagree with the Bible?

Moving on.

Matthew 24:15-16

15 "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*),

16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

17 "Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house.

18 "Whoever is in the field must not turn back * to get his cloak.

19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

20 "But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.

The infamous “abomination of Desolation” passage. So what is it? It’s a reference to the Book of Daniel. So, let’s go back to Daniel to get some Biblical context.

Daniel 9:27

27 “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and **on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction**, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

Daniel 11:29-31

29 “At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before.

30 ” For ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; **so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant**.

31 “**Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation**.

The abomination of desolation is perhaps better translated “an abomination that desolates”. This translation is supported by the Prophet Daniel. In both passages, Daniel is talking about judgment. Chapter 11 has the judgment directed at “*those who forsake the Holy Covenant*”. Jesus spent most of Matthew 21-23 talking about how the Jews have not only been unfaithful, but have killed the faithful.

Also mentioned in Daniel 11 is “*do away with the regular sacrifice*”. Once the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, regular sacrifice has never again been practiced by Israel. Even to this day, it’s not practiced.

Daniel 9 talks about this Abomination causing a “complete destruction”. Again to quote Josephus.

...it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it [Jerusalem] had ever been inhabited.

(Mostly irrelevant fact: Daniel 11:31 talks about setting up the abomination of desolation. When Hadrian became Caesar in 117 AD, he had a temple built to Jupiter where the Jewish temple used to be. Inside this temple, he had built a statue of Jupiter and a statue of himself. A statue of a man and a pagan god on the site of the temple; how’s that for an abomination?)

)

So what is the “abomination that desolates”?

Honestly I think it refers to Rome in general and the army that destroyed Jerusalem in particular. Rome practiced worship of its Emperors (*an abomination*) and they desolated Israel in general and Jerusalem in particular.

This point is somewhat reinforced by Luke’s contribution.

Luke 21:20

20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her **desolation** is near.

Roman armies did indeed surround Jerusalem during the siege.

But here’s where things get **REALLY** interesting.

The Jews began revolting over taxes and other issues. These revolts came to a head in 66 AD. **The Roman Governor Gessius Florus responded by plundering the temple.** Now, remember the words of Jesus.

Matthew 24:15-16

15 “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),

16 **then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.**

So if the Romans plundered the temple, what are the odds some of them plundered the Holy Place in the temple...? Further, merely having Gentiles in parts of the temple would be considered an abomination to the Jews.

A sharp eyed reader will notice that Jesus told the disciples to leave when they saw this abomination standing in the Holy Place. The plundering of the temple took place in 66 AD. Later that year, we know there was a mass exodus from Jerusalem because Josephus records it in [Wars 2:20:1](#).

After this calamity had befallen Cestius, many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink,

(Cestius was trying to quell the revolt but was ambushed and defeated)

We also know from History that the Christians left the City and fled to Pella before the War truly got underway. The city of Pella was located in the Transjordan Mountains. We know they were warned by a prophet. The historian Eusebius records this:

“The members of the Jerusalem church by means of an oracle, given by revelation to acceptable persons there, were ordered to leave the city before the war began and settle in a town in Peraea called Pella.

Perhaps seeing Romans plunder the temple was confirmation of Jesus’ words that they should leave when the “abomination that desolates” is in the Holy Place.

And when they left, they fled to the mountains (*where Pella was located*) just as Jesus prophesied.

Literal fulfillment. You gotta love how precise Jesus’ Prophecies are.

Moving on.

Matthew 24:21-28

21 “***For then*** there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will

22 “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

23 “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe him.

24 “For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

25 “Behold, I have told you in advance.

26 “So if they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe them.

I need to point out that the word “then” in verse 21 is significant. It indicates that the great tribulation will take place **after** all of the other things Jesus prophesied.

If you have read anything about the horrors that took place during the siege of Jerusalem, this passage would make sense. I’m not going to recount them yet because they fit better paired up with seven seals, seven trumpet, and seven bowls of wrath in Revelation. However, I have never heard of such abhorrent things happening. Some truly depraved things happened, even compared to the sinful world of the apostles’ time.

Josephus said about the fall of Jerusalem in [Wars 5:10:5](#)

That neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world

And he also said in [Wars 6:9:4](#)

Accordingly, the multitude of those that therein perished exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world

Like I said, we’ll deal with just how awful it was during Revelation. Truly, some of the things that happened are not fit to be put into print. Until then please trust me (*and Josephus*) that the worst ever is certainly possible.

Moving on.

Matthew 24:27-28

27 “For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

28 “Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

The first century Roman Historian Tacitus records in The Histories 5:13 a fascinating event that lines up so clearly with verse 27 its incredible.

In the sky appeared a vision of armies in conflict, of glittering armor. **A sudden lightning flash from the clouds lit up the Temple. The doors of the holy place abruptly opened, a superhuman voice was heard to declare that the gods were leaving it,** and in the same instant came the rushing tumult of their departure.

Josephus records the same event in Wars 6:5:3

Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the temple,] as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, 'Let us remove hence'.

I'm just saying...

Moving on. (*And remember the words in BOLD are a quotation of the Old Testament*)

Matthew 24:29-31

29 "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.

30 "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.

31 "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.

Okay, so now it's time to introduce another component of Jewish cultural context: apocalyptic language. It was a common style of writing in the day. This is proven by the dozens of non-scriptural/canonical books written in this style around Jesus' time.

This is another aspect of Jewish culture that's often misunderstood today. The Jews were a people of Stories and symbols. By contrast, the western world today is a people of facts and logic. In the western world we assume that their culture is like ours.

It wasn't.

The symbols were never meant to be taken literally because they are just that: symbols

For example:

Isaiah 13:1 + 9-10

- 1** **The oracle concerning Babylon** which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.
- 9** Behold, **the day of the LORD is coming**, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it.
- 10** **For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light.**
- 11** Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.
- 12** **I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold** And mankind than the gold of Ophir.
- 13** Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the LORD of hosts In the day of His burning anger.

This prophecy was fulfilled in 539 BC when the Persian king Cyrus conquered Babylon. Obviously the Sun did not cease to shine 2500+ years ago, nor did the stars fall or the moon's light fail. And with 7.3 Billion people in the world, we could hardly call mortal man scarce.

Again, these are Symbols, not literally prophesied facts.

Ralph Woodrow writes this:

On the American flag, each state is symbolized by a star. Policemen commonly wear badges which include the star symbol — representative of their authority as policeman....

...We might describe the future as being "bright" if referring to good days ahead; or the future might be described as being "dark" if days of trouble are being described. We commonly speak of the Middle Ages as the "Dark Ages", etc.

In hieroglyphic writing, the sun, moon, and stars were often used as symbols — representing empires, states, kings — and the darkening of the heavenly bodies symbolized the overthrow of these empires and their rulers.

In like manner, the holy prophets of the Bible used these same symbols to portray divine truth and warnings. The use of such symbols was not the product of a heated imagination,

but was within the framework of the established and sober language of those times.

The only time in this passage in Matthew that Jesus uses apocalyptic language is when He is quoting the Old Testament Prophets. He was quoting the Old Testament prophets to make a point because everyone was familiar with them. It's like someone quoting pop culture today.

Notice too that its Apocalyptic literature, meaning it concerns judgment. Here's a look at the passage Jesus is referencing:

Ezekiel 32:2 + 7-8

2 “Son of man, **take up a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt** and say to him, ‘You compared yourself to a young lion of the nations, Yet you are like the monster in the seas; And you burst forth in your rivers and muddied the waters with your feet and fouled their rivers.’ ”

7 “And **when I extinguish you, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud And the moon will not give its light.**

8 “**All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you And will set darkness on your land,**” Declares the Lord GOD.

Again, the darkness reference here is the destruction of a kingdom or nation. In this case the nation of Israel. Its light was symbolically “darkened” when Israel when the Romans destroyed their country (*and capital*) in 70 AD.

It's interesting that the passage that Jesus quote here refers to the destruction of Egypt. In Revelation, Jerusalem is “mystically called Sodom and Egypt” and we know this because Jesus was crucified just outside Jerusalem.

Revelation 11:8

8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, **where also their Lord was crucified.**

Jesus' second reference to apocalyptic literature is also a quotation of an Old Testament Prophet prophesying the destruction of Egypt. And again, remember that Jerusalem is “mystically called Sodom and Egypt” in Revelation.

Isaiah 19:1-2

1 The oracle concerning Egypt. Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and is about to come to Egypt; The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence, And the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.

2 “So I will incite Egyptians against Egyptians; And they will each fight against his brother and each against his neighbor, City against city and kingdom against kingdom.

Note verse 2 talks about the Egyptians turning on each other. During the siege of Jerusalem, there were three main factions that fought against each other. The infighting was so serious that they would even destroy the other factions' food supplies... during a siege!

One additional note about “coming on the clouds”. I was initially inclined to take it figuratively but then learned that Josephus said this in [Wars 6:5:3](#)

Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the one and twentieth day of the month Artemisius, [Jyar,] a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared: I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable; were it not related by those that saw it; and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals. For, before sun setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities.

Tacitus records an identical event [book 5 of Histories](#).

There had been seen hosts joining battle in the skies, the fiery gleam of arms, the temple illuminated by a sudden radiance from the clouds.

Again, this is a literal fulfillment of a seemingly impossible prophecy. And yes this took place around the destruction of Jerusalem.

Moving on.

Matthew 24:32-35

32 “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;

33 so, you too, **when you see all these things**, recognize that He is near, right at the door.

34 “Truly I say to you, **this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.**

35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

I would like to draw your attention to verse 33 where Jesus says “*when you see all these things*“. Please remember the Biblical context. Jesus is not teaching generally to a crowd, He is speaking specifically to the disciples. They asked Him when something would happen and He gave them a straight answer.

Verse 33 makes it clear that Jesus was expecting the disciples to see these things happen.

And if verse 33 wasn't obvious enough, He repeats the point in verse 34. He assures them that “*this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.*”

Jesus died on April 3rd in 33 AD. (*for proof of that date, look [here](#) and [here](#)*) Jerusalem was destroyed 37 years later in 70 AD. 37 years is certainly within one generation. Many/most of the young men of Jesus' day would've been alive 37 years later when Jerusalem was destroyed. Notice too that Jesus said “**all these things**“. Emphasis on the word “all”.

If we say that the events of Revelation haven't happened yet (*and are still in our future*) both verse 33 and 34 become impossible.

Moving on.

Matthew 24:36

36 “But **of that day and hour no one knows**, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

If you are still on the fence about whether this passage refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, you've probably been waiting for this verse.

First of all, remember the context.

The disciples asked “*when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming*” and Jesus has just spent half a chapter telling them what the signs will be. He CLEARLY wanted them to recognize those signs because He was telling them about them. Further, Jesus said they would see

these signs and just a few verses earlier. He then repeated it by saying: *“this generation will not pass away until all these things take place”*.

Jesus wanted them to know when it was close... but also wanted them to rely on Him for the specific time.

Jesus gave them a rough description of what it would look like and a rough time frame. (*“this generation will not pass away until all these things take place”*) But for the rest, they had to rely on God when the time came.

The disciples couldn't know because it hadn't happened yet. However, now that this prophecy has been fulfilled – *and “all these things” have happened* – of course we can know the day and hour... Because its history for us.

(If I may step away from Revelation for a moment, God does this all the time. The Bible contains everything we need generally for a righteous life. However the Bible can't tell you whether you take job A or job B. It's the Holy Spirit that provides that kind of guidance in our lives. As a general rule, God gives general instruction through the Bible and specific instruction through the Holy Spirit. This verse is no different.)

Moving on.

Matthew 24:37-41

37 “For the coming of the Son of Man will be **just like** the days of Noah.

38 “For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

39 and **they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away**; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

40 “Then there will be two men in the field; **one will be taken and one will be left.**

41 “Two women will be grinding at the mill; **one will be taken and one will be left.**

There are places in the Bible where the rapture is taught. (*1 Thessalonians 4:17 for example*) However this verse isn't one of them.

Again, look at the context.

The immediate context is comparing the *“coming of the Son of Man”* to the flood in Noah's day. What was the flood for? Again it was about judgment. If you look at verses 38-39, you'll see that the ones being “taken” are those who were NOT on the ark because *“the flood came and **took** them all away”*

Jesus said “*so will the coming of the Son of Man be*”.

The ones being “taken” in verses 40 and 41 are being **judged**, just like in the days of Noah. The immediate context is so clear that I’m amazed this verse has been so badly twisted to talk about the rapture. (*There are much better verses in the Bible for that*)

The ones being “taken” here are being taken in judgment. They aren’t being pulled up to meet Christ in the clouds like 1st Thessalonians talks about. Again, Jesus’ whole theme this entire day has been judgment. This section is no different.

Matthew 24:42 – 25:30

This section and its parables deal with being ready for the coming judgment. It includes the parable of the ten virgins and the parable of the talents. The meaning is fairly plain and mostly undisputed, so I will skip them here to avoid making this book-length.

The only thing I will say is that the whole theme of this passage seems to be “keep watch”. I recommend you read it for context and then pick up at the verse below. Like I already said, Jesus told the disciples to look for the signs... Keep watch for the signs?

Moving on.

We’ll pick up just after the parable of the talents.

Mathew 25:31-34 + 41

31 “But **when the Son of Man comes in His glory**, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

32 “All the nations will be gathered before Him; and **He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;**

33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

34 “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

41 “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

There are some people who want to switch tracks and say this is a picture of the great white throne judgment depicted in Revelation 20.

I disagree because of the context.

There is not one single break in the whole whole section. From Matthew 21:23 to the end of chapter 25 is one continuous day, and it carries a single continuous theme. From Matthew 24:4 to the end of chapter 25, Jesus never stops speaking. (*This is easier to see if you have a bible where Jesus' words are in red*)

Jesus has spent the entire day talking about judgment. Specifically, He's been talking about judging Israel because they killed His servants (*the Prophets/faithful Israelites in the Old Testament*)

He starts this whole section because the Disciples asked when His judgment of Israel would happen. He's told parables about this judgment, He warned the disciples it would come in their lifetime so they needed to "keep watch" for it.

After getting done with the warning to keep watch, Jesus then finishes with a symbolic picture of what the Judgment looks like. The faithful (*believers/Christians*) are depicted as sheep compared to the unfaithful Jews who are depicted as goats. So symbolically, the sheep inherit the Kingdom and the goats get sent to the hot place.

That's exactly what happened.

After the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews couldn't hinder the spread of Christianity anymore. Partially as a result of that, Christianity just exploded. To put it another way, the Christians were now fully able to inherit the kingdom of heaven that Jesus and John the Baptist taught was "at hand".

On the other hand, the Jews in Jerusalem were wiped out. I'm just guessing, but I don't think they made it into the Lamb's book of life. Therefore I think they were sent to a... hotter climate.

Revelation

Now that we have the context of Matthew 21-25 in mind, it's time to take a look at Revelation.

It's not my intent to produce a full commentary on Revelation. I will be focusing on the seven seals, the seven trumpet and the seven bowls of wrath. That said, I will hit many other places which indicate that this wonderful book of Prophecy was fulfilled with the war against Jerusalem that ended in 70 AD.

Revelation Chapter 1

Let's begin.

Revelation 1:1-3 + 7

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,

2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

3 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**.

7 **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.

This first chunk here illustrates two important things.

First, verse 7 is a reference to Isaiah 19 and is talking about judgment of Egypt. As we've already seen (*and will see again later*) Jerusalem is spiritually called Egypt in Revelation.

Second, John makes it abundantly clear that the events that are being described "*must soon take place*" because "*the time is near*". If that wasn't clear enough, he goes on to clarify that "*every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him*".

Jesus was only pierced once, and it was after He died on the cross.

John 19:33-34

33 but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

34 **But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear**, and immediately blood and water came out.

If the eyes of those who pierced Him will see His coming, then obviously the events can't refer to Jesus "Second Coming". Rather, they must refer to an event that took place during the lifetimes of the those who conspired to kill Jesus (*or even specifically those soldiers*). It's quite plausible – even likely – that most of them were alive and well at this time.

Matthew is even clearer on the timeframe:

Matthew 16:28

27 “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.

28 “Truly I say to you, **there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”**

Some of the disciples “will not taste death” until Jesus comes in judgment. Unless Jesus was lying here, when He “comes” (*in judgment*) some of the disciples must not have died yet. Again, we’re pinned down to a fairly small window after Christ died for these events to happen. The Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD fits into that window and fulfills virtually every prophecy in the book.

Moving on.

Revelation 1:7

7 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.

First, some biblical context. This highlighted portion of verse 7 is a direct quote from Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:30

30 “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.

Notice the use of the word “tribes” here. The world isn’t divided into tribes; it’s divided into nations. Only Israel is divided into tribes. The word translated “tribe” there is the word “[Phule](#)”, and here is the definition according to Strongs:

1). a tribe

a). in the NT all the persons descending from one of the twelve sons of the patriarch,

Jacob

2). a nation, people

So we're definitely talking about tribes.

By contrast, the word translated "earth" is the word "Ge" which means earth, but not in the sense of the whole planet. Basically, it means "dirt" or "land". (*Random fact, the word "Ge" is one of the root words for our word Geology.*) It's been translated as "land" and used to signify the Land of Israel. For example:

Matthew 9:20-21

20 "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the **land of Israel**; for those who sought the Child's life are dead."

21 So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the **land of Israel**.

What I'm saying is "earth" doesn't have to mean the whole world.

Again, cultural context is crucial because something is always lost in translation.

To us living in the 21st century, "earth" means "the whole world". However it meant something different to those in the 1st century. Remember Paul said the gospel had been preached in "the whole world" and we saw that didn't need to mean the entire planet. Likewise, the word "Ge" doesn't have to mean the whole planet.

A wise man once said "The Bible is written FOR us, but not TO us."

You need to look at what the words meant for the original audience. It's easy to make mistakes interpreting the Bible if you don't take culture and language into account.

I would translate verse 7 as "*the tribes of the Land*", land meaning the Land of Israel. This is perfectly consistent with the Greek words and the culture of the time. It also makes more sense because usually the world is talked about as being divided into nations, not tribes. By contrast, Israel has always been divided into tribes.

Moving on.

The rest of Revelation 1 introduces Jesus using figurative language. It's worth noting that Revelation 1:16 again puts judgment in view with the sword coming out of Jesus' mouth. Again, that's clearly figurative language because I don't think Jesus has a sword instead of a tongue.

Revelation 1:16

16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and **out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword**; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

Revelation 2 and 3 are the letters to the seven churches. There is an almost universal consensus that these letters were intended for actual churches. (*Though some believe they indicate the state of the church through recorded history*)

I will let them pass almost without comment except to say that several churches are warned to clean up their act or Jesus will judge them.

Moving on.

Revelation Chapter 4

As I said before, it's not my intention to write a full commentary on Revelation. I'm going to mostly ignore the 24 elders and the four living creatures because frankly, I'm not 100% sure what they represent.

Regardless, chapter 4 is mostly a grand picture of just how glorious God the Father is. The imagery is vivid and leaves you in no doubt how powerful He is. To the 1st century Christians who were being persecuted, I think that reminder would come as a comfort.

Moving on.

Revelation chapter 5

Revelation 5:1

1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a **book** written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.

Fair warning, I'm going to spend a large chunk of time on an issue that's really not a large issue. I'd take less time, but it's significant enough to warrant a good explanation.

The word translated as "book" is the Greek word "[Biblion](#)". Strong's definition :

- 1). a small book, a scroll, a written document
- 2). a sheet on which something has been written
 - a). a bill of divorcement

It's translated as a "certificate" of divorce elsewhere in the New Testament.

Matthew 19:7-9 (*And the parallel passage in Mark 10:4*)

7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?"

8 He [Jesus] said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.

9 "And I say to you, whoever * divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery ."

The word that's translated "immorality" in the passage above the Greek word "[Porneia](#)". (*It's the same root word as our word pornography*)

According to Strongs it means:

- 1). illicit sexual intercourse
 - a). adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc.
 - b). sexual intercourse with close relatives; Lev. 18
 - c). sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman; Mk. 10:11,
- 2). **Metaphorical, the worship of idols**
 - a). **of the defilement of idolatry**, as incurred by eating the sacrifices offered to idols

The basic idea behind "Porneia" is the action of being unfaithful. In the case of marriage, it's being unfaithful to your spouse. In the case of idols, it's being unfaithful to the One True God because you are worshipping/following false gods.

Even a cursory read of the Old Testament will reveal just how "Porneia" (*unfaithful*) Israel was to God.

Almost every other chapter in Judges starts with some variation of: “*Then Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and worshipped idols*”.

Israel was even worse after the kings came along.

David did well, but even Solomon turned bad at the end. 1 Kings 11 records him worshiping idols and building altars to pagan gods. Solomon even built an altar to Molech, the pagan god to whom children were burned alive in the Valley of Hinnom.

After Israel split into two separate kingdoms, things got even worse. Judah had a total of twenty kings, only eight of whom were faithful to God. Israel had a total of nineteen kings, none of whom were faithful to God.

Here is God’s take on Israel’s “Porneia”:

Jeremiah 3:6-7

6 Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, “Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there.

7 “I thought, ‘After she has done all these things she will return to Me’; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

8 “**And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce**, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.

I bring this up for two reasons.

First, there are some among Preterists who believe that the scroll in The Father’s hand is the “certificate of divorce” that Jesus talks about. It’s an interesting theory, but I’m not sure it’s much more than a theory. There isn’t much evidence to back it up, though it would arguably make sense Biblically.

The second reason is to again highlight just how unfaithful Israel was in God’s eyes. More importantly, God was VERY clear what would happen if they broke their covenant with Him.

Like, super crystal clear.

In Deuteronomy, God gives a clear warning and picture of what will happen should Israel break their covenant. As we’ve already seen, they broke almost non-stop.

Deuteronomy 28:49-68

47 “Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the

abundance of all things;

48 therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you.

49 “The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand,

50 a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young.

51 “Moreover, it shall eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also leaves you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish.

52 “**It shall besiege you** in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which the LORD your God has given you.

53 “Then you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, during **the siege** and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you.

54 “The man who is refined and very delicate among you shall be hostile toward his brother and toward the wife he cherishes and toward the rest of his children who remain,

55 so that he will not give even one of them any of the flesh of his children which he will eat, since he has nothing * else left, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you in all your towns.

56 “The refined and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and refinement, shall be hostile toward the husband she cherishes and toward her son and daughter,

57 and toward her afterbirth which issues from between her legs and toward her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of anything else, during **the siege** and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you in your towns.

58 “If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the LORD your God,

59 then the LORD will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses.

60 “He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they will cling to you.

61 “Also every sickness and every plague which, not written in the book of this law, the LORD will bring on you until you are destroyed.

62 “Then you shall be left few in number, whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, because you did not obey * the LORD your God.

63 “It shall come about that as the LORD delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the LORD will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you will be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it.

64 “Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known.

65 “Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul.

As you will see when we get to the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls of wrath, all of this was literally fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

And yes, it really was THAT BAD.

Regardless if the book represents a “certificate of divorce”, it certainly seems to contain Israel’s sentence for her crimes.

Chief among these crimes is the murder of the Old Testament Prophets, and presumably the murder of many Christian martyrs. This was God’s punishment for their breaking of their covenant and the unrepentant wickedness of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the high priests. They repeatedly attacked and eventually murdered Jesus, the ultimate martyr.

Moving on.

The rest of Revelation 5 deals with deciding who is worthy to open the scroll. Jesus of course is found worthy, which results in everyone falling down to worship Him. To this I say Amen.

Now we finally arrive at the seven seals.

The Seven Seals

The First Seal (*horseman*)

Revelation 6:1-2

1 Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come ."

2 I looked, and behold, **a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.**

Given that the context refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, it would make sense that this first seal represents the Roman army. Specifically, it refers to the army that was dispatched to quell the Jewish revolt that started the First Jewish Roman War. (*For history buffs, that army included the Legio X Fretensis, Legio V Macedonica, and Legio XV Apollinaris, plus several cohorts of auxiliaries* .) The legions began their invasion of Galilee in April of 67 AD and the war ended in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem.

The timeline fits because the Roman army would've arrived just a few months after the Christians fled from Jerusalem to Pella.

The Second Seal (*horseman*)**Revelation 6:3-4**

3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come ."

4 And another, a red horse, went out; and **to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another;** and a great sword was given to him.

That "*men would slay one another*" came true literally. To quote Josephus in [Wars 5:1:1](#).

It so happened, that **the sedition at Jerusalem was revived, and parted into three factions: and that one faction fought against the other.** Which partition in such evil cases may be said to be a good thing; and the effect of divine justice.

And Josephus also said in Wars 5:6:1.

Now while **these factions fought one against another**, the people were their prey on both sides, as we have said already. And that part of the people which would not join with them in their wicked practices, were plundered by both factions...

...And when the parts that were interposed between their possessions were burnt by them, they left a space wherein **they might fight with each other. For this internal sedition did not cease**, even when the Romans were encamped near their very walls. But although they had grown wiser at the first onset the Romans made upon them; this lasted but a while: for **they returned to their former madness, and separated one from another, and fought it out**: and did everything that the besiegers could desire them to do. For they never suffered any thing that was worse from the Romans, than **they made each other suffer**.

The Third Seal (*horseman*)

Revelation 6:5-6

5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come ." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.

6 And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "**A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine.**"

For some cultural context, a denarius was the going rate for a day's worth of unskilled labor. Essentially, this indicates famine conditions because the price for a meager amount of grain was so high. Josephus records essentially identical conditions during the siege of Jerusalem in [Wars 5:10:2](#).

"...they saw they would very soon die of themselves for want of food. Many there were indeed who sold what they had for one measure; it was of wheat, if they were of the richer sort; but of barley, if they were poorer."

The "do not harm the oil and wine" is even more clearly fulfilled. Josephus records in many places that the Jewish factions would spitefully destroy each other's food reserves. However, the wine and oil didn't suffer that fate. It was wasted, but not "harmed".

Josephus records in Wars 5:13:6.

...on which account he emptied **the vessels of that sacred wine and oil**, which the priests

kept to be poured on the burnt-offerings, and which lay in the inner court of the temple, and **distributed it among the multitude**, who, in their anointing themselves and drinking, used [each of them] above an hin of them

The Fourth Seal (Horseman)

Revelation 6:7-8

7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come ."

8 I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to **kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.**

This 4th Horseman was given four tools to cause death. These are the exact same four tools that the Prophet Ezekiel said God would use the during the destruction of the first time around (*by the Babylonians in 586 BC*)

Ezekiel 14:21-22

21 For thus says the Lord GOD, "**How much more when I send My four severe judgments against Jerusalem: sword, famine, wild beasts and plague to cut off man and beast from it!**

22 "Yet, behold, survivors will be left in it who will be brought out, both sons and daughters. Behold, they are going to come forth to you and you will see their conduct and actions; then you will be comforted for the calamity which I have brought against Jerusalem for everything which I have brought upon it.

Again, this simply serves to reinforce the point that Revelation is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Additionally, Josephus records Wars 5:12:3-4

So all hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city. Then did the famine widen its progress, and devoured the people by whole houses and families; the upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine, and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children also and the young men wandered about the market-places like shadows, all swelled with the

famine, and fell down dead, wheresoever their misery seized them...

...Now the seditious at first gave orders that the dead should be buried out of the public treasury, as not enduring the stench of their dead bodies. But afterwards, when they could not do that, they had them cast down from the walls into the valleys beneath.

However, when Titus, in going his rounds along those valleys, saw them full of dead bodies, and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan; and, spreading out his hands to heaven, called God to witness that this was not his doing; and such was the sad case of the city itself.

The Fifth Seal

Revelation 6:9-11

9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, **I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;**

10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

Before the destruction of Jerusalem, the biggest persecutor of Christianity was the Jews. They were the ones who chased Christians all over the country trying to kill them. Additionally, the Old Testament Prophets were only killed by the Jews. No other nation killed so many of God's faithful.

Jesus talks about this judgment in Matthew 23.

Matthew 23:33-36

33 "You serpents, you brood of vipers, **how will you escape the sentence of hell the Valley of Hinnom?**

34 "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,

35 **so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from**

the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

36 **“Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.**

Jesus prophesied that *“the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth”* would *“come upon this generation”*. That generation would’ve been almost completely wiped out in the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Sixth Seal

Revelation 6:12-17

12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood;

13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.

14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains;

16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

It’s impossible to not see the parallels between this passage and Isaiah’s Prophecy concerning the destruction of Babylon. Remember too that John has started referencing passages about the destruction of Babylon to look to the destruction of Jerusalem. That fact will be important later.

Isaiah 13:1 + 9-13

1 **The oracle concerning Babylon** which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.

- 9** Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it.
- 10** For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light.
- 11** Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.
- 12** I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold And mankind than the gold of Ophir.
- 13** Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the LORD of hosts In the day of His burning anger.

Remember, this is apocalyptic literature. To quote a previous portion of the article: (*and yes I'm quoting myself*)

As we've already covered, this prophecy was fulfilled in 539 BC when the Persian king Cyrus conquered Babylon. Obviously the Sun did not cease to shine 2500+ years ago, nor did the stars fall or the moon's light fail. And with 7.3 Billion people in the world, we could hardly call mortal man scarce.

Again, these are Symbols, not literally prophesied facts.

Ralph Woodrow writes this:

On the American flag, each state is symbolized by a star. Policemen commonly wear badges which include the star symbol — representative of their authority as policeman....

...We might describe the future as being "bright" if referring to good days ahead; or the future might be described as being "dark" if days of trouble are being described. We commonly speak of the Middle Ages as the "Dark Ages", etc.

In hieroglyphic writing, the sun, moon, and stars were often used as symbols — representing empires, states, kings — and the darkening of the heavenly bodies symbolized the overthrow of these empires and their rulers.

In like manner, the holy prophets of the Bible used these same symbols to portray divine truth and warnings. The use of such symbols was not the product of a heated imagination, but was within the framework of the established and sober language of those times.

Similar language is used in Ezekiel concerning the judgment of Egypt.

Ezekiel 32:2 + 7-8

2 “Son of man, **take up a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt** and say to him, ‘You compared yourself to a young lion of the nations, Yet you are like the monster in the seas; And you burst forth in your rivers and muddied the waters with your feet and fouled their rivers.’ ”

7 “And **when I extinguish you, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud And the moon will not give its light.**

8 “**All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you And will set darkness on your land,**” Declares the Lord GOD.

Last time I checked, the Sun is still shining and Egypt is still a nation. God judged them heavily, but this prophecy was symbolic, not literal. These symbols point to the death of a king and/or the weakening of a nation. The same is true of Jerusalem,

Another example:

Isaiah 34:4-5

4 And all the host of heaven will wear away, And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; All their hosts will also wither away As a leaf withers from the vine, Or as one withers from the fig tree.

5 For My sword is satiated in heaven, Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom **And upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction.**

This is applied to both Edom **AND** the people God has devoted to destruction. Again, this is symbolic and the symbolism is used throughout the Bible for destruction and judgment.

That said, not all of the Sixth seal is symbolic:

Revelation 6:15-17

15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains;

16 and they said to the **mountains** and to the **rocks**, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

This portion was fulfilled literally in the destruction of Jerusalem. Josephus wrote in [Wars 6:7:3](#):

So now the last hope which supported the tyrants, and that crew of robbers who were with them, was in the caves and caverns underground; whither, if they could once fly, they did not expect to be searched for; but endeavored, that after the whole city should be destroyed, and the Romans gone away, they might come out again, and escape from them. This was no better than a dream of theirs; for they were not able to lie hid either from God or from the Romans.

The Vision Between the 6th and 7th Seals (*Revelation 7*)

Revelation 7:1-3

1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

3 saying, “**Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.**”

(Verses 4-8 record 12,000 from each tribe being sealed, it's entirely reasonable to think that many of each tribe were converted to Christianity in the years leading up to the Destruction of Jerusalem.)

God loves to make history rhyme, or at least it seems that way to me. Way back in Ezekiel 8-9, God also had His faith symbolically sealed to separate them from the Judgment of the unrighteous.

Ezekiel 9:1-5

1 Then He cried out in my hearing with a loud voice saying, “Draw near, O executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand.”

2 Behold, six men came from the direction of the upper gate which faces north,

each with his shattering weapon in his hand; and among them was a certain man clothed in linen with a writing case at his loins. And they went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

3 Then the glory of the God of Israel went up from the cherub on which it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed in linen at whose loins was the writing case.

4 The LORD said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst.”

5 But to the others He said in my hearing, “Go through the city after him and strike; do not let your eye have pity and do not spare.

God saves those who are His by protecting them before the judgment comes. We know He did this in the destruction of Jerusalem. The Christians were warned before hand and fled the city to Pella. (*As we've already covered*)

This is further confirmed by verse 14.

Revelation 7:14

14 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.

The washing their robes and being made “*white in the blood of the Lamb*” is an obvious reference to them becoming Christians. While the Jews in general persecuted Christians, many were converted and saved.

There were many Christians in Jerusalem and they were warned to leave – or “come out” – of the city before the judgment started.

Josephus records in Wars [2:20:1](#).

After this calamity had befallen Cestius, many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink,

(*Cestius was trying to quell the revolt but was ambushed and defeated*)

Further, all of Christianity “came out” of Israel, or at least Jerusalem because that’s where the church started. So the “great multitude” recorded in verse 9 could be all Christians and still “come out” of the tribulation.

The Seventh Seal

Revelation 8:1-5

1 When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

Josephus records a very interesting event in [Wars 6:5:3](#) that occurred before the war began.

Thus also before the Jews' rebellion, and **before those commotions which preceded the war**, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus, [Nisan,] and **at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which lasted for half an hour**. This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it.

The Coals Thrown

Revelation 8:2-5

2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

3 Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne.

4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

5 **Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth;** and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

I would like to remind you that the word "earth" in verse 5 could properly be interpreted as "Land", as in the Land of Israel. With that said, David Chilton writes in "[The Days of Vengeance](#)" which was his

commentary on revelation:

The irony of this passage becomes obvious when we keep in mind that it is a prophecy against apostate Israel....

... Now, when God's people were commanded to destroy an apostate city, Moses further ordered : "You shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the Lord your God" (*Deut. 13:16; Jud. 20:40; cf. Gen. 19:28*).

The only acceptable way to burn a city as a whole burnt sacrifice was with God's fire —fire from the altar. Thus, when a city was to be destroyed, the priest would take fire from God's altar and use it to ignite the heap of booty which served as kindling, so offering up the entire city as a sacrifice.

It is this practice of putting a city "under the ban," so that nothing survives the conflagration (*Deut. 13:12-18*), that the Book of Revelation uses to describe God's judgment against Jerusalem.

The Seven Trumpets

Revelation 8:6

6 And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

The judgment of the Seven Trumpets is very interesting for the symbolism.

Again, context is incredibly important.

In this case, it's cultural context. Specifically the context of the Feasts that God told Israel to observe in the Old Testament. Most interesting is the time the Roman troops arrived in Israel.

These troops, as if orchestrated by God, arrived in Jerusalem in the Jewish month of Tishri, a month that begins with the Feast of Trumpets. **Called the Day of Judgment, it is on this day that trumpets sound the somber days of atonement and final judgment.** (*Leviticus 23:24, Numbers 29:1*). Thus began the Jewish War

[\(Source\)](#)

It should be noted the judgments of the Trumpets were almost certainly heralded by literal trumpets.

The Roman army used trumpets to signal virtually everything. This is an easily confirmed historical fact and Josephus records it in Wars. For example, in [Wars 3:5:3](#), Josephus said

Their times also for sleeping, and watching, and rising are notified beforehand by the sound of trumpets, **nor is anything done without such a signal.**

Assuming I'm correct that these trumpets were executed by the Romans, **every single one of them would've been announced beforehand by a literal trumpet.** Specifically, a trumpet would've been sounded to signal an attack.

Please keep that in mind as you read.

The First Trumpet

Revelation 8:7

7 The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and **a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.**

First, I would like to remind you that the word "earth" in the verse above can be (*and has been*) translated "Land", as in the "Land of Israel".

In regard to the a third of the earth [*and*] and a third of the trees being burned up, this literally came true. The Roman army marched all throughout Israel and destroyed much of the countryside and many cities too. The Romans came and destroyed any place the Jewish rebels hid,. Further, Josephus records the following in Josephus [Wars 5:1:1](#).

And now the Romans, although they were greatly distressed in getting together their materials, raised their banks in one and twenty days; after **they had cut down all the trees that were in the country that adjoined to the city: and that for ninety furlongs round about;** as I have already related. And truly the very view itself of the country was a melancholy thing. For **those places which were before adorned with trees, and pleasant gardens, were now become a desolate country every way; and its trees were all cut down.** Nor could any foreigner that had formerly seen Judea, and the most beautiful suburbs of the city, and now saw it, as a desert; but lament and mourn sadly at so great a change. **For the war had laid**

all the signs of beauty quite waste.

The Second Trumpet

Revelation 8:8-9

8 The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood,

9 and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Israel is often referred to as God's Mountain.

Ezekiel 20:40

20 "For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel," declares the Lord GOD, "there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land; there I will accept them and there I will seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things.

Again, Revelation is a prophecy of the judgment of Israel by God for their sins. So throwing His "Holy Mountain" into the sea makes sense. (*the sea is a symbol for the Gentiles as we will see later*) Further, Jerusalem has long been called a city upon a hill. It was certainly burned during its destruction.

And a large chunk of Israel was literally "thrown into the sea". Josephus described a battle (*in [Wars 3:10:9](#)*) where the Romans chased many Galileans on to the Sea of Galilee:

Sometimes the Romans leaped into their ships, with swords in their hands, and slew them; but when some of them met the vessels, the Romans caught them by the middle, and destroyed at once their ships, and themselves who were taken in them. And for such as were drowning in the sea, if they lifted their heads up above the water, they were either killed by darts, or caught by the vessels; but if, in the desperate case they were in, they attempted to swim to their enemies, the Romans cut off either their heads or their hands; and indeed they were destroyed after various manners everywhere, till the rest being put to flight, were forced to get upon the land, while the vessels encompassed them about [on the sea]: but as many of these were repulsed when they were getting ashore, they were killed by the darts upon the lake; and the Romans leaped out of their vessels, and destroyed a great many more upon the land: one might then see the lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies, for not one of them escaped

. And a terrible stink, and a very sad sight there was on the following days over that country; **for as for the shores they were full of shipwrecks, and of dead bodies all swelled**; and as the dead bodies were inflamed by the sun, and putrefied, they corrupted the air, insomuch that the misery was not only the object of commiseration to the Jews, but to those that hated them, and had been the authors of that misery. This was the upshot of the sea fight.

The Third Trumpet

Revelation 8:10-11

10 The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters.

11 **The name of the star is called Wormwood**; and a third of the waters became wormwood, **and many men died from the waters**, because they were made bitter.

The sea of Galilee is to this day one of the main sources of water for Israel. If the second Trumpet does indeed refer to the battle that Josephus describes, then many waters indeed would've been polluted and unsafe to drink because of the decaying bodies in the Sea of Galilee.

Also, the name of the star is significant here. David Chilton in "*The Days of Vengeance*" writes:

The name of this fallen star is Wormwood, a term used in the Law and the Prophets to warn Israel of its destruction as a punishment for apostasy (Deut. 29:18; Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7). Again, by combining these Old Testament allusions, St. John makes his point: Israel is apostate, and has become an Egypt; Jerusalem has become a Babylon; and the covenant-breakers will be destroyed, as surely as Egypt and Babylon were destroyed.

To quote just one of the places Chilton Mentions:

Jeremiah 9:13-16

13 The LORD said, "Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it,

14 but have walked after the stubbornness of their heart and after the Baals, as their fathers taught them,"

15 therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “**behold, I will feed them, this people, with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink.**”

16 “I will scatter them among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them until I have annihilated them.”

The Fourth Trumpet

Revelation 8:12-13

12 The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”

Please remember that this is apocalyptic literature. As we’ve already covered stars, and other celestial bodies often symbolized kings or kingdoms to the Jewish culture in this type of literature.

Again to quote David Chilton:

Like the ninth Egyptian plague of “thick darkness” (Ex. 10:21-23), the curse brought by the fourth angel strikes the light-bearers, the sun, moon, and stars, so that a third of them might be darkened. The imagery here was long used in the prophets to depict the fall of nations and national rulers (cf. Isa. 13:9-11, 19; 24:19-23; 34:4-5; Ezek. 32:7-8, 11-12; Joel 2:10, 28-32; Acts 2:16-21).”

In “*The early days of Christianity*” Frederic William Farrar observes:

“ruler after ruler, chieftain after chieftain of the Roman Empire and the Jewish nation was assassinated and ruined. Gaius, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, all died by murder or suicide; Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, Herod Agrippa, and most of the Herodian Princes, together with not a few of the leading High Priests of Jerusalem, perished in disgrace, or in exile, or by violent hands. All these were quenched suns and darkened stars.”

The Fifth Trumpet

Revelation 9:1-12

- 1 Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him.
- 2 He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.
- 3 Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.
- 4 They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.
- 5 And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man.
- 6 And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.
- 7 The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.
- 8 They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions.
- 9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.
- 10 They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.
- 11 They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.
- 12 The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

The first thing to notice about the fifth trumpet is the opening of the “bottomless pit”. For virtually any Christian the symbolism with Hell should be obvious. If the bottomless pit is Hell, then it makes perfect sense that what comes out of Hell would be demons.

The bottomless pit being opened could very easily refer to demons being allowed to run amok through

the minds of men. Notice the words of Jesus in Matthew:

Matthew 12:43-45

43 “Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it.

44 “Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came ‘; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order.

45 “Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. **That is the way it will also be with this evil generation.**”

Again quoting David Chilton:

The entire generation became increasingly demon-possessed...

...its horrifying final stages are depicted in the pages of Josephus' The Jewish War. The loss of all ability to reason, the frenzied mobs attacking one another, the deluded multitudes following after the most transparently false prophets, the crazed and desperate chase after food, the mass murders, executions, and suicides, the fathers slaughtering their own families and the mothers eating their own children. Satan and the host of hell simply swarmed throughout the land of Israel and consumed the apostates.

As to their appearance, Josephus writes this:

With their insatiable hunger for loot, they ransacked the houses of the wealthy, murdered men and violated women for sport; they drank their spoils with blood, and from mere satiety and shamelessness gave themselves up to effeminate practices, plaiting their hair and putting on women's clothes, drenched themselves with perfumes and painting their eyelids to make themselves attractive. **They copied not merely the dress, but also the passions of women**, devising in their excess of licentiousness unlawful pleasures in which they wallowed as in a brothel. Thus they entirely polluted the city with their foul practices. **Yet though they wore women's faces, their hands were murderous.** They would approach with mincing steps, then suddenly become fighting men, and, whipping out their swords from under their dyed cloaks, they would run through every passerby

This is also a fairly accurate description of all that God said would take place in Deuteronomy 29 if Israel didn't obey God. (*I recommend you read it, but make sure you have a strong stomach*) Also,

Paul mentions giving people over their lusts as a punishment in Romans.

Romans 1:24-25, 28

24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge * God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

The five months that are referred to here could very well be a literal five months (*May to September*) during the siege of Jerusalem. Adam Clark wrote about how the zealots in the city “*produced dreadful contests among the people*” during that period.

One last note, the words “Abaddon” and “Apollyon” are simply the Hebrew and Greek words respectively that mean “destroyer” or “destruction”.

The Sixth Trumpet

Revelation 9:13-14

13 Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

14 one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “**Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.**”

15 And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind.

16 **The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million;** I heard the number of them.

The 10th Roman legion – which took part in the destruction of Jerusalem – was stationed at the Euphrates river before being reassigned to guard Jerusalem. Since they took part in the destruction of Jerusalem, that legion killing a third wouldn’t be unreasonable at all.

Josephus writes (in [Wars 7:1:3](#))

...but permitted the tenth legion to stay, as a guard, at Jerusalem: and did not send them away beyond **Euphrates, where they had been before.**

About the 200 Million.

Young's Literal translation renders this verse thusly:

Revelation 9:16

16 and the number of the forces of the horsemen [is] two **myriads** of **myriads**, and I heard the number of them.

The word translated "myriads" is the Greek word "Murias". Here is the definition according to Strongs:

3. ten thousand
4. an innumerable multitude, an unlimited number
5. innumerable hosts

So it's actually "two ten-thousands of ten-thousands". However, most translations do the math for you because $2 \times 10,000 \times 10,000 = 2$ million.

However, that might be mistranslated. Read differently, it could be two "Murias" of ten thousand each, for a total of 20,000. Not coincidentally, that's the exact number of auxiliary troops that accompanied the Romans at the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Also of note is that the heads of the horse these riders were sitting on are "like the heads of lions" according to Verse 17. As we'll see soon, the lion is a symbol for Rome in Revelation.

Eating the Book (*Revelation 10*)

Revelation 10:1-2 + 8-10

1 I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire;

2 and he had in his hand a little book which was open. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land;

8 Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, “Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land.”

9 So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, “Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.”

10 I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.

The action of eating the book is almost identical to what God told the Prophet Ezekiel to do just before he prophesied – wait for it – the destruction of Jerusalem by siege.

Ezekiel 3:1-3

1 Then He said to me, “Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.”

2 So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll.

3 He said to me, “Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you.” Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth.

Ezekiel 4:1-4

- 1 “Now you son of man, get yourself a brick, place it before you and **inscribe a city on it, Jerusalem.**
- 2 “**Then lay siege against it, build a siege wall, raise up a ramp, pitch camps and place battering rams against it all around.**
- 3 “Then get yourself an iron plate and set it up as an iron wall between you and the city, and set your face toward it so that it is under siege, and besiege it. **This is a sign to the house of Israel.**
- 4 “As for you, lie down on your left side and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel on it; you shall bear their iniquity for the number of days that you lie on it.

One more thing, that this is a reference to Ezekiel is made even clearer by what happens afterward.

Revelation 11:1

- 1 Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “**Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar,** and those who worship in it.

Ezekiel spends all of Ezekiel chapters 40-47 measuring the temple.

The 3 1/2 years

(42 months, 1260 days, and/or “time and times and half a time”)

Revelation 11:1-2

- 1 Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it.
- 2 “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.**

In 66 AD, a large Jewish revolt broke out which saw the Jews wresting control of a portion of Israel from the Romans. The First Jewish Roman war (*which ended with the destruction of Jerusalem*)

actually began when Rome responded by sending troops to deal with the uprising in April of 67.

Therefore, the war really began in April of 67 and ended in with the fall of Jerusalem on August 3rd of 70. If you count how long it likely took for the Romans to thoroughly destroy the city's foundations, it's almost exactly 3 1/2 years.

It could also refer to Nero's persecution of the church, which began in November of 64 and continued until his death on June 9th of 68. But I find that unlikely because if everything else about this book is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, why would this be different?

That said, it could be both perhaps. We'll touch on this more later.

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:3-13

3 "And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way.

6 **These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying;** and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

7 When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.

8 **And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.**

9 Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.

10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

11 But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them.

12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.

13 **And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake**, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Some have argued that James and Peter stayed in Jerusalem to be the two witnesses, but that's pure speculation.

However, we're still talking about Jerusalem because verse 8 says their bodies will lie on the street of the great city "where also their Lord was crucified". Jesus was crucified just outside of Jerusalem.

It's interesting that Jerusalem is said to spiritually be Sodom and Egypt. This again reinforces the point that it was Israel's rejection of Messiah and long history of idolatry and killing Godly men that brought about God's judgment.

Matthew 23:35-36

35 so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

36 "Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

One possibility is a man who Josephus records in [Wars 6:5:3](#):

But what is still more terrible; there was one Jesus, the son of Ananus, a plebeian, and an husbandman, who, four years before the war began; and at a time when the city was in very great peace and prosperity; came to that feast whereon it is our custom for every one to make tabernacles to God in the temple, began on a sudden to 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...

... 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!"...

...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; 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 [catapults], and smote him, and killed him immediately; and as he was uttering the very same presages he gave up the ghost.

Depending on where you count the war's beginning (*the person quoted below counts it from an earlier date than I*) he could've preached for exactly 1260 days.

As explained in detail above, Jesus the son of Ananus prophesied openly for 1260 days. This 1260 day interval spans the time of the arrival of the Roman army at Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles in A.D. 66 to the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem in Passover of A.D. 70 when Jesus was killed by the Romans, approximately 1260 days later.

[\(Source\)](#)

Further, we know from verse 6 that there would be a drought while the two witnesses were witnessing. In [Wars 5:9:4](#), Josephus records a drought in Jerusalem that ended when the Romans began their siege of Jerusalem.

you know that Siloam, as well as all the other springs that were without the city, did so far fail, that water was sold by distinct measures; whereas they now have such a great quantity of water for your enemies, as is sufficient not only for drink both for themselves and their cattle, but for watering their gardens also.

We know that Jesus the son of Ananus was killed by the Roman catapults, the waters flowed again only after he died...

Another compelling evidence is that Josephus records (*In [Wars 4:4:5](#)*) something happening that's quite close to the aftermath of the Two witnesses ascending:

For there broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds; with the largest showers of rain; with continual lightening, terrible thundering, and amazing concussions and bellowing of the earth that was in an earthquake.

The aftermath of the storm is also interesting. During the storm, two of the factions within the walls began fighting and Josephus also records the result of their combat (*In [Wars 4:5:1](#)*):

And now the outer temple was all of it overflowed with blood. And that day, as it came on, they saw eight thousand five hundred dead bodies there.

Sure it's overshoot from the 7000 in Revelation, but the numbers are close enough that it's not hard to imagine Josephus got the number wrong on the high side. Many historians have argued that Josephus inflated his numbers somewhat to curry favor with the Romans, so it's very possibility.

The Seventh Trumpet

Revelation 11:15

15 Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."

The phrase "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" is interesting. Christianity didn't really become a world religion until after it left the shadow of Judaism. The destruction of Jerusalem – which also helped prevent Jews from persecuting Christians – greatly helped the spread of Christianity.

(If I get around to adding a section about the millennial kingdom, this is an important verse)

The Woman, the Dragon and the War

The woman has a crown of twelve stars on her head and gives birth to Jesus (*the child*). Therefore I would say the woman is Israel, or more probably the faithful remnant of Israel. In verse 6, the woman flees to the wilderness where she is protected by God for 3 1/2 years (1260 days) As already noted, the Christians in Jerusalem (*which includes the faithful Jews who accepted the Messiah*) were warned in advance of the coming destruction and fled to Pella beforehand.

The Child is Obviously Christ and verse 9 identifies the dragon as Satan. The war in heaven is often considered backstory retelling Satan's fall. An alternate theory is that the war happened at/around Christ's death.

We know that because of Christ's death, Satan's power was greatly weakened."

Hebrews 2:14-15 (*also Colossians 2:14-15*)

14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, **that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,**

15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

Jesus foretold this “casting out” in the Gospel of John.

John 12:30-31

30 Jesus answered and said, “This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.

31 **“Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.**

32 “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”

33 But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.

It’s important to note that according to Jesus, the “ruler of this world” (Satan) “will be cast out”. Jesus didn’t say “has been” or “is being; He said “will be”. The next verse connects this with His death on the cross.

So if this “war in heaven” took place because of the cross, then the devil having “only a short time” in verse 12 makes sense because Jerusalem was destroyed less than 40 years later. Thus Satan was only given a short time to persecute the woman (*faithful Jews who accepted Christ*) before the woman was spirited away out of his reach (*to Pella*).

The goal was to destroy the woman before their influence could spread.

Ultimately though, God protected the faithful remnant of believing Jews. Once Satan failed to kill the woman (*the faithful remnant*), he “*went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*” which means Christians. The woman was seemingly protected by God from further attack.

Verse 12 imparts a woe to the earth (*or land of Israel*) and sea (*probably the gentiles*). It seems like the flood (*of anger/wrath*) that the serpent aimed to kill the woman missed it’s intended target. The flood would be the Roman invasion that Satan hoped would kill the faithful Jewish remnant. However, the earth (*or “land” of Israel*) took Satan’s wrath instead because God protected the woman.

Again, I mention that the faithful Jews and Christians left Israel for Pella before the Romans starting destroying everything. So if Satan sent the army hoping to crush the faithful Jews/Christians, the army arrived too late and the wrath of that army was absorbed by the Land of Israel instead... Which is

exactly what happened.

The Beast from the Sea

Revelation 13:1-3

1 And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw **a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns** and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.

2 And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and **his mouth like the mouth of a lion**. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.

3 I saw **one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed**. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast

Here's where things get really interesting. First, we need to discuss the book of Daniel to see some of the symbolism.

Daniel 7:2-3, 7, 16-17, 23-25

2 Daniel said "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.

3 "And **four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another**.

7 "After this I kept looking in the night visions, **and behold, a fourth beast**, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and **it had ten horns**.

16 "I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things:

17 "These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth.

23 “Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.

24 ‘As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.

25 ‘He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

Now, it’s my belief that this great beast is the Roman Empire in general and Caesar Nero in particular. Here’s why:

First, we know that the beast represent kings and the fourth beast was the greatest and last of the great world-conquering kingdoms. Not since then has another single nation held the entire known world in its grip. Rome was the last nation to rule the whole (*known*) world.

Second, During the First Jewish war (*and the others as well*) Rome destroyed a LOT of Israel. Daniel talks in verse 23 about how the fourth beast will “*devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it* “. If earth is really the land (*of Israel*) then that prophecy certainly came true.

Third, Verse 2 describes the beast saying “his mouth like the mouth of a lion” Paul makes a very interesting comment regarding his release from Caesar Nero in 2 Timothy.

2 Timothy 4:17

17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion’s mouth.

The statement about being rescued out of the Lions mouth is even more interesting because of the most famous story surrounding the prophet Daniel: Daniel and the lion’s den.

Fourth. The beast made everyone worship him. There were many temples to Caesar in Asia Minor. Many Caesars claimed to be Gods in human form and statist worship was very common, even required. There was even a cult of emperor worshipers who enforced this worship of Caesar.

Dean Alford writes:

The Seer [John] is now describing facts which history substantiates to us in their literal fulfillment. The image of Caesar was everywhere that which men were made to worship: it was before this that the Christian martyrs were brought to the test, and put to death if they refused the act of adoration

Fifth. Caesar Nero reigned from October of 54 until he died in June of 68. In 64 AD, a great fire broke out in Rome. It is believed that many of the roman populace blamed Nero for setting the fire. (*Whether he did or not isn't certain*) This was passed around as rumor and apparently Nero felt he had to respond to it. Tacitus records (*in [Annals 15:44](#)*) that:

“Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace.
“

Nero's persecution of the Christians lasted 42 months like verse 5 indicates. It went from November of 64 to June of 68.

It's worth noting that Nero's persecution of Christians was absolutely horrific and barbaric. He was said to soak them in oil, light them on fire and use them for streetlights. They were thrown to lions and numerous other tortures of the worst kind.

Also worth mentioning is the use of the word "saints" in Daniel above.

Sixth. The number of the beast.

Revelation 13:18

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.

To quote from [an article I found](#): (*excerpts*)

If the Greek spelling of Nero Caesar (*Neron Kaisar*) is transliterated into Hebrew (*nrwn qsr*), the numerical equivalent is 666.

It's interesting to note though, that 666 is not a universally agreed upon number. Some of

the earliest manuscripts use the number 616 instead of 666.

If the Latin (*rather than the Greek*) spelling “Nero Caesar” is transliterated into Hebrew (*nrw qsr*), the final “n” in Neron being omitted (*and its corresponding value of 50*), the name computes as 616, which is the number indicated in the oldest surviving copy of the New Testament

Regardless of the number, Nero is the only name that can account for both 666 and 616, which is the most compelling argument that he, and not some other person, such as Caligula or Domitian, was intended.

In my opinion, that’s pretty compelling evidence for Nero being the Anti-Christ. He fits both of the numbers found in ancient manuscripts. I don’t know what the odds are of a single name fitting both, but I’d bet they’re astronomical.

Seventh. The mortal wound described in verse 3 is likely referring to the death of Nero himself. As the “head” of Rome, his death caused massive upheaval. Three emperors succeed him within a year. Rome’s recovery under Vespasian is considered by many historians to be nothing short of miraculous.

Eighth. the mark of the beast is required to buy and sell.

Megalomaniac that he was, Nero had coins minted in which he was called “almighty God” and “Savior.” Nero’s portrait also appears on coins as the god Apollo playing a lyre. While earlier emperors were proclaimed deities upon their deaths, Nero abandons all reserve and demanded divine honors while still alive (*as did also Caligula before him, AD 37-41*).

Those who worshipped the emperor received a certificate or mark of approval – charagma, the same word used in Revelation 13:16. Furthermore, in the reign of Emperor Decius (AD 249-251), those who did not possess the certificate of sacrifice to Caesar could not pursue trades, a prohibition that conceivably goes back to Nero, reminding one of Revelation 13:17”

(C Martin Pate and Calvin B. Haynes, Doomsday Delusions, 41-42)

(source)

Ninth. We know the Anti-Christ came 2000 years ago.

1 John 4:1-3

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God,

because **many false prophets have gone out into the world.**

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; **this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.**

Since we know the anti-Christ was already “in the world” when John wrote, who fits the bill better than Nero?

The Beast from the Earth (*Land*)

Revelation 13:11-18

There are two theories which make sense for his identity.

The first is the actual Roman Governors of Israel at the time. The Bible commentator James Stewart Russell writes:

There are two names which may vie with each other for the bad pre-eminence of the original of this picture of the second beast, – Albinus and Gessius Florus. Each was a monster of tyranny and cruelty, but the latter outdid the former. Before Gessius Florus came into office the Jews counted Albinus the worst governor who had ever ground them by his oppression. After Gessius Florus came they thought Albinus almost a virtuous man in comparison. Florus was a miscreant worthy to stand by the side of Nero: a fit servant of such a master.

The second is the unfaithful Jewish leaders themselves. David Chilton writes:

The Jewish leaders, symbolized by this Beast from the Land, joined forces with the Beast of Rome in an attempt to destroy the Church (*Acts 4:24-28; 12:1-3; 13:8; 14:5; 17:5-8; 18:12-13; 21:11; 24:1-9; 25:2-3, 9, 24*)...

...This is emphasized by St. John’s statement (*repeated in v. 14*) that the False Prophet exercised the Beast’s authority in his presence...

...The Book of Acts records several instances of miracle-working Jewish false prophets who came into conflict with the Church (*cf. Acts 8:9-24*) and worked under Roman officials (*cf. Acts 13:6-11*); as Jesus had foretold (*Matt. 7:22-23*), some of them even used His name in their incantations (*Acts 19:13-16*).

It's worth noting that they said this during Jesus' trial:

John 19:15

15 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."**

Because of that and Revelation's theme of apostate Israel, I tend to prefer the latter explanation.

Babylon is Fallen

Revelation 14:8

8 And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "**Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great**, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her **immorality**."

I think Jerusalem is Babylon, but they'll be more clues why later at the beginning of Chapter 17.

Further, the word "immorality" highlighted above is the Greek word "Porneia", which we've already talked about. If you remember, it's also translated adultery and carries the connotation of being unfaithful. (*In marriage to your spouse, with God as it relates to idols.*)

Winepress of God's wrath

Revelation 14:19-20

19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and **gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.**

20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and **blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles 1600 Stadia.**

(The NASB transfers ancient measurements into new measurements, so the “two hundred miles” is 1600 stadia in the original text)

Isaiah has already referred to Israel as the vine of God and foretold of its fate:

Isaiah 5:1-7

1 Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile * hill.

2 He dug it all around, removed its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it And also hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected it to produce good grapes, But it produced only worthless ones.

3 “And now, **O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard.**

4 “What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones?

5 “So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.

6 “I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, But briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.”

7 **For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel** And the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.

Another example of the “winepress of God’s wrath is expressed in Lamentations after the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586 BC.

Lamentations 1:15

15 “The Lord has rejected all my strong men In my midst; He has called an appointed time against me To crush my young men; **The Lord has trodden as in a wine press The virgin daughter of Judah.**

Also remember the parable of the winegrowers that we already talked about way back in Matthew 21:33-41.

It’s important to remember that the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586 BC was the “sentence

of the valley of Hinnom” that we talked about in the beginning. Remember the words of warning from Jesus to the Pharisees:

Matthew 23:33-36

33 “You serpents, you brood of vipers, **how will you escape the sentence of hell the valley of Hinnom?**

34 “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,

35 **so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth**, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

36 “Truly I say to you, **all these things will come upon this generation.**

Of particular note is that the valley of Hinnom was located just outside the city of Jerusalem – where the wrath of God was poured out.

I think this is a purposeful reference to the valley of Hinnom because Jerusalem is (was) undergoing the “sentence of the valley of Hinnom”.

Please note, the Jordan River is exactly 1600 stadia long and about as deep as a horse’s bridle. Josephus writes in Wars 4:7:6

... not only the whole country through which they fled was filled with slaughter, and **Jordan could not be passed over, by reason of the dead bodies that were in it**, but because the lake Asphaltiris [the dead sea] was also full of dead bodies, that were carried down into it by the river

So the Jordan River would have been flowing with blood as deep as a horses bridle for 1600 Stadia (*its length*).

The Seven Bowls (ch 15)

I think we’re still on the “wine of God’s wrath” here. This time, the wine of His wrath is given to seven angles to pour out on Jerusalem. In chapter 16 we get:

Revelation 16:19b

19b ... Babylon the great was remembered before God, to **give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.**

The First Bowl

Revelation 16:2

2 So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

It's interesting that this plague resembles the plague of boils from Egypt recorded in Exodus 9:8-12. We know from Revelation that Israel (*Jerusalem*) is spiritually called Egypt and Sodom.

Revelation 11:8

8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of **the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.**

The description of this plague lines up very well with the penalty that God threatened Israel with if they broke the covenant.

Deuteronomy 28:27, 35

27 "The LORD will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed.

35 "The LORD will strike you on the knees and legs with sore boils, from which you cannot * be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head.

On a more historical note, sanitation with Jerusalem during the siege would've been horrible. We know from Josephus that rotting bodies were piled in the city and blood and sewage ran in the streets. It's almost impossible to imagine that sores and boils wouldn't have resulted from the filth of the city. And

since there was no place that would be clean, they would've tended to get worse over time and resist healing. Infection would've been rampant.

The Second Bowl

Revelation 16:3-7

3 The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and **it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.**

This one appears to be similar to the Second trumpet, but much more severe. I'll again quote Josephus description (*in [Wars 3:10:9](#)*) of a battle that took place on the Sea of Galilee.

and the **Romans leaped out of their vessels, and destroyed a great many more upon the land: one might then see the lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies, for not one of them escaped**. And a terrible stink, and a very sad sight there was on the following days over that country; for as for the shores they were full of shipwrecks, and of dead bodies all swelled; and as the dead bodies were inflamed by the sun, and putrefied, they corrupted the air, insomuch that the misery was not only the object of commiseration to the Jews, but to those that hated them, and had been the authors of that misery. This was the upshot of the sea fight.

Could this be a restating of the second trumpet? Perhaps. However, add another event that occurred around this time and together the two would've turned Israel's seas into blood. Josephus writes in [Wars 4:7:6](#)

... not only the whole country through which they fled was filled with slaughter, and Jordan could not be passed over, by reason of the dead bodies that were in it, but because **the lake Asphaltiris [the dead sea] was also full of dead bodies**, that were carried down into it by the river

The Third Bowl

Revelation 16:4-7

4 **Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood**

5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things;

6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it."

7 And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

As to the rivers and springs become tainted with blood, I will mention the fallout from the Second Trumpet/Bowl above would've polluted virtually all the fresh water sources. Also, Steve Gregg writes in Revelation: four views:

The pollution of water sources did occur during the siege of Jerusalem, and streams of actual blood flowed through the city. This can be seen as a literal fulfilling of this vision, though it is possible that a symbolic meaning is intended as well.

Verse 6 gives us a powerful indication that the city is Jerusalem again. It says "*they poured out the blood of saints and prophets*" Killing Godly Prophets is something that Jerusalem was rather famous for. Again I will recall Jesus' words in Matthew 23.

Matthew 23:29-36

29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,

30 and say, 'If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.'

31 "So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

32 "Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers.

33 "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell the valley of Hinnom?

34 "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,

35 so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

36 “Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

And don't forget the sentence of the valley of Hinnom was the complete destruction of Jerusalem. This fact makes it clear (*to me*) that we are still talking about Jerusalem.

The Fourth Bowl

Revelation 16:8-9

8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire.

9 Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

During the siege of Jerusalem, the temple caught on fire. This fire spread and engulfed the residential section of the city. The fire killed an awful lot of people.

The Fifth Bowl

Revelation 16:10-11

10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain,

11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

It's interesting that this bowl isn't directed at Israel or Jerusalem. Instead, it's directed at the beast, which I would say is Rome in general and Caesar Nero in particular.

Nero committed suicide in 68 during the First Jewish Roman war. His suicide produced untold

amounts of upheaval in the Roman Empire. The following year (69 AD) is known as the “year of four Emperors” because the crown changed hands so much. This could certainly be called darkness because they were dark times for the Romans. Some historians would say they were Rome’s darkest hour.

As for the “*gnawed their tongues because of pain*” in verse 10, Farrar writes about the chaos in the wake of Nero’s suicide:

The horrors inflicted upon Rome and Romans in the civil wars by provincial governors...

...Such were Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian. **Vespasian and Mucianus deliberately planned to starve the Roman populace**; and in the fierce struggle of the Vitellians against Sabinus and Domitian, and the massacre which followed, there occurred the event which sounded so portentously in the ears of every Roman — the burning to the ground of the Temple of the Capitoline Jupiter, on December 19th, A.D. 69. It was not the least of the signs of the times that the space of one year saw wrapped in flames the two most hallowed shrines of the ancient world — the Temple of Jerusalem and the Temple of the great Latin god.

Starving might cause a figurative “pain in the tongue”.

The Sixth Bowl

Revelation 16:12

12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.

13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs;

14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”)

16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

Assuming Israel is the spiritual Babylon here, this could be a metaphorical allusion to history. When

the Persian king Cyrus conquered Babylon in 536 BC, he did so by diverting the path of the Euphrates river. This allowed him to march his troop into the city under the wall.

David S Clark writes:

We may remember in this connection that the doom of old Babylon was achieved by turning aside the waters of the Euphrates. As we use the word Waterloo as a symbol of defeat, they may have used the drying of the Euphrates as a symbol of defeat.

Also, Josephus records that thousands of the troops Titus used in the siege did come from the Euphrates. (*Like the 10th Roman legion*)

And about "Har-Magedon", Strongs gives this definition:

In Rev. 16:16 the scene of a the struggle of good and evil is suggested by that battle plain of Esdraelon, which was famous for two great victories, of Barak over the Canaanites, and of Gideon over the Midianites; and for two great disasters, the deaths of Saul and Josiah. Hence in Revelation a place of great slaughter, the scene of a terrible retribution upon the wicked. The RSV translates the name as Har-Magedon, i.e. the hill (as Ar is the city) of Megiddo.

The Seventh Bowl

Revelation 16:17-21

17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done."

18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty.

19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21 And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds [talent] each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

In [Wars 4:4:5](#), Josephus records:

For there broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds; with the largest showers of rain; with continual lightening, terrible thundering, and amazing concussions and bellowing of the earth that was in an earthquake.

As to the city being divided in three, this also came true. Philip Carrington wrote:

This refers to the division into three factions, which became acute after the return of Titus. While Titus was besieging it from without, the three leaders of rival factions were fighting fiercely within: but for this the city might have staved off defeat for a long time, even perhaps indefinitely, for no great army could support itself for long in those days in the neighborhood of Jerusalem; there was no water and no supplies. The fighting within the city delivered it quickly into the hands of Titus.

As for the great hailstones which weighed about one hundred pounds each. The actual word used there is the word “talent”, as in the parable of the talents. A talent weighed about one hundred pounds. In [Wars 5:6:3](#), Josephus records:

These engines [catapults], that all the legions had ready prepared for them, were admirably contrived: **but still more extraordinary ones belonged to the tenth legion**. Those that threw darts, and those that threw stones were more forcible, and larger than the rest; by which they not only repelled the excursions of the Jews, but drove those away that were upon the walls also. **Now the stones that were cast were of the weight of a talent**; and were carried two furlongs, and farther. The blow they gave was no way to be sustained; not only by those that stood first in the way, but by those that were beyond them, for a great space. **As for the Jews, they at first watched the coming of the stone: for it was of a white color**; and could therefore not only be perceived by the great noise it made, but could be seen also before it came by its brightness. Accordingly the watchmen that sat upon the towers gave them notice when the engine was let go, and the stone came from it; and cried out aloud, in their own country language, **THE SON COMETH**.

The rocks that the roman catapults weigh about a talent and where white in color. Sounds like the “great hailstones” that John saw to me. Further I can think of no other explanation for the people of Jerusalem shouting “the son cometh” other than they might have recognized their judgment.

I would like to point out that it was the tenth legion that had these catapults. The 10th Roman legion took part in the destruction of Jerusalem and was stationed at the Euphrates River before being reassigned to guard Jerusalem. Josephus records this in [Wars 7:1:3](#). So it's quite possible this is part

of the sixth Trumpet/bowl.

The Harlot (Revelation 17)

Israel being the great harlot depicted here makes a lot of sense. God Himself has called Israel a harlot before in the Old Testament books of Prophecy.

Jeremiah 3:6-7

6 Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, “**Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there.**

7 “I thought, ‘After she has done all these things she will return to Me’; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

8 “And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, **yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.**

The whole of Ezekiel 16 is dedicated to calling Israel a harlot. In fact, God uses the word harlot to describe Israel 21 times in that chapter alone. Verses 1-41 are God ranting about how bad of a harlot Israel is.

The harlot in Revelation is also described as being “*drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus*“. No one persecuted Christians like the Jews in the early years of the Church.

It’s interesting that the harlot “sits on many waters“. Ezekiel 16 talks about the nations that Israel played the harlot with, and the gentile nations were often associated with the sea/water in prophecy. (*like the beast coming out of the sea was a Gentile nation*) This is confirmed in verse 15 when the angel declares “*The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.*”

The beast on which the harlot sits is described the same as the beast who rose from the sea. All throughout Acts the Jews were trying to get Romans to kill and murder Christians. The symbolism there is significant.

Verse 9 says the seven heads are seven hills on which the woman (harlot) sits. Rome has long been called the “city on seven hills”, thus providing more proof that the beast is Rome in general. Further down Nero is indicated in the kings.

Also, the ten horns on the beast are what destroys the harlot. If the beast is Rome, then certainly Rome destroyed Jerusalem. (*Some even say the ten horns represent ten provinces of Rome.*)

Verse 18 says the woman (harlot) is the “great city”. In Revelation 11:8, the “great city” is Jerusalem. This great city “reigns over the kings of the earth” which matches Lamentations description of Israel.

Lamentations 1:1

1 How lonely sits the city that was full of people! She has become like a widow who was once great among the nations! **She who was a princess among the provinces has become a forced laborer!**

Further, “Great city” matches Revelation 11:8’s description of Jerusalem.

Revelation 11:8

8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of **the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.**

The Seven Kings

Revelation 17:10-11

10 and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.

11 “The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.

Five roman emperors died prior to Nero’s reign: Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula and Claudius. Nero became emperor in 54 and reigned until 68. That would fit with the timeline if “one is” refers to Nero’s reign.

The eighth king who is “is one of the seven” might possibly refer to Domitian, who has been called a second Nero.

Babylon is Fallen

Revelation 18:1-2

- 1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory.
- 2 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “**Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.**

Way back at the Fifth trumpet there was some significant historical and scriptural evidence that demons were allowed to run amok through the minds of men. This fits well with verse 2.

Paid Back Double

Revelation 18:5-6

- 5 for **her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.**
- 6 “**Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double** according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, **mix twice as much for her.**

God said he would pay back Israel double for her sins.

Jeremiah 16:17-18

- 17 “For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes.
- 18 “I will first **doubly** repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable idols and with their abominations.”

Jeremiah 17:1, 18

1 **The sin of Judah is written down with an iron stylus;** With a diamond point it is engraved upon the tablet of their heart And on the horns of their altars,

18 Let those who persecute me be put to shame, but as for me, let me not be put to shame; Let them be dismayed, but let me not be dismayed. **Bring on them a day of disaster, And crush them with twofold destruction!**

Chapter 18**Revelation 18:24**

24 “And **in her was found the blood of prophets** and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.”

There is little that specifically points to Jerusalem until verse 24. In times past – especially under Solomon’s reign, all of the things said could easily be applied to Israel/Jerusalem. The real clincher is verse 24. No other city on earth could qualify except Jerusalem. Many other cities have been guilty of the blood of the saints (*Christians*). But no one else is as guilty of the blood of the (*Old Testament*) Prophets the way Israel/Jerusalem is.

Conclusion

Like I said when I started, it’s not my intention to produce a full commentary on Revelation. The White horse and His armies, the Great white throne judgment, and the Millennial Kingdom I will leave for other people. Perhaps I will take a stab at them at a future date, but not now.

The rapture too, is still yet to come.

My only purpose in writing this was to show that Christians need not fear for the future. We are free to concentrate on the here and now where our attention belongs. Even if I’m wrong and the events of Revelation are still yet to come, it wouldn’t change how I live my life.

As Christians, We are called to love God first and people second. This applies whether Revelation is now history or still prophecy. So if you wish to please God and hear “*Well done my good and faithful servant*”, I’ll leave you with advice from my favorite verse in the Bible.

Micah 6:8

8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of

you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God

Amen.