Pattern Recognition in the Apocalypse

A commentary on Revelation

Paulus Wyns
Dedicated to Richard D
For his unstinting support
and encouragement.

And I went unto the angel, and said unto him,
Give me the little book.
And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up......
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<td>Babylonian Rabbanism - Digression 5</td>
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Preface

Many of the apocalyptic patterns in Revelation can only be discerned with hindsight and even then they can be difficult to determine, mainly because we are looking for something else. For example, the seals look both backwards and forwards from their point of origin. However, if we start with the premise that the seals only look forwards, and that their point of origin is 96 CE then we achieve a completely different reading of the seals.

In psychology and cognitive neuroscience, pattern recognition describes a cognitive process that matches information from stimulus with information retrieved from memory. Wikipedia states that, “The human tendency to see patterns that do not actually exist is called apophenia. Examples of apophenia include the Man in the Moon, faces or figures in shadows, in clouds, and in patterns with no deliberate design, such as the swirls on a baked confection, and the perception of causal relationships between events which are, in fact, unrelated”.¹

In our case we are matching patterns from the Old Testament (retrieved from “historical memory”) with the Apocalypse (and interpreting the application of those old patterns within new historical contexts). Of course, we must guard against the danger of apophenia but intertextual and contextual approaches strictly confine the limits of pattern matching thus preventing the detection of non-existent patterns.

A large portion of the Apocalypse has already found a fulfilment in the history of the Jewish people and in the early first century church. W. Farrar sums up the preterist approach as follows:

“But to me it seems that the founder of the Preterist School is none other than St. John himself. For he records the Christ as saying to him when he was in the Spirit, ‘Write the things which thou sawest, and THE THINGS WHICH ARE, and the things which are about to happen (ha mellei ginesthai [ᾳ μέλλει γενέσθαι]) after these things’ [Rev 1.19]. No language surely could more clearly define the bearing of the Apocalypse. It is meant to describe the contemporary state of things in the Church and the world, and the events which were to follow in immediate sequence. If the Historical School can strain the latter words into an indication that we are (contrary to all analogy) to have a symbolic and unintelligible sketch of many centuries, the Preterist School may at any rate apply these words, ha eisen [ᾳ εἰσίν], ‘THE THINGS WHICH ARE,’ to vindicate the application of a large part of the Apocalypse to events nearly contemporary, while they also give the natural meaning to the subsequent clause by understanding it of events which were then on the horizon. The Seer emphatically says that the future events which he has to foreshadow will occur speedily (en taxei [‘at hand’]) and the recurrent burden of his whole book is the nearness of the Advent (bo kairos engus [‘the time is near’]). Language is simply meaningless if it is to be so manipulated by every successive commentator as to make the words “speedily” and “near” imply any number of centuries of delay”.²

If the need is felt to label this commentary using modern categories then please label it correctly as partial preterist as only some of the vision was realized in the history of the Jewish people and early church - much of the realization is still future --- it is therefore incorrect to tag the commentary as “preterist”. Suggested descriptive terminology is “pattern-repetition–interpretation” because the same patterns are constantly repeated and foreshadowed in the Old Testament.

What the Apocalypse does so well is reuse Old Testament patterns, allusions and imagery without destroying the meaning of the original context and it reapplies those OT patterns to the first and second centuries and to the future. This approach makes the whole of Scriptures a Revelation of the events leading up to the kingdom and no one would dare label Old Testament prophecies as “preterist” as they clearly (obviously) have dual fulfilments as some are still not yet realized. “Farrar called John the “the founder of the Preterist School” but John is neither a preterist nor, a partial preterist, I would categorize John as a patternist (my own fabricated term).

The Apocalypse is not either/or (all past/all future) – it teaches us to recognize repeat patterns of human behaviour and divine intervention and superimposes the past onto the future like the old double negative exposures when cameras used to have film that was not rewound correctly. As Mark Twain said; “History Does Not Repeat Itself, But It Rhymes”, this is certainly a truism for divine history.
Chapter 1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Revelation of Jesus Christ was given to his servant John, who we learn was imprisoned (or banished) to the island of Patmos in Asia Minor. We are faced with questions from the very start of the vision. Is this the same John who wrote the Gospel? Why was he sent to Patmos? Critics will immediately point out the differences in style between the Gospel and Revelation.

Although many commentaries acknowledge striking similarities between the five Johannine writings, they also acknowledge striking differences and so attribute them to different authors. It is claimed that the gospel and epistle are written in flawless Greek, free from barbarism, solecism, or vulgarism; whereas the Apocalypse was written in inaccurate Greek, full of barbarous idioms and solecisms. R. H. Charles argued persuasively that John’s Greek, for all its idiosyncrasy, is not ungrammatical but has its own grammar, unparalleled in any other ancient writing, but none the less real and consistent, the hybrid grammar of a man thinking in Hebrew while he wrote in Greek. Some argue that because of the difference in Greek, the Apocalypse represents an earlier development and the gospel and epistles, with the more exact Greek a later development.

However, stylometric analysis using function words indicates that the Johannine corpus has clustering affinity although differences (even within books) can be noticed. For example Rev 2-3 and 21-22 form a sub-cluster within the Apocalypse. In similar fashion John 1 and 21 are slightly different from the body of the Gospel. The similarities of the clusters far outweighs the differences and because we are employing function words which are on the whole impervious to change and indicative of a unique style it suggests uniformity of authorship. Differences can be attributed to the editing process which would not overly affect function words. In the final analysis John received the Apocalypse when he was in exile and had little chance to have his work proof-read or stylistically polished. Thus the “authentic” John shines through with his Hebraised Greek with its unique idiosyncrasies as he had no assistance (Johannine school?).

Upon his release he wanted to get the message out as soon as possible. It is probable that the beginning and the end of the Apocalypse was “polished” before sending out. It is also possible that the Gospel prologue and the last chapter were added to his Gospel at the same time. The Gospel begins by emphasising that Jesus was in the beginning “with God” and Revelation commences with Jesus, who is now (again) with God relaying a message from heaven.
That is not to say that John is promoting the fallacy of pre-existence or equality with God (Jesus was towards God; John 1.1) simply stating that his final predetermined destination had been achieved and that as the “word of God” he now spoke from heaven. Similarly, the end of the Gospel makes it clear that John would remain alive “until Jesus came” (John 21.22) leading to speculation among the disciples that John would not die.

**Revelation 1**
- I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day *(v.10)*
- Unto him that loved us *(v.5)*
- What thou see write in a book *(v.11)*
- Who bore witness to the word of God *(v.2)*

**John 21**
- If he remains until I come *(v.22)*
- The disciple who Jesus loved *(v.20)*
- …would not contain the books *(v.25)*
- This is the disciple who bore witness *(v.24)*

Unlike the synoptic tradition John's Gospel does not contain apocalyptic material. The reason for this is because John was given an expanded version of the Olivet prophecy in the book of Revelation. There was therefore no need for him to record apocalyptic teachings made during Jesus’ ministry as he received a message completely dedicated to those teachings. Of course, if the Apocalypse is an expanded version of synoptic apocalypticism (such as found in the Olivet prophecy) then this has implications for how we interpret Revelation.

So a case can be made that his Gospel and the book of Revelation were sent out at the same time and that the Gospel which he had been writing in collaboration with his associates before he was banished had the beginning and ending adjusted. At the same time his draft of the Apocalypse had the beginning (message to the churches) and ending (New Jerusalem), “polished” and sent out to the churches stressing the imminence of impending judgement (behold, I come quickly, Rev 22.7), using the same words as the Gospel… the beginning *(John 1.1-2)*… but also… the end *(Rev 22.13)*. In other words Jesus is the first and last word of divine Revelation to man. The whole testament (artificially divided into Old and New) speaks of him and this is emphasised through prolific allusions to the Old Testament throughout the Apocalypse.
The importance of Daniel to the Apocalypse has been noted in the seminal work done by Beale. However, even Beale does not fully grasp the implications of the importance of Daniel for shaping the message of the Apocalypse. Beale sums up the major themes in Daniel thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daniel</th>
<th>Revelation 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets. (2:28)</td>
<td>The Revelation of Jesus Christ that God gave unto him. (v.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel makes this man to understand the vision. (8:16)</td>
<td>And he sent and signified it by his angel. (v.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blessed is he that waiteth. (12:12)</td>
<td>Blessed is he that readeth. (v.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O man, greatly beloved (10: 19)</td>
<td>The disciple who Jesus loved. (John 21:20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I praised and honoured him that liveth forever and ever. (4: 34)</td>
<td>To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. (v.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There came with the clouds of heaven one like the Son of man. (7:13)</td>
<td>Behold, he cometh with clouds. (v.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with pure gold of Uphaz. (10:5)</td>
<td>One like unto the son of man. (v.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His body also was like the beryl and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. (10:6)</td>
<td>His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace: and his voice as the sound of many waters. (v.14,15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then was I fallen into a deep sleep on my face, with my face toward the ground. (10: 9)</td>
<td>I fell at his feet as dead. (v.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And behold a hand touched me. (10: 9)</td>
<td>And he laid his right hand upon me. (v.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear not (10:12)</td>
<td>Fear not (v.17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“The book of Daniel has the following three dominant themes: (1) historical and cosmic eschatological judgment of evil nations and consequent establishment of God’s historical reign or of the divine eternal kingdom; (2) God’s absolute sovereignty and kingdom, which controls all earthly rulers and uses their own rebellious actions to accomplish his own purposes; (3) the saints living under an ungodly earthly rule and undergoing trials through being tempted to compromise with the religious practices of pagan society”.

Unfortunately, the most important theme of Daniel has been missed, namely, temple restoration and atonement. In the Daniel commentary, God is Judge, it is demonstrated that the temple is a major theme in Daniel. Many of the court tales in Daniel function as situational midrash on the temple.

For example, the three friends in the fire depict the dilemma of the exilic community when the temple was burnt, Daniel in the lion’s den depicts the frustration and resurrection of the hope to return and rebuild under Darius. The Babylonia section is bracketed by the loss of the temple vessels in Dan 1.2 and the desecration of those vessels in Dan 5.1. Nebuchadnezzar takes pride in the “glory of his house” (cf. the Jews “glorying” in the temple). In Dan 7, the Son of Man exits the heavenly temple surrounded by clouds of incense (Day of Atonement) not to declare forgiveness but to dispense judgement for the mistreatment of the holy people. There follow further descriptions of temple desecrations by Antiochus and a prophecy concerning yet more desolations of the holy place. The “exile” is not 70 years but 7 x 70 years until the great Day of Atonement, when at the end of 490 year “Jubilee” restoration and forgiveness is finalized. But first there will be a particular 3½ year period of tribulation. The focus of Daniel is therefore the restoration of the temple (true worship) and atonement. Questions about the sovereignty of God and punishment of the nations are sub-themes within the wider context of the temple.

And this is exactly where the NT picks up the story. Jesus becomes the “Temple” that Daniel anticipated – the true restoration of worship and atonement. Jesus and Stephen were accused of wanting to destroy the temple and change the laws (Acts 6.14) – this is what Antiochus Epiphanes (God manifest) attempted. But Jesus was no Antiochus – and he answers the Sanhedrin in words taken from Dan 7.3; “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matt 26.64) and the Apocalypse opens with the similar words: “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him’ (Rev 1.7).
In other words, Jesus is saying...you may think I am a blasphemer like Antiochus who comes to
destroy your temple but I am the “Son of Man” who comes from the heavenly temple as your
judge. The irony is that the Sanhedrin was sitting in judgement of God’s appointed end-time
judge. Moreover, Jesus indicates that he is now the temple – the only place where God could be
worshipped in Spirit and truth.

This was the temple that Daniel anticipated. The “heavenly temple” had come down to earth
reminiscent of the “garden sanctuary” at the very beginning. God would dwell with men. John
does not see “Ezekiel’s temple” he sees a city built out of saints – and the temple becomes Jesus
and his Father - “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the
temple of it” (Rev 21.22). The thematic of the temple is crucial to understanding the Apocalypse,
just as it is crucial to understanding Daniel. All the scenes take place either in the “heavenly
temple” or on earth/sea/air until the heavenly temple descends. The Apocalypse itself is
structured around a conceptual framework of 3½ years of Jewish feasts – Passover (seals),
Atonement (trumpets), Witnessing (Hanukkah and Purim), plague-vials (Atonement) New
Jerusalem (Tabernacles) etc...is this coincidence?

But before any new temple can be revealed the old temple needed to be removed, after all you
cannot put new wine into old bottles. Jesus himself refers to Daniel when he speaks of the fall of
Jerusalem in 70 CE (Matt 24.15). Once again this theme is picked up in the Apocalypse with the
same time periods mentioned (3½ years) and related to the measuring of the temple in Rev 11.1-
2. As this commentary progresses it will become apparent that we make the case for recurrent
patterns, namely the Jews constantly emerged from exile and rebuilt the temple. Exodus from
Egypt –build temple (temple destroyed) –Exodus from Babylon –build temple – temple
desecrated by Antiochus (3½ years) – new temple (Jesus) destroyed (after 3½ year ministry)
and raised, old temple destroyed (3½ year Roman War) – attempt to build temple by false
messiah Bar Kochba –destroyed after 3½ year war (supported by Parthia/Babylon) – Jews exiled
– Jews returned (1948)……build temple?? The Apocalypse is therefore not all realized in 70 CE,
or in 135 CE (in the past), etc...it is a repeat pattern until final consummation is achieved.
The Apocalypse commences with the words; “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him to show his servants what must soon take place” (Rev 1.1a). G.K. Beale has noted that the formula translated in Rev 1.1 (and also 4.1 and 22.6) as “what must...take place” is found in only one other place in the Bible, namely in Greek versions of Daniel 2, where it occurs in verses 28, 29 and 45:

[.....]...he showed ... what things must take place in the latter days (Dan 2.28 LXX)

[.....]...to show ... what things must take place quickly (Rev 1.1)

According to Beale, the verbs translated “show” are “semantic equivalents,” both used to describe the “role of the prophets in revealing what God has ‘shown’ them.” The important matter to note is the change from the expression “in the latter days” to “quickly,” which “appears to indicate that fulfilment has begun (that it is being fulfilled) or will begin in the near future. Simply put, John understands Daniel’s reference to a distant time as referring to his own era and he updates the text accordingly. What Daniel expected to occur in the distant ‘latter days’ -- the defeat of cosmic evil and the ushering in of the divine kingdom -- John expects to begin ‘quickly,’ in his own generation, if it has not already begun to happen.”

Therefore the Apocalypse in 1.1a anticipates (via Daniel) an imminent fulfilment in the first century; this was a partial fulfilment setting the pattern for what is to come. This explains why first century Jewish-Christians (and Gentile-Christians) expected the return of the Messiah in the first century. Of course, Jewish non-believers did not regard Jesus as the messiah but they also expected the appearance of the messiah (not Jesus) in the first century. In fact, the rabbis deleted about 160 years of history from the Persian period in order to adjust their calendar so that the end of Daniel’s 490 year prophecy would fall in the first century. This was obviously done “after the fact” but the Seder Olam Rabbah calendar was so constructed that it justified the Maccabee and the Bar Kochba revolts. There was then a general expectation of the messianic age arriving in the first century – by both Jews and Jewish-Christians and history was “reinterpreted” in the Jewish calendar to reinforce this belief. This helps explain the volatile first century situation and the number of messianic uprisings that occurred.
Hebrews and the Apocalypse

When the temple was destroyed the Jews concluded that they had been punished because they were not ready to receive the messiah (i.e., because of wickedness)….however, they did not conclude that the punishment had occurred because they had rejected the messiah as they did not regard Jesus as the messiah. There followed a period of introspection and realignment in Judaism where the focus was firmly placed on codification of the “oral” Law and commentary on the Torah with the work done in the Babylonian schools. Nothing had been learned. The take-away from this is that; Jews, Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians expected the messianic age to **arrive in the first century and the Apocalypse fits this historical picture exactly.** The epistle to the Hebrews (to the Jews) reflects familiarity with the Apocalypses demonstrating that it was in circulation **before Hebrews was written:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revelation 1</th>
<th>Hebrews 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God gave to Jesus to show his servants (v.1)</td>
<td>last days spoken to us by his Son (v.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He sent it by his angel (v.1)</td>
<td>Christ superior to the angels (v.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and from the seven Spirits (v.4)</td>
<td>Are they not all ministering spirits (v.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The firstborn of the dead (v.5)</td>
<td>The firstborn (v.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and prince of the kings of the earth⁹ (v.5)</td>
<td>Appointed heir of all things (v.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>countenance as the sun (v.16)</td>
<td>the brightness of his glory (v.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am alive for evermore (v.18)</td>
<td>They perish; but you remain ¹⁰ (v.11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The writer to the Hebrews uses the opening chapter of the Apocalypse as a framework for his own opening arguments. His intention is to demonstrate Christ’s superiority. Jesus sends his own angel (therefore he is above the angels: proof he is the “Son”, the firstborn of Ps 2.7) and therefore he is the **heir**, who is superior to gentile kings because they are his inheritance (proof: Ps 2.8), Jesus openly manifests glory after speaking with God therefore superior to Moses (proof: Moses required to hide face after meeting God cf. Ex 34.30-32) and Jesus lives forever (proof Ps 102:25-27). Moreover, the “seven spirits” sent by Jesus from before the throne (Rev 1.7) to the seven churches should not be regarded as a threat (if they are heeded) for; “Are they not all ministering spirit, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb 1.4) Jesus has, after all spoken to them in these “last days” (from heaven Heb 12.25) if only they would listen!
The epistle to the Hebrews emphasises how Jesus replaces the temple, its feasts and services because Christians have a “better (superior) covenant” in that Jesus is the fulfilment of everything and therefore Jesus and his saints are now the temple. In other words, going back to Judaism is tantamount to crucifying Jesus again (Heb 6.6) and anyway (very soon) it will all be removed (Heb 12.26).

The proof that this is a correct reading is supported by the fact that the warning to Ephesus is echoed throughout Hebrews because Hebrews was written to the Jews at Ephesus. Moreover, there are countless allusions to the Apocalypse in the body of Hebrews. It is sometimes argued that Hebrews was written after the temple was destroyed because Hebrews never uses the word “temple” but speaks of the tabernacle and its services.

If the temple was already destroyed it would make the argument (of Jews reverting to Judaism) completely unnecessary. Why does the writer of Hebrews prefer the example of the tabernacle? For the same reasons as Rev 13.6, John 1.14 (skenoo) and especially Stephen in Acts 7.46-48 who has God reject the temple in favour of the tabernacle because the tabernacle represented a moveable, impermanent dwelling place that could be dismantled and re-erected.

The Tabernacle represented Christ (and his saints) and the indwelling of the Shekinah glory in perishable mortal bodies that had been raised from death. So Hebrews was written before the temple fell and the writer of Hebrews had a copy of the Apocalypse at his elbow. Blindness in part has not just come to Israel but also to many Christian commentators who cannot see what is glaringly obvious – that the Apocalypse was early and that the early church was aware of the message.
Tripartite Prophetic Formula?

**Revelation 1:19** Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.

The case presented by various commentaries can be summarised as follows- the things which thou hast seen could refer to the vision of the, “one like the son of man” in vv.12-20, yet since John is still “within” the vision when he writes in v.19 this would seem artificial. In v.19 John is using the tripartite prophecy formula known as the “epistolary aorist” i.e., while the visions he was about to record were yet to be seen by John, from the standpoint of the reader they belong to the past. The things thou hast seen is a reference to v.11, “what you saw write in a book”, the conclusion drawn from this, is that the verse should be understood as; Write what you see, namely the events of the present and the future. However, the allusion is to the tripartite covenant title which is circumlocution of the divine name in the previous verse (and not a reworking of a tripartite prophecy formula) –

I am he that liveth -the things which are - present
I was dead -hast seen - past
I am alive for evermore -which shall be hereafter -future

The instruction given to John alludes to Rev 1.8: “the one who is, and who was, and who is still to come”. The activity of God cannot be limited to any single temporal plane. In similar fashion, those who limit the vision to exclusively preterist or futurist interpretations are limiting the word of God. The visions given to John relates to events in the past, (in his) present, and in the future. The problem facing the expositor, is determining which events are past, present or future. Sometimes this is clearly indicated, i.e., “five are fallen, one is, the other is not yet come” (Rev 17.10). At other times the transition from past to future is ambiguous as the patterns are applicable to different ages.

By the things which are we are probably to understand the circumstances of the seven churches that shortly follow as well as the heavenly throne scene\(^\text{13}\) of Rev 4, where John is informed about the “things which must be hereafter” (Rev 4.1). However, before the future vision unfolds, we see a vision of the Lamb, that has been slain (Rev 5.6) and was slain (Rev 5.9), clearly indicating that the vision commences shortly after the Passover resurrection of Jesus, when he was given the sealed book (and not 66 years later in A.D. 96).
Who are the servants?

Many commentators understand the “servants” as the gentile Christian church of a latter age. This rests on the assumption that the persecutor is Domitian\textsuperscript{14} and that the seven churches describe seven continuous “church ages”. Therefore the Apocalypse has nothing to say to the Jewish nation and nothing to say to Jewish-Christians in the first century. However, all the Old Testament allusions point to the Jews. During the primitive church era Christians were a sect within Judaism. A large minority and in many cases a majority of Christian churches were Jewish. Citations and allusions in Rev 1 reflect this fact.

For example, the allusion to Zech 12.10, a chapter which speaks of all the families (tribes) of Israel mourning their rejection of the messiah (vv.9-14), which tribes are encountered in Rev 7 where the faithful from each tribe are sealed. Certain Christian denominations have applied this prophecy literally to their own congregations even selecting who will be among the sealed!\textsuperscript{15} This is what happens when the Apocalypse is removed from any historical context and “spiritualized”. It loses all relevance and can be made to mean anything.
The Faithful Witness

Jesus’ title as the “faithful witness” (Rev 1.5) also testifies to the essential Jewish character of the context as it is derived from Ps 89.37 a psalm that contemplates the demise of the Davidic covenant because the Davidide (Hezekiah) was about to die childless. Without an heir, how could the Davidic covenant achieve realization? However, Hezekiah was saved from his deathbed and his life was extended by fifteen years—the reprieve allowing him to marry and conceive a royal line. The same psalm is alluded to in John 12:16 where the Lord speaks of his glorification (crucifixion);

Psalm 89:37 It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

LXX: Psalm 89:37 and as the moon that is established for ever, and as the faithful witness in heaven. Pause.

The faithful witness in heaven should not be confused with the moon as it references the rainbow covenant. The rainbow was the covenant of mercy; “For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens” (Ps 89.2). It is the rainbow covenant that appears in Rev 10.1 to reassure the Jewish nation that despite being (temporarily) cast off, God would not forget his mercy. The appearance of the risen Christ in Rev 1.1 is therefore the realization of the Davidic covenant. A Davidide on the throne forever; and this does justice to Psalm 89 as Hezekiah was at the point of a childless death which would have annulled the covenant. The context is purely Jewish:

Revelation 1.5
- The faithful witness
- The firstborn of the dead
- Ruler of the kings of the earth
- I am the first and the last; I am he that is alive and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and death. Amen (v.18)

Psalm 89
- as a faithful witness in the heaven (v.37)
- Also I will make him my firstborn. (v.27)
- Highest of the kings of the earth (v.27b)
- What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? (v.48)

The covenant was upheld and established despite the death of the messiah, moreover in words that describe the plight of the “suffering servant”; “He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” (Isa 53.10). The “seed” that Jesus saw (the travail of his soul, v.11) were first century Christians, many of whom (the majority?) were Jewish.
Moreover, the commissioning of John to write down the visions draws heavily on Isaiah 30. Like all the prophets, John identifies himself with (and in some ways personifies) his people. The powerful point behind these allusions is that the people of Israel were walking in the wrong direction, for they heard the voice behind them, they did not want to hear the word of the Lord pronounce judgment on them: “which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease before us” (Isa.30.10-11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 30</th>
<th>Revelation 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o Children that <strong>will not hear</strong> the word of the Lord (v.9)</td>
<td>o Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein. (v.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Write it before them in a table, and <strong>note it in a book</strong> (v.8)</td>
<td>o <strong>Write in a book</strong> (v.11,19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Thine ears shall hear a <strong>word behind thee</strong> saying, this is the way walk ye in it. (v.21)</td>
<td>o <strong>Heard behind me</strong> a great voice (v.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teacher be hidden anymore, <strong>but thine eyes shall see thy teacher.</strong> (R.V.mg. singular = the teacher=Christ, the teacher of righteousness) (v.20)</td>
<td>o John exiled to Patmos, his brethren persecuted (v.9) <strong>Every eye shall see him</strong> (v.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The context is once again the Hezekiah era where advantage was taken of his illness and delegations were sent to Egypt to request help against the Assyrian incursion. The Jews are being castigated for attempting to achieve their own deliverance rather than repent and rely on Yahweh.
The setting – the Day of Atonement

Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet

The expression “The Lord's Day” has caused much debate in the scholarly community especially as it is a phrase found nowhere else in the NT, the closest expression being the Lord’s Supper. Secular usage in Greek sources are always Imperial where κυριακός qualifies nouns such as “[Lord’s] treasury” and “[Lord’s] service”- therefore, used to describe imperial financial administration and this hardly fits the picture. Suggestions range from the “Sabbath” to the “Day of the Lord” (i.e. the eschatological day of judgement) to Passover. The only scholar who argues for the Day of Atonement is Wilfrid Stot but this is rejected by Ranko Stefanovic; “This argument is weakened by the fact that the scene of Christ among the lampstands reflects not the Day of Atonement, but rather the daily services related to the first apartment of the Hebrew cult as prescribed in the Mishnah”.17

However, Stefanovic’s observation is off the mark as the Day of Atonement in second temple Judaism was the only time when the High Priest cared for the Menorah (a task normally left to the minor priests). A week before the feast, the High Priest would leave his home to live inside the temple. That week, he would perform all the temple duties himself. In addition, he would study two Torah portions and learn one by heart to make sure he didn’t make any mistakes. The night before, the High Priest would stay up all night learning Torah and preparing spiritually. If he fell asleep, young priests woke him up by reciting psalms. In the morning, he would put on his priestly clothes and go about the daily morning service, including the morning’s sacrifice, the lighting of the menorah and the burning of incense.

However, if the Menorah supposedly had an “everlasting” flame why did it require to be lit daily? The lamps of the menorah were lit daily, “from evening until morning,” starting from the central lamp (the shamash) and then moving right to left (Exod. 27:2 1). According to the Talmud (Shabbat 22b), while all the lamps received the same amount of olive oil, the “westernmost” lamp (according to Rashi, the centre lamp, due to its orientation) miraculously never ran out of oil (i.e., it was still burning the next morning), even though it was kindled first in the sequence.
In other words, when Aaron would rekindle the lamps every evening (the start of the Jewish day), he found the shamash still burning, so he simply refilled it with oil and trimmed its wick. This miracle is also said to have occurred during the second temple period, though it abruptly ended about 40 years before the destruction of the second temple (in c. 30 CE) as it is attested in the Talmud: “Our Rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot ['For the Lord'] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-coloured strap become white; nor did the westernmost light shine” (Yoma 39a).

It has already been noted that Jesus refers to the “Son of man” from Dan 7.13 coming with “clouds” into the presence of the “Ancient of Days”. This depicts the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. Furthermore it is only on this day that the High Priest wears a white garment with a golden sash.

Christ also wears a golden sash and although we are not told the colour of his garment, he is depicted as having “white hair” (Rev 1.13-14); making him look like someone “ancient” (Ancient of Days) and denoting purity. He is still acting as a High Priest but now with the full authority of his Father. Most striking is the visage of his face, which shines as brightly as the sun with the reflection of the Father’s glory. The High Priestly blessing was pronounced on the people when the High Priest exited the divine presence on the Day of Atonement;

Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them” (Num 6.23-27).
How do we obtain the blessing?

Revelation 1:3  **Blessed** he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Those who kept the words would receive the blessing—everlasting life and the gift of becoming a kingdom of priests who will reign with him. There are seven beatitudes in the Apocalypse and the ones occurring in Rev 14.3, Rev 16.14 (and Rev 19.9 which runs parallel with Rev 16), have Day of Atonement associations.

The last three are found in Rev 20-22 when the “books are opened” (Rev 20.6, 12) and the fate of the wicked and righteous is decided. In second temple Judaism “The fate of the thoroughly wicked and the thoroughly pious is determined on the spot; the destiny of the intermediate class is suspended until the Day of Atonement, when the fate of every man is sealed (R. H. 16a)”.

Sukkot (Feast of ingathering or Tabernacles) commences five days after the Day of Atonement and forms the backdrop to the blessings in Rev 21-22.

While pronouncing the blessing the priest holds up his hands forming the letter Shin (שׁ), an emblem for Shaddai, translated as “Almighty [God]” which was copied by the Jewish actor Leonard Nimoy who played “Spock” in Star Trek used the hand-sign as his greeting; “Live long and Prosper” (which is the basic meaning of “EL Shadday”).

Jewish tradition states the Divine Presence would shine through the fingers of the priests as they blessed the people, and no one was allowed to look at this out of respect for God. Some congregants will even turn their backs to the Kohanim so as to avoid any possibility of seeing their hands—although this practice is unsupported by any rabbinic source and is probably a tradition that developed later, but if it has early roots it may explain why John heard a voice “Behind him” although it is more likely that an allusion to Isaiah 30 is intended.

The sages also regarded the Day of Atonement as the supreme festival and the greatest day of the year (Gen. R. 2:3), hence its names: “The Great Day” (or, in abbreviation, “The Day”) it is therefore no great step to see it referred to as the Lord’s Day especially as it was probably intended to carry eschatological overtones to the “Day of the Lord”.
The point that requires emphasising is that the Apocalypse held out the hope of national repentance and mercy at any stage for, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” (Exod 33.19).

The outcome was not predetermined but allowed for a response in which case the recurrent pattern would find complete realization in a single event without the need to constantly repeat. However, intransigence and disobedience would reap righteous judgement; “Will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation” (Exod 34.7).
The Seven Churches

Revelation 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

The message is directed at Seven Churches in Asia Minor. These form the “Menorah” in the heavenly temple, which is depicted in the Apocalypse as having an altar of incense, Cherubim – like living creatures and a throne (The Ark of the covenant). The Menorah should not be thought of in the two-dimensional way in which it is usually depicted, but in three dimensions as it represents a tree with branches (tree of life) around a central stem.

Its representation is therefore multivalent – a tree, a lamp-stand, seven stars, seven angels and seven churches. In so doing it emphasizes the point that the churches are the earthly counterpart of furniture in the heavenly sanctuary just as the tabernacle was built on the pattern (proto-type) of the heavenly. A birds-eye view of the Menorah looks like a star constellation -some speculate that it forms the basis for the “Star of David” –
In any case it seems to signify the heavenly constellation of *Pleiades* or Seven Sisters a star cluster visible to the naked eye and known from ancient times and symbolised on Egyptian and Babylonian artefacts. The Bible has therefore demythologised ancient lore and used it as an example of the “heavenly” lamp-stand but once again the context is purely Jewish (tabernacle/temple). The Nebra Disk found in Germany is usually considered one of the oldest representations of Pleiades (1600 BCE).  

![Figure 7.2. A monument of King Esarhaddon of Assyria from Zinjirli. The symbols on the right are extracted from the monument on the left, and they seem to represent, among other objects, the Pleiades and seven planets. The four lower staff symbols are unidentified. Sketch by Rea Postolowski and Sharon Hanna.](image)
The Location of the Churches

Revelation 1:11  Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

As for the choice of these particular churches Steve Moyise\(^\text{24}\) says; “Another point is the definite way that John speaks of 'the seven churches that are in Asia, (1: 4). One might suppose from this that these were the only churches in Asia but we know both from Acts and Paul's letters that this was not the case. Alternatively, we might think that these were the leading churches of Asia but again this does not seem to be true. Thyatira (which receives the longest letter) is a very insignificant place whilst Colossae, Troas and Magnesia have been passed over. Lastly, it might be suggested that these are the seven churches which were under John's oversight but since they cover such a wide area, it is hard to imagine how this came about. In particular, the letter to the Colossians shows that a close relationship existed between that church, the author of the canonical letter and the church at Laodicea (Col 4: 13f). How could it be that John's oversight extends from Ephesus to Laodicea but does not include either Colossae or Hierapolis? We are thus led to the conclusion that the definite nature of the address to the seven churches, is intended to be representative and means something like 'to the Church in all its fullness and diversity' […] Ramsay also offers an answer for why John addresses these particular seven churches. As a result of his own expeditions, he discovered that each of the cities lies on a trade route. A messenger coming from Patmos would arrive at Ephesus and moving North would come first to Smyrna and then up to Pergamum. If he then turned and descended in a South-Easterly direction, he would come to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and finally Laodicea, where the route back to Ephesus would be due West. Though often called a circular route, its shape is more like that of a triangle (Ephesus, Pergamum, Laodicea) with the other cities acting as stopping off points. Ramsay further conjectured that each of the seven places operated a secondary route allowing for the efficient dissemination of information throughout this part of Asia. Thus the reason that John addressed the seven churches’ is that they formed the seven postal districts for this part of Asia”\(^\text{25}\).
Conclusion

The Apocalypse is of early provenance probably just before the Nero Persecution but possibly even earlier. The Jewish nation is still intact and the temple is still standing. The essential Jewish character of the Apocalypse which alludes to the feasts and cultic temple rituals testifies to this. Its message is directed to Jews both non-aligned (not believing) and believing (Jewish-Christians) and the “servants” are Jewish believers baptised into the name of Christ. The Gentiles are a secondary concern in this message as the very real threat exists that without repentance the nation will be cast-off and the temple destroyed (as prophesied by Daniel and Christ). When that happens the message will go forth to the Gentiles as they will also be given an opportunity but they too will face consequences for disobedience. It is not as though the gospel was not already being preached to the Gentiles (by Paul) but until the removal of the nation and the temple there was always the chance of re-absorption by Judaism. In fact, that was already happening in the first century- many churches had become corrupt and many “God fearers” had left or reverted to Judaism. Many Jews also reverted to Judaism as a deliberate campaign was waged to subvert and undermine the early church (discussed in the next chapter). There was only one remedy; if no repentance was forthcoming (from the nation and the church) the only option left was to remove them and repeat the pattern (again).

Commentators and denominations that do not regard the Apocalypse as having any application to the Jews have deliberately chosen to remove the writing from any historical and scriptural context and are therefore forced to assign the work a late date. Any interpretation that applies the Apocalypse to later Christianity of subsequent centuries is clearly a case of allowing the tail to wag the dog. Gentiles seem to have forgotten that they are but a branch in-grafted into a much larger tree and are in danger of overestimating their importance in the scheme of things. Without the restoration of true worship by the Jews the tree is dead and ipso facto the branch also.
Appendix: Timeline of the Apostle John

The external evidence is confusing and often contradictory. According to the tradition in Epiphanius, John left Patmos when he was over 90 years old during the reign of Claudius Caesar (51-54 CE). This is clearly impossible for if John were 20 years old at the crucifixion (30 CE) he would have been 40-50 years old during the reign of Claudius. The confusion results from the similarity between the names of the emperors Claudius Nero Caesar and Nero Claudius Caesar (54-68 CE). Eusebius states quite clearly that the emperor was Domitian (81-96 CE) and quotes Irenaeus to the effect that John survived until the reign of Trajan (98-117 CE), making him 90-100 years old. In another place Eusebius mentions that “Peter was crucified head downwards at Rome, Paul beheaded, and John exiled to an Island”, giving the impression that these events occurred in close temporal proximity, and that as a consequence Revelation has an early date. By no stretch of the imagination can the ‘church fathers’ be cited as reliable witnesses. It is far better to rely on the internal evidence from scripture, which overwhelmingly supports an early date. Let us rather consider the traditions and ascertain where they complement the scriptural evidence.

- The apostle John is closely linked with Ephesus by early church tradition in fact the “house of Mary” can still be viewed there today.

- According to the Syriac apocryphal “History of John the Son of Zebedee”; After these things, when the Gospel was increasing by the hands of the Apostles, Nero, the unclean and impure and wicked king, heard all that had happened at Ephesus. And he sent and took all that the procurator had, and imprisoned him; and laid hold of St. John and drove him into exile; and passed sentence on the city that it should be laid waste. The angel of the Lord then appeared to Nero and frightened him into releasing John, and Nero thereafter did not dare to interfere with the affairs of the province of Asia.

The last location where John can be reliably placed is at the ‘council of Jerusalem’ until we meet him again at Patmos in Rev 1.9. The intervening years are not documented and therefore what follows is supposition, but it fits the facts as far as we can know them. Let us proceed by dating important events in the life of John, as far as it is possible from scripture:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of John</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date CE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mary committed to John’s loving care (John 18: 15; 19: 27)</td>
<td>30-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John and Peter imprisoned (Acts 4: 19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John and Peter sent to Samaria (Acts 8: 14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>John’s brother James murdered (Acts 12: 1)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>John present in Jerusalem during the ‘Jerusalem council’</td>
<td>Dated between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After Paul’s first missionary journey. [ecclesia undergoing</td>
<td>47-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>general persecution] (Acts 15: 6; Gal.2: 9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Jews banished from Rome by Claudius (Acts 18: 1)</td>
<td>52-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John in exile on Patmos (Rev.1:9)</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Nero persecution</td>
<td>64-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jewish war starts</td>
<td>66½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nero’s death</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domitian caretaker for his father Vespasian for six months</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>End of the Jewish war</td>
<td>73½</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Endnotes Chapter 1 pages 1-22

1 For a reconstructed chronology (time line) of the apostle John the apostle see the Appendix at the end of the chapter.

2 This is an ongoing project I hope to publish some time in the future.


5 The phrase in Rev 1.7 is a conflation of Zech 12.10 and Dan.7.13; “behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man”, and Zech.12.10 “they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son.”

6 This is linked to the triennial reading cycle of the Old Testament…..see [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/Digressions/rev_feasts.pdf"] the "paschal context of Revelation 1 fits neatly into the context of the entire book of Revelation. However, concentration on a Paschal approach neglects other feasts that are also clearly alluded to in the Apocalypse. If we are dealing with a cycle of feasts over a 3½ year period then we can expect Paschal and Atonement feasts to repeat over this period and that is exactly what we find. For a Paschal approach see; M. D. Goulder, “The Apocalypse as an Annual Cycle of Prophecies,” NTS 27 (1981): 342-367; T. Niles, As Seeing the Invisible (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 119-125; Richard M. Davidson, “Sanctuary Typology,” in Symposium on Revelation—Book 1, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 121-122, Jon Paulien, “The Role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary, and Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation,” AUSS33 (1995): 247-255; Ranko Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation, 2d ed. (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2009), 32, 34.


9 A paraphrase of Ps 2.7-8

10 A citation from Psalm 102.25-27

11 On this see chapter 2-3 page 43 the message to Ephesus

12 On this see [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/Digressions/Dating_matters.pdf"] Hebrews is not the only NT book that shows awareness of the Apocalypse.

13 The heavenly sanctuary is an ever present reality and must fall under the things that are, for it represents the glory of God over his creation and continuous divine care for his people.

14 This is discussed in Chapter 2 page 54


18 The mention of “Clouds” has multivariate associations as it also denotes the “witnesses” (Heb 12.1), the “prayers of the saints” (Rev 5.8) as well as the “incense cloud” on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16.13).


20 For this J.W. article [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/Shad.pdf"] [Retrieved June 2017].


22 On this see Chapter 11 page 196


24 Steve Moyise, The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation, (Phd Diss, University of Birmingham, 1993), 17-18. This is a useful article; See there for a list of OT allusions used in the letter to the Seven Churches. Available online [Retrieved June 2017] [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/moyise.pdf"] [Retrieved June 2017]
The view that the order of the letters corresponds to the route taken by the messenger is accepted by most modern commentators, e.g., Sweet, p. 78; Caird, p. 28; Mounce, p. 76; Krodel, p. 94, who says the suggestion is 'as good as any'; also in the Ph.D. dissertation of L. C. Tengborn, Studies in the Interpretation of Revelation Two and Three, Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1976, p. 101.
Chapter 2 and 3

Jews, Christians and Seven Letters to Seven Churches

This chapter will examine the seven letters of Rev 2-3 within the framework of Jewish-Christian relations. It is a valid avenue to pursue because Jews are twice mentioned in a negative sense (in Rev 2.9 and Rev 3.9) and this poses questions about the Jewish presence in Asia Minor and interactions with Christians. It also poses questions about the dating of the seven letters. What follows is therefore not homiletic as there are many commentaries that can provide exhortation; rather, it is an analysis of the socio-historical context as a correct grasp of the setting will influence our reading of the letters (and therefore of the whole book of Revelation). For example, an interpretation that understands “seven church ages” that run consecutively will lead to a particular understanding (i.e., we might believe that we are living in the “age” of Philadelphia or of Thyatira etc).

However, before we proceed it should be noted that the distinction between Jews and Christians is largely artificial because at this time many Christians were Jews --- Christianity was not yet a “Gentile religion”. Although the apostle John was himself a Jew, John often uses the term “Jew” in a pejorative sense in the fourth gospel (to denote the ruling elite). In the period that concerns us believing and non-believing Jews worshipped side by side and attended the same synagogues. Within this context we can understand Stephen disputing with his fellow Jews in the synagogue of the Libertines (Acts 6.9).

Dunn says, “The significance of these findings should not go unnoticed. For one thing they raise again the issue of the ongoing relations between the churches and the synagogues. Were all the Jewish believers wholly detached from the synagogue or did they see no inconsistency in owning a dual allegiance to ‘synagogue’ and ‘church’, perhaps regarding the believer’s in Messiah Jesus as a (controversial!) renewal group within the Jewish community? Here we also need to bear in mind that in a city where many Jews had settled, the synagogues might themselves have been quite diverse; putting the same point the other way; we should not assume that the several synagogues (gatherings of Jews) in a large city were homogeneous. In which case the first churches might well have been seen as simply part of that diversity and their legal status have been left unquestioned accordingly”.

[HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/PDF/church_schema.pdf"]
Knowles sums it up succinctly; “Christianity began as a renewal movement within first century Judaism. Jesus himself was a Jew. His original disciples were all Jews. The first believers were Jews. Initially, this movement operated entirely within Judaism, not outside of it. In that context, it was known as “the sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5), in the same way we read of “the sect of the Pharisees” (Acts 15:5) and the “sect of the Sadducees” (Acts 5:17). It was not until later, at gentile Antioch, that the name “Christian” caught on (Acts 11:26). Initially, it may have been an epithet, rather than a merely descriptive term”.

Levine sums up the situation as follows; “In all, Acts mentions the synagogue nineteen times, almost always referring to the institution as “synagogue,” with but one exception, Philippi, where the term *proseuche* is used. Acts informs us of synagogues in Damascus (9:2, 20), Salamis (13:5), Antioch of Pisidia (13:14), Iconium (14:1), Thessalonica (17:1), Berea (17:10), Athens (17:17), Corinth (18:7, 8), Ephesus (18:19ff.), and Philippi (16:13). The frequent reference to synagogues in Acts is not fortuitous. According to Luke (author of Acts), this institution was a critical factor in the spread of Christianity in its early stages. Almost every reference to a synagogue is related to Paul’s missionary activity; at first he addresses the Jews and only later the gentiles. The pattern appearing in Acts is almost inexorable: visit to a synagogue, effective preaching, Jewish hostility, and expulsion. This recurrent phenomenon goes to the heart of Acts’ theological and political message. Paul is rebuffed time and again by the Jews, and only then devotes himself fully and unequivocally to the gentile mission. The theological basis of this schema is clearly spelled out in Acts 13:46: “And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, ‘it was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from yourselves, thereby judging yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the gentiles.’”

Christians would also meet outside the synagogue in “house churches” (Acts 2.46a, 12.12, 16.3, 5, 40 ; 1 Cor. 16.19; Col 4.15; Phil 1,2). Therefore, in the early days both believing and non-believing Jews would attend the synagogue and believing Jews (Christians) would “break bread” etc in their homes. In Judaism the home is the most important centre of spiritual life. The first church buildings did not start to appear until the early 200s.
God Fearers

As well as believing Jews (Christians) and non-believing Jews, there were also the “God fearers” who were Gentiles that were attracted to the Jewish religion. In the first century there were many Gentiles who although they were uncircumcised and did not adhere to the strict food laws etc were accepted (as we might term “interested friends”) and acted as “patrons” supporting the Jewish religion financially and in other ways because they found it preferable to paganism. It is not difficult to imagine that the “God fearers” were the most susceptible to the gospel message, especially as they were now received as fully-fledged fellow brethren. No longer were they treated as second class believers by Jewish exclusivity but as fellow-workers.

One such example is the Roman centurion Cornelius who was obviously well versed in scripture and understood that Christ was the promised messiah; “A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always” (Acts 10.2). This man was an ideal candidate for conversion as he did not have “Jewish baggage” in other words he did not believe that access to God was his right by birth or race. When he heard the truth he understood it without bias, tradition, or privilege clouding his view.

In the past many scholars thought of the early Pauline churches as being predominately Gentile and that may have been true for some of the churches in Galatia but after analysing the provenance of the names in the greetings of the Pauline epistles and further investigation Dunn concludes; “The reality was a good deal more confused and hardly uniform. Paul, as we have seen, typically used the local synagogue(s) as the springboard for his mission to Gentile God-fearers. But Luke does indicate that many Jews were also converted (footnote: Acts 13.43; 14.1; 17.4, 11-12; 18.8; 19.9; 28.24), and they would have formed part of the core members around which the earliest churches began to grow”.10
The Jews of Asia Minor

It is necessary to properly evaluate the Jewish presence in Asia Minor before the situation in the churches of Asia Minor can be properly understood. In the past scholars often thought that “synagogues” were a phenomenon that appeared on the scene after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. More recently a raft of archaeological (epigraphic) and literary evidence has come to light that demonstrates that this is patently untrue.

The institution of the “synagogue” existed in Israel but especially in the Diaspora for centuries. This supports the historical accounts depicted in Acts. It is actually quite logical that Jews should develop a “synagogue” culture even before the fall of the second temple. Not everyone could afford to travel to Jerusalem, not even once in their lifetime, and although the temple was financially supported by collections in the Diaspora, local communities need a place to gather and focus their religious and ethnic identity.

It comes as no surprise that the institute of the synagogue developed to fill this gap. Although the synagogue did not replace the temple it became a gathering place for various guild associations (to make business connections), a debating society (discussing the Law etc), a bible study school, a place where administrative decisions were made regarding the community and last but not least a place for communal worship. Outside of the family home the synagogue became the focal point of Jewish identity and the “face” that Judaism presented to the Gentile community.
Gentile Benefactors

These are Gentiles who gave financial and political patronage to the Jewish community and in particular to the building and upkeep of synagogues. Recent archaeological evidence has brought this to light and we turn to a number of commentators who evaluate the find. Horst\textsuperscript{11} has the following to say;

“There are several indications for this high degree of integration. Here only some of the most striking instances can be mentioned. In Phrygian Acmonia, we find a very intriguing inscription (\textit{IfO II} 168) that tells us that some prominent members of the local Jewish community had the synagogue restored that had been built by Julia Severa. This woman is well known to us — she is mentioned also in other inscriptions and on coins from Acmonia — as the priestess of the local emperor cult in the middle of the first century CE. So she was certainly not Jewish but played a prominent role in an important pagan cult in the city. Even so this inscription testifies to her warm interest in the Jewish [religion]. Julia Severa was an aristocratic lady (her son later became a senator in Rome), who had close connections with the prestigious Roman emigrant family of the Turronii; one of them, Turronius Rapo, was also a priest for the emperor cult and together with Julia Severa he is mentioned on the coins of the city, while another member of the same family, Turronius Cladus, is mentioned in our inscription as the ‘head of the synagogue’ (\textit{archisynagogos}) that had the renovations done!”

Levine\textsuperscript{12} comments as follows on the inscription:

“The items of interest here are manifold, most striking, of course, is the fact that the synagogue building itself was built by one Julia Severa a number of years prior to the date of this inscription, which itself deals with the restoration of the structure. Even more unusual than the nature of this woman’s benefaction is the fact that she was a well-known pagan who came from “a nexus of leading families.” The local coinage celebrates Julia Severa as politically active in the mid-first century, holding the positions of \textit{agonothete} and \textit{ἀρχιερεία} (high priestess) of the local Imperial cult.” Pagan donations to synagogues are known elsewhere in Asia Minor as well, but donating an entire building was indeed rare”.

An \textit{agonothete} (plural \textit{agonothetes}) has the following historical definition: An officer who presided over the great public games in Ancient Greece. This office (obviously) had religious implications as the games were dedicated to the “gods”. Trebilco\textsuperscript{13} observes the following:
The text deals with the restoration of the synagogue which was originally built by Julia Severa. We know from coinage that she was active in the 50s and 60s of the first century CE, thus suggesting that this inscription is to be dated in the 80s or 90s, in order to allow time for the synagogue to require repairs. It is therefore the earliest synagogue in Asia Minor attested by an inscription. Julia Severa is well known from numismatic and epigraphic evidence. She was ἀρχιερεία of the Imperial cult at Acmonia for at least three terms of office in the reign of Nero [emphasis mine] and was also an agonothete.

Of course the dating of the renovation is scholarly speculation and rests on the premise that it fell into disrepair through neglect but this was a region well known for minor earthquakes such as damaged Laodicea in 60. In all probability she built the synagogue for the Jews in the 50s and repaired it in the 60s.

Of paramount interest is that this “God fearer” (sic) was associated with Nero who persecuted the Christians. Is it coincidence that another “God fearer” was Nero’s mistress (later to become his wife). There were many aristocratic (Paul calls them honourable) “Greek Women” who became Christians (Acts 17.12) but there were also many “God fearers” who remained associated with Judaism but still kept one foot in the “pagan camp”.

The location of the inscription is Acmonia or Akmonia (Ἀκμονία). An ancient city and a titular see of Phrygia Pacatiana, in Asia Minor, now known as Ahat Köyü. It is mentioned by Cicero (Pro Flacco, 15) and was a point on the road between Dorylaeum and Philadelphia. To give a sense of where the synagogue at Akmonia is located I have superimposed a transparent map of the seven churches on top of a screenshot of the map from the archaeological application – the scale is kept roughly the same by matching the coastlines:
Map of the Seven Churches and Akmonia

The distance from Akmonia (yellow dot) to Philadelphia is barely 50 km.
Sardis

The synagogue at Sardis has been chosen as an example (floor-plan below):

![Plan of the Sardis synagogue.](image)

Levine relates how the rabbinical writing Tosefta (first appearing in the third-century) has a tradition that describes a colossal synagogue in Alexandria and although the rabbinical account is clearly exaggerated Philo does describe a large Alexandrian synagogue in 38 CE. According to the Tosefta it had 71 golden thrones for the “elders” (mimicking the Sanhedrin and high priest). Levin goes on to say:
“From an archaeological perspective, the only evidence that could possibly relate to this Alexandrian tradition of seventy-one elders comes, as mentioned, from fourth-century Sardis. At the western end of the hall were three semicircular benches, clearly intended for people of rank within the congregation. These Sardis elders, who sat on benches facing eastward, toward the centre of the hall and the Torah shrine (or shrines), also may have numbered seventy, as the building’s excavators have estimated on the basis of the space available”. [p. 93]

The seating arrangements were often in professional “guilds” (cf. Paul was a rabbi but a tentmaker by profession).

“Once again, the Sardis synagogue may offer an interesting parallel. Located on the main street of the city, it stood adjacent to a row of shops, many of which appear to have been owned by Jews. One side entrance of this synagogue even joined its atrium to these shops”. [p.94]

N. T. Wright puts the situation into perspective as follows;²⁰

“As in most cities of the region, there was almost certainly a significant Jewish community in Philadelphia; Sardis, not far away, was a major Jewish centre at the time. As in the letter to Smyrna, we have here an indication that the synagogue community was using its civic status to block the advance of the message about Israel’s Messiah, Jesus, a message so very Jewish and yet so challenging to Jewish people. We should not imagine a ‘church’ on one street corner and a ‘synagogue’ on another, as in many cities today. We should imagine a Jewish community of several thousand, with its own buildings and community life, and a church of probably two or three dozen at most, holding on to the highly improbable, and extremely risky, claim that the God of Israel had raised Jesus from the dead. That imbalance goes some way to help us explain what is now being said”.

Below are 23 occasions where the NT names a particular location as having a synagogue, together with documented extra-biblical sources (where available). Of course, the NT only names a particular location as having a synagogue if it is relevant (e.g., the synagogues at Sardis and Akmonia are not referenced). Jewish synagogues were therefore prolific throughout the first century, particularly in the region of Asia Minor.
## Synagogue Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antioch, Pisidia</td>
<td>Acts 13:14–17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>Acts 24:12, inscription, Talmud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antioch, Syria (Paul)</td>
<td>Acts 6:5; Josephus W. 7:44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laodicea</td>
<td>Col 4:16; Cicero Flaccus 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>Acts 17:16–17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miletus</td>
<td>Acts 20:17; Josephus Ant. 14:244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berea</td>
<td>Acts 17:10–14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magdala</td>
<td>Mark 5:21, Excavation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cana</td>
<td>John 2:1; Jos. Life 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capernaum</td>
<td>John 6:59, Excavation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pergamum</td>
<td>Rev 2:12; Cicero Flaccus 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>Acts 18:4–11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>Revelation 3:7-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyrene</td>
<td>Mark 15:21; Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salamis, Cypress Island</td>
<td>Acts 13:4–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damascus</td>
<td>Acts 9:1–25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smyrna</td>
<td>Revelation 2:8-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thessalonica</td>
<td>Acts 17:1–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iconium, Pisidia</td>
<td>Acts 14:1–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thyatira</td>
<td>Acts 16:14; Rev 2:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jericho</td>
<td>Lk 19:1, Excavation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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The Most-High God

One way in which Jews and pagans could compromise and still (supposedly) retain their separate religious identity was by worshipping the “Most High God” together. Of course it is nothing more than syncretism – both Jews and pagans pretending to worship the same thing – after all, as the saying goes, “you have to go along to get along” and it would surely lead to more harmonious relationships (especially of the business kind). Of course, the Most-High God of the OT is not the head of a pantheon of “gods” (even lesser ones) as Yahweh clearly states that “there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me” (Isa.46.9). But principles can be stretched almost endlessly for the higher good of getting along and making money. Horst describes this phenomenon as follows:

“Finally, we have to discuss a very significant form of rapprochement between Jews and Gentiles in Asia Minor, namely the cult of Theos Hypsistos, God Most High. Stephen Mitchell collected some 375 inscriptions of worshippers of this god, mostly from the second and third centuries CE, 46 mainly from the eastern Mediterranean, but especially from Asia Minor. A large percentage of these inscriptions, more than 160, are from Asia Minor, and in most cases it is impossible to determine whether the inscription is pagan, Christian, or Jewish; arguments for assigning them to either category are rarely decisive. That is so because Theos Hypsistos is a designation that was current as an epithet for the highest god in both paganism and Judaism and Christianity. It is highly probable that this rather elusive cult concerned a syncretistic religious movement that did a conscious effort to bridge the gap between polytheism and monotheism. Its origins lie not in Jewish but in pagan henotheistic circles, where the attraction of Judaism was so strongly felt that one was seeking common ground. Hypsistarians chose to address their god by a name that fitted both pagan and Jewish patterns of belief. Quite often they combined their worship of Theos Hypsistos with that of angels, another trait with monotheistic, or at least henotheistic, overtones. As Mitchell says, “We are evidently dealing with an area of belief, where Jews, Judaizers, and pagans occupied very similar territories. (...) The cult of Theos Hypsistos had room for pagans and for Jews. More than that, it shows that the principal categories into which we divide the religious groupings of late antiquity are simply inappropriate or misleading when applied to the beliefs and practices of a significant proportion of the population of the eastern Roman Empire”

Well might Dunn (2009: 620) comment, “....we have evidence of boundaries between Jewish synagogues and other associations which were permeable to powerful beliefs and influential practices”.

Jews, Christians and the Imperial Cult

Almost to a man scholars adopt the imperial cult as an explanation for the persecution of the “churches” in Revelation and as the background for the “image worship” in later chapters. It is virtually heretical to question the scholarly consensus – the beast is the Roman Empire and image worship is the Imperial cult. On the surface this is a plausible explanation but even if accepted many questions are left unanswered.

The Imperial cult of ancient Rome identified emperors and some members of their families with the divinely sanctioned authority (auctoritas) of the Roman State. Its framework was formulated during the early Principate of Augustus (27 BCE–14 CE), and was rapidly established throughout the Empire and its provinces, with marked local variations in its reception and expression. A deceased emperor held worthy of the honour could be voted a state divinity (divus, plural divi) by the Senate and elevated as such in an act of apotheosis. The granting of apotheosis served religious, political and moral judgment on Imperial rulers and allowed living Emperors to associate themselves with a well-regarded lineage of Imperial divi from which unpopular or unworthy predecessors were excluded. It was impossible to ignore the imperial cults, since Herod the Great had ringed Judea with temples to Augustus before the time of Christ and Caligula and Nero were resolutely active in cultivating divine honours during the time of Paul.

However, although Robinson does agree that later chapters in the Apocalypse reference “Emperor Worship” Robinson does not find any reference to the Imperial cult in the seven letters:

“The most noticeable feature in the account of what has actually been suffered by the churches of Asia, or is immediately likely to be, is the absence of any clear reference to the imperial cult, which pervades the rest of the book. There is nothing in the warnings and encouragements given to the congregations that requires us to pre-suppose more than Jewish harassment, the action of local magistrates, and general pagan corruption. Even in Pergamon, which is stated to be 'Satan's throne' (2.13), there is no compelling evidence that the allusion is to emperor-worship. In so far as Satan is characteristically for this writer 'the old serpent' (12.9; 20.2), the allusion may well be to the snake-worship associated with the shrine of Asclepius, of which the city was a centre [So Hort, ad loc.; Zahn, INT III, 411f.]. Even if, as later commentators tend to argue, the reference is to the temple consecrated there to 'the divine Augustus and the goddess Roma', [I.T. Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John, New York 1919, 456,notes that Pergamon was the first place in the province of Asia...}
to have such a temple. Yet Augustus also sanctioned temples in Ephesus and Nicea
with the inscription 'To the goddess Roma and the divine Julius' (Dio Cassius,
Hist.51.6.) this had been founded in 29 bc [Tacitus, Ann. 4.37; cf. 3.63; 4.55; and
Suetonius. Aug. 52.] and does not of itself require a late date. Yet though emperor-
worship can be read into the letters to the seven churches it is not demanded by
them (in strong contrast with the visions that follow). Even if a gigantic statue of the
Emperor Domitian was indeed erected in a temple at Ephesus, [Cf. Reicke, NT Era,
279, for the references.] there is absolutely nothing in the letter to the Christians
there to suggest that this was the issue they faced: their struggle was not with the
state but with false apostles, the Nicolaitans, and loss of fervour within the church
(2.1-7). This is not, of course, to deny that for the seer the final battle with the 'beast'
underlay everything else. But the development of emperor-worship in the province
of Asia cannot be used for determining the historical context into which the letters
fit".24

In agreement with Robinson, no references to the Imperial cult can be found in the seven letters,
it is clearly a case of reading into the seven letters the “image worship” found in Rev 13 but
contra Robinson (and many other commentators) even the “image worship” found in Rev 13
can be given a historically (and scripturally) satisfying explanation without the necessity to
impose the imperial cult on the text.25

Another objection to reading the Imperial cult into the back into the setting of the persecutions
and problems of the seven churches is that “Christians” were not regarded as separate group by
the Romans. Early Christians were a sub-group of Judaism and many Christians were ethnic Jews
(as already discussed) and therefore (like the Jews) exempt from the Imperial cult. Once again
we turn to Dunn for a summary of the situation [2009: 618-619];

“Of crucial importance was the consistent recognition of and toleration for the
rights of Jewish diaspora communities. In particular, Caesar and Augustus had given
Jewish synagogues formal recognition, and Caesar expressly exempted Jewish
communities from the bans on collegia. Josephus makes a point of documenting these
decrees and rulings no wonder, since they secured the toleration of and protection
for Jewish laws and customs in the empire. These rights included the right of
assembly, the right to administer their own finances (including the exceptional
permission for the Temple tax to he collected and transmitted to Jerusalem),
jurisdiction over their own members (including the power to administer corporal
punishment 2 Cor. 11.24), freedom from military service (because of the Jewish
requirement to observe the Sabbath), and not least in importance, permission not to
participate in the imperial cult. In short, the Jewish religion remained throughout our
period under the formal protection of the Roman state, although the expression
(much used in modern literature) *religio licita* is not actually to be found in the literature of the period. It is important to underscore the fact that the Jewish synagogai were thus officially regarded as equivalent to, on a par with, the *collegia* and *thiasoi* of other national and religious groups — the Jewish ethnic association, the devotees of the cult of Kyrios Yahweh, the practitioners of the philosophy taught by Moses. These, synagogai would, of course, have been one of the more homogeneous associations, consisting of Jews as the core members and participants in the synagogue’s corporate life. But, as already noted, they were not an exclusive association, for they evidently welcomed non-Jewish adherents and sympathizers (God-fearers) in their gatherings. So too, it is worth repeating, there is sufficient evidence of civic approbation of certain synagogue communities, not least in Asia, so that we can be confident that by and large Jewish synagogue communities were regarded as just another of the wide range of national and religious associations which was such a feature of Roman society”.

Therefore, as long as Christians remained a “sect” with Judaism they were afforded certain protections as they were not regarded as a “separate” religion. However (as always), this is probably an oversimplification of a very complex and fluid situation as the Jews themselves had to constantly fight to maintain their rights, particularly against “mad” emperors such as Caligula and the situation where “Christians” were under the “protective umbrella” of Judaism (we speak here of legal Roman protection) lasted only until the 60s as the Jews themselves fell out of favour (but not entirely) because of their revolt against Rome.

At this point it is interesting to digress somewhat and ask what Paul’s intention was as Luke (Paul’s biographer in Acts) presents an *apologia* which some see as favourable to Rome and as his epistle to the Roman church, particularly Rom 13 urges submission to the Roman authorities, “Therefore he who resists the authoritiesresists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment” (Rom 13.2) similarly many early commentators concluded that Acts is an *apologia* written to demonstrate that Christianity was no threat to Rome and that Paul wished to run a “test case” in Roman law in order to have Christianity recognised as a *religio licita* in its own right.

Tellbe produced a book on this subject which an abstract summarises as follows; “When first-century gentile Christians withdrew from the traditional and civic Graeco-Roman cults and increasingly began to be identified by the Romans as not belonging to mainstream or common Judaism, they soon found themselves pressed “between synagogue and state”.”
On the one side, the fact that they did not observe the Torah elicited hostility from Jews who did not want to be identified with a movement that in Roman eyes could be interpreted as seditious and thus jeopardize their own political and religious privileges. On the other side, the Roman authorities were well known for their suspicion of upstart religious movements and potentially subversive organizations. Did Christians in this situation make any attempt to claim Jewish identity and rights in order to operate under the privileges of the Jews and to avoid potential conflicts with the wider civic community and the governing authorities? And how did the apostle Paul respond to this socio-political dilemma of the early first-century Christian movement?"

The international standard Bible sums it up thus; “The first persecutions for the infant church came entirely from exclusive Judaism, and it was the Jews who first accused Christians before the Roman courts. Even so, the Roman government not only refused to turn persecutor, but even protected the new faith both against Jewish accusations and against the violence of the populace (Ac 21:31 ff). And the Christian missionaries--especially Paul--soon recognized in the Roman Empire an ally and a power for good. Writing to the Romans Paul counsels them to submit in obedience to the powers that be, as “ordained of God.” His favourable impression must have been greatly enhanced by his mild captivity at Rome and his acquittal by Nero on the first trial. The Roman soldiers had come to his rescue in Jerusalem to save his life from the fanaticism of his own coreligionists. Toward the accusations of the Jews against their rivals the Romans were either indifferent, as Gallio the proconsul of Achaia, who “cared for none of those things” (Ac 18:12 ff), or recognized the innocence of the accused, as did both Felix (Ac 24:1 ff) and Porcius Festus (Ac 25:14 ff). Thus the Romans persisted in looking upon Christians as a sect of the Jews. But the Jews took another step in formulating a charge of disloyalty (begun before Pilate) against the new sect as acting “contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus” (Ac 17:7; compare Ac 25:8). Christianity was disowned thus early by Judaism and cast upon its own resources. The increasing numbers of Christians would confirm to the Roman government the independence of Christianity. And the trial of a Roman citizen, Paul, at Rome would further enlighten the authorities”. 28

Once again, the above summary is oversimplified and analysis of the reasons for Acts as apologia is still discussed in scholarship and other valid insights have been proposed. 29 The reader is encouraged to pursue the subject at their leisure. It is probable that the apologia had multiple objectives and by narrowly focusing on a single reason to the exclusion of all else a biased picture can emerge.
However, we need to take note of a few things. Firstly, Jesus told his followers to render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s – but this did not include worshiping him as a “god” because believers were made in the image of the true God and therefore could only render worship to the one whose image they represented. Therefore cooperation with the authorities had certain boundaries that could not be crossed. Secondly, it made strategic sense for the Jews to distinguish themselves from Christians by declaring their allegiance to Caesar “we have no king but Caesar” and by portraying Jesus as “king of the Jews” they could drive a wedge between Judaism and Christianity. This was a strategy that had proved successful at Jesus’ trial and so they perused the same strategy against Paul saying that there is “another king, one Jesus” (Acts 17.7; compare Acts 25.8). The Romans did not perceive this as an idle threat as they had put down “messianic rebellions” in the past and a “rabble” that followed another king was a challenge to Roman authority. So one reason for the *apologia* may have been to quell such fears and demonstrate that the “Christians” were no threat to Roman authority. In any case, it is with the utmost irony that we observe that the Jews did accept the person of “Bar Kochba” who was declared the “messiah” by the rabbi’s and the war that ensued destroyed the Jewish state completely (and nearly destroyed the Roman Empire). The Romans knew not to “mess” with the Jews after all the priestly Maccabee family had defeated the Greek Seleucid Empire as a reaction to Antiochus’ desecration of the temple and proscription of Jewish laws. So driving a wedge between Rome and Christianity was a good strategy (from a Jewish view point) because it would make Rome aware of the troublesome Christians and would lead to them to being declared an illegal sect. Kraybill comments; “The great revolt of 66-70 CE could have put Diaspora Jews in a precarious political position, but ultimately little changed in their relations with Rome. In 71-72 CE, however, Emperor Vespasian made one change that affected Jews throughout the Mediterranean world: he ordered Jews to send their annual temple tax (διδαρχή γινηγος cf. Mt. 17.24) to Rome instead of Jerusalem. Money that traditionally supported the Yahweh cult at Jerusalem now officially went to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, the god who triumphed through Roman armies over the Lord of Israel. Smallwood notes the symbolic importance of this change.

The effect of this measure was that Judaism remained a *religio licita* only for those people who declared their allegiance by paying the *didrachmon*, soon to be known as the ‘Jewish tax’, to Rome, and thus purchased the privilege of worshipping Yahweh and contracting out of the imperial cult by a subscription to Jupiter.”
Dunn observes; “The crisis of 70 CE did not settle the matter, then. There is other evidence, however, which strongly suggests that the following period, the period between the two Jewish revolts (66-70 and 132-131) was decisive for the parting of the ways. Alter the first revolt it could be said that all was still to play for. But after the second revolt the separation of the main bodies of Christianity and Judaism was clear-cut and final, whatever interaction there continued to be at the margins”.33

The conclusion of this section is that to the Roman mind there was little to distinguish the Jews from the Christians in the period 40 - 60s. This was a squabble between different Jewish “sects” about questions concerning their law and religion. As long as it did not encourage rebellion or challenge the authority of Rome – so what? In this period the decisions that Rome made were usually ambivalent – they tacitly agreed with the ruling elite (Sanhedrin) for diplomatic reasons all the while knowing that the charges against Christ (and later Paul) were exaggerated. They were not seen as enemies of the state as such (until a later period) and they (as part of Judaism) would have been exempt (during this period) along with the Jews from the imperial cult.

Michael F. Bird34 comments, “The Christ-believers who were persecuted under Nero in the mid-60s CE, including the probable executions of Peter and Paul,35 were motivated by complex factors. It is certainly true that abstention from the imperial cult is not treated as the reason for the Neronian persecution in any of our sources”.

It is true that Tacitus (56 CE-120 CE) history is less than flattering when describing Christians but he was born at the beginning of Nero’s reign and his opinion was obviously biased by the great fire of Rome (ca. 64 blamed on the Christians) they were despised for their “abominations,” as a “mischievous superstition,” they were typical of things “hideous and shameful” that make their way to Rome, and for their “hatred of mankind.”36 For a Roman resident to profess faith in Jesus as an alternative to Roman religion lent itself to accusations of atheism and hatred of the human race, and was interpreted as a rejection of the mos maiorum (ancestral customs) and committing maiestas (affronting the majesty of Caesar). The conclusion from the evidence gathered so far is that the seven letters are early 50s-60s as they do not reflect a situation where the main problem was “Emperor Worship”. The letters reflect a historical setting where Jews and Christians were still closely affiliated, not least in the minds of the Roman authorities. Scriptural evidence from the letters themselves will be presented to demonstrate that the correct time period for these letters is 50-65 CE, after which common objections will be considered.
The Seven Letters

Can we state with any confidence that the letters to the seven churches have been removed from any explicitly Jewish context and placed solely within a Christian context? In other words, should we say that the warnings should be viewed as warnings against apostate Christianity and not as a warning against reverting to Judaism? Such a view goes along with a late (post-70) date for Revelation—i.e. when the temple cult was already destroyed, the Jewish nation in disarray, and the apostles (with the exception of John) were already dead. In fact even if the Apocalypse is dated to ca. 96 CE it still does not preclude the danger of apostatising to Judaism as the “parting of the ways” did not occur in any definitive sense until after the Bar Kochba rebellion which ended in 135 CE.

It is that rebellion in particular that was the focus of Jesus’ warnings; “If another comes in his own name, him you will receive” (John 5.43) and “For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Lo, I have told you beforehand” (Matt 24.24-25). Unlike other “messianic rebellions” Bar Kochba was recognised as the messiah by the leading rabbi of his day and supported by the ruling Jewish elite. Many Christians refused to accept Bar Kochba as the messiah and were therefore persecuted. Some Christians were deluded because they did not heed the warning of Christ. Therefore up until 135 CE (at the very least) the problem was Judaism. After 135 CE Jerusalem was declared a “gentile city” by Hadrian and Jews were prohibited and certain Jewish rites were proscribed. By the third century Jewish-Christianity had all but disappeared and Christianity had become predominantly a gentile religion. That is not to say that paganism was not a temptation (especially to gentile converts) or that the Imperial Cult did not pose any problems (before 135 CE) but they were problems shared by both Jews and Christians (many of whom were Jewish) and they were marginal problems in comparison to the far greater attack launched by Judaism.

It is only after 66 that a true distinction between Jews and Christians emerged as Christians refused to take up arms against Rome (in both wars). By the 70’s the Jews were already pushing Jewish-Christians out of the synagogue and it is at that point that Emperor Worship would have become a problem for Christians. It is ironic that Christians who did not revolt in 66 were treated as pariahs and Jews who did revolt were still shown a measure of leniency regarding “Emperor Worship”.

For clarity, let us state once more that no evidence for the Imperial cult is found in the seven letters. In order to explore the position that Christians are being warned about apostate Christianity that appeared at a later age, we will accept the premise of a late date (although we believe internal Scriptural evidence demonstrates the opposite). This premise is accepted in order to highlight the weakness of the argument that believes that the OT symbology in the Apocalypse has been “Christianized” and has therefore no application to Judaism.

This argument pre-supposes that the Jewish cult no longer exits—therefore there is no danger of Jewish-Christians reverting to Judaism. Judaism and Christianity have parted ways—first-century Christianity is vindicated and the threat from Judaists has disappeared. Therefore, the use of OT symbol holds no direct reference to the Jews but should be understood in the sense of a contrast such as ‘the Jews played the harlot with the Old Covenant/Christians are now playing the harlot with the New Covenant’. This approach regards the language and symbol of the OT as reconfigured and adapted for a new purpose, namely, to address a new threat—false Christianity.
This is a strange turn of phrase to use against false Christians at Smyrna especially when we add the observation that they belong to the “Synagogue of Satan”. Interestingly, the same writer (the apostle John) notes that the “Jews” made similar claims in John 8.39; “Abraham is our father” (i.e., we are real Jews and you are not) and Jesus replies in v. 44; “You are of your father the devil” (i.e., the Synagogue of Satan).

It is hardly credible that John echoes the same polemic against two different groups, especially as Christians were already familiar with his Gospel which was a directed against the “Jews; “Which say they are Jews but are not, and do lie”. These “Jews” were antagonistic towards the church at Philadelphia, they were “liars”, or “deceivers”, who practised guile (note; John 8.44, where Jesus says to the Jews who claim Abraham as father; “...your father the devil... he is a liar and the father of it”).

However, the New Israel consists of those in whose “mouth was no guile” (Rev 14.5), a play on the name of Jacob and a reference to Nathaniel in the Fourth Gospel, “Behold an Israelite in whom is no guile”(John 1.47). Faithful Jews were those who (like Nathaniel) acknowledged Christ as the messiah—the twelve tribes of the New Israel follow the Lamb (Rev 14.4;cf. John 1.24, 36-37, 43); they are protected/sealed (Rev 14.1;cf. Rev 3.10) and bear the Father’s name (Rev 14.1;cf. Rev 3.12). Note the time frame, “I come quickly” (Rev 1.11). This is hardly a message against “false Christians” particularly considering how much of Revelation echoes the polemic of the Fourth Gospel (by the same writer) where false Jews are the enemy.
It is accepted by most scholars that at some stage John lived in Ephesus and had close contact with the church there. In previous eJournal articles the case was made that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written to the church at Ephesus and it was demonstrated that the warnings in the Apocalypse are echoed throughout Hebrews. It is perhaps useful to give a brief summation of the evidence presented there to demonstrate that Hebrews was written to the “Hebrews (Jews) dwelling in Ephesus”. If Acts 19 is examined alongside the epistle to the Hebrews the correspondence becomes apparent. John the apostle was initially a disciple of John the Baptist and it is in Acts 19 that Paul finds disciples of the Baptist who were unaware of the messiah. Once they had been instructed they were rebaptised as the Baptism of John (“baptism of repentance”) was not sufficient. The theme of baptisms and the impossibility of being renewed to repentance (again) is a motif picked up by Hebrews. Moreover the rare occurrences of aspects of the word “theatre” point to Acts 19 where the riot occurred. Furthermore, the ascendancy of Christ and the decrease of the Baptist is a theme dear to the 4G (also written when John resided in Ephesus). The comparison table on the page below demonstrates that the author of Hebrews was aware of the Apocalypse:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrews (c. 67)</th>
<th>Revelation 2:1-7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“But call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were illuminated ye endured a great fight of afflictions” (Heb.10:32).</td>
<td>“Remember from whence thou art fallen...will remove thy lampstands (illumination) ...I know thy works and thy labour” (v. 1-7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love, which ye showed towards his name” (Heb.6:10).</td>
<td>“I know thy works and thy labour and thy patience” (v.2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“That ye wax not weary fainting in your souls”(Heb.12:3).</td>
<td>“And hast borne, and hast patience and for my names sake hast laboured and hast not fainted”(v.3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“That no man fall after the same example of disobedience” (Heb.4:11 cf. 6:6).</td>
<td>“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen” (v.5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…how much more shall we not escape, who turn away from him that warneth from heaven”(Heb.12:26).</td>
<td>“Revelation is the only message from Jesus spoken from heaven to the churches.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“And this word, yet once more signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken” (Heb.12:27).</td>
<td>“I will remove thy lampstand...” (v.5) (= Spirit gifts &amp; dependence on the temple).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of course if late-daters are presented with such clear echoes they either push the dating of Hebrews beyond 96 or argue that the Apocalypse is dependent on Hebrews! This smacks of desperation and is a “last resort” argument made in order to maintain a late date for Revelation. The direction of dependency is very obviously from Revelation to Hebrews. The epistle to the Hebrews is dependent on the Apocalypse for its message and this is further explored in a separate chapter called “Dating Matters”.

Suffice to say that if we limit ourselves specifically to the seven letters and ignore the rest of the Apocalypse it can be demonstrated that Christ did not copy Hebrews but Hebrews drew on Christ’s words. The warning to Ephesus alludes to the fall from grace in the Garden of Eden. It mentions the *tree of life in paradise* (Rev 2.7 // Gen 3.22) which is synonymous with the *candlestick* (lampstand) in the sanctuary (Ex.25.1-39). God walked amongst the trees in the cool of the day similarly Jesus walks amongst the lampstands/candlesticks/trees (Gen 3.8 // Rev 2.1).

Adam had left his first love and his eyes had been opened (Gen 3.7) but his disobediently acquired “illumination” (from the serpent) only served to expose his wretched condition and complete vulnerability. Similarly the Jews had received a law that they could not keep (don’t eat) because they also wished to become “like the Elohim” through their own process of self-divinization; the original *causa sui* project.

Let us accept the premise (for the sake of argument) that the Apocalypse was written after Hebrews (i.e., that Revelation was written post-70 and is echoing Hebrews). To what was the church at Ephesus in danger of falling away? They had lost their first love (Christianity) and were in danger of reverting back to Judaism: “If they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame” (Heb 6.6). They were warned not to do this because they had not come to Mt. Sinai but to Mt. Zion (Heb 12.18-23) and to “better” things. Why warn the church at Ephesus (here we think particularly of the Jewish-Christian element) against reverting to Judaism if the temple cult was already destroyed and the nation in disarray? It would be self-evident to Jewish-Christians that the nation had suffered divine judgement. Allusions to Genesis in Rev 2.1-7 are so deeply embedded in the argument of their context that they cannot be suspected of being later interpolations or allusions to Hebrews.
The author of Hebrews was obviously aware of the warning issued by Jesus to Ephesus and felt the need to remind his readers at Ephesus by weaving those warnings into the “woof and warp” of the fabric of his epistle. If readers are unaware of the existence of Rev 2.1-7 then the multiple allusions would be pointless – now they form a powerful argument to the Hebrews – you (Jewish Christians at Ephesus) have already been warned from heaven by Jesus………therefore repent! Don’t lose your first love. Don’t go back to Judaism.\[40\]

Most synagogues included a lampstand or Menorah as part of the furniture or part of the external decorations (carvings) and the Menorah in the second temple was eight feet high and made of solid gold. As the temple of Herod contained no Ark the Menorah took on extra significance. This Menorah had been made by Herod but the flame (light) had supposedly been kept burning for centuries (everlasting flame) the priests had purportedly kept (and hidden) the flame during the Babylonian exile.

The “oil” that the lamp used was a holy recipe that took seven days to prepare and the miracle of the “feast of lights’ (Hanukkah) is that although the Maccabees only had one day of oil left (when they rededicated the temple in the time of Antiochus) - the lamp kept burning for a week until the next batch of oil was ready. This is a bit like driving 200 km on a nearly empty petrol tank.

This was important to the Jews because according to legend the flame represented the everlasting covenant between God and the Jewish people. It was therefore not allowed to be extinguished and (supposedly) it was kept burning during the Babylonian captivity and used to relight the menorah of the Maccabees and then the menorah of Herod. How ironic then that the menorah is depicted on the shoulders of Roman soldiers on Titus triumph arch. The Jews had literally lost their lampstand and any Ephesians who turned back to Judaism would face the same fate. This is so obviously not about false Christianity that it is difficult to comprehend how it could ever have thought to have been so.
Pergamum and the doctrine of Balaam

Pergamum is warned against the doctrine of Balaam which specifically involved “eating things sacrificed to idols and committing fornication”. However, this was not a new doctrine, as it is already condemned by Peter as “following the way of Balaam” (2 Pet 2.15), and by Jude as “the error of Balaam” (Jude v. 11). The prophetess Jezebel at Thyatira taught the doctrine of Balaam, “to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (Rev 2.20). So the doctrine of Balaam was pervasive (found in more than one church) and early (found in pre-70 epistles). Robinson comments as follows;

“In both, the false teachers are accused of the error of Balaam (Jude 11; II Peter 2.15; Rev.2.14), which in Revelation is closely associated with the teaching of the Nicolaitans (2.6, 15). In both Christians are described as being lured into immorality (II Peter 2.14, 18; 3.17; Rev.2.20), into contaminating their clothing (Jude 23; Rev.3.4), and into disowning their Master (Jude 4; II Peter 2.1; Rev.2.13). There is the same contrast between the true and false γν•σις (Jude 8; II Peter 1.2f., 16; Rev. 2.17,24). The heretical teachers are claiming to be shepherds and apostles of Christ's flock (Jude 1.1f.; Rev.2.2), and there is a similar appeal to remember the teaching of the true apostles (Jude 17; II Peter 1.12; 3.if.; Rev.3.3), who are the foundation of the church and of its faith (Jude 3; Rev.21.14). The eschatological symbolism too shows remarkable parallels, with the day of Christ being likened not only, as in the common Christian tradition, to the thief (II Peter 3.10; Rev.3.3; 16.15) but uniquely in these two documents to the morning star (II Peter 1.19; Rev. 2.28; 22.16). In both the existing heavens and earth disappear (II Peter 3.10; Rev. 6.14; 16.20; 20.11) to be replaced by new (II Peter 3.13; Rev.21.1); in both the fallen angels are chained in the depths of hell (Jude 6; II Peter 2.4; Rev.20.1-3, 7), and appeal is made to the theme of a thousand years (II Peter 3.8; Rev.20.2-7). All this could doubtless have come from almost any period, and if II Peter and Jude are not early the argument falls. Yet there is good reason to suppose that the Apocalypse too presupposes a time when the final separation of Christians and Jews had not yet taken place”.41

It was also a deliberate wresting of the apostle Paul’s teaching about liberty in Christ; “And why not say; “Let us do evil that good may come? (as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say). ‘Let us do evil that good may come?’ Their condemnation is just” (Rom 3.8).
These opponents of the Gospel were Jews (Gal 2.4) who followed the strategy of Balaam in promoting promiscuity with the ultimate aim of encouraging pious Jewish-Christian converts back to Judaism; “And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage).” Idol worship and fornication were an abomination to pious Jews (despite the syncretism practiced in some synagogues)\textsuperscript{42}, and Jewish-Christians would soon revert back to Judaism if confronted with such blatant idolatry. Of course, Paul preached no such thing!

However, the point needs emphasising that the doctrine of Balaam (also preached by Jezebel) was not a heresy promoted by Christians but a heresy promoted by ‘Jews’ (false brethren) in order to damage early Christianity and discredit Christianity in the eyes of Jewish-Christian converts and pious Jews. Such a strategy was underway long before 70 and would not have been necessary after 70—after all, once God had removed the temple cult, the Jews could hardly claim to be the chosen ones by right of their heritage.
Thyatira- Jezebel

Jezebel was a foreign queen who corrupted Israel. The name Jezebel is obviously not the real name of the “prophetess” of Thyatira but it points to a woman of foreign aristocratic provenance who wielded considerable influence in both synagogue and church. No better candidate than Julia Severa suggests itself and if it is not actually her then it was someone like her. She was a pagan priestess with considerable influence in the synagogue that she patronized (and built). She would have been a bad example to the “God fearers” as she sacrificed to idols, practiced the Imperial cult and also worshipped at the synagogue – she was proof that you could “serve two masters”. Any Jewish-Christians who still attended that synagogue (as well as gathering in their homes) were in danger of being seduced into apostasy by her. However, the church at Thyatira ceased to exist by 95 CE. We know this because Tertullian (about 145-200 CE) says that leaders of certain heretical sects, such as Cerdon (c.138 CE) and Marcion, (c. 85 – c. 160 CE) rejected the Apocalypse on the ground that it could not have been written by John inasmuch as (among other reasons) that there was no Christian Church in existence at Thyatira in the time of John (assuming John wrote in 96 CE). Epiphanius (c. 367 CE) deals with the Alogi, a sect which disputed the genuineness of the Apocalypse, and on the same grounds. He quotes their words: “moreover, some of the [the Alogi] again seize on this passage in this same Apocalypse [Rev. 2.18]. And they allege, by way of opposition, that it is again said: “write to the angel of the Church which is in Thyatira,” although there was no Christian Church in Thyatira. How then could he write to a church which was not in existence?”

They may well have been heretics but they have done historians a service by pointing out the absence of a church in Thyatira in the period when the Apocalypse was supposedly written down by John. Marcion was actually born c.85 therefore he would have been about 11 years old if John received the apocalypse in 96 CE – but no church existed at Thyatira because by the time of Marcion it had already disappeared. The church was not a building (as so many assume) but a group of believers and they ceased to exist. This is what Jesus warns:

Revelation 2:21-23 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.
The short existence of the church at Thyatira ran from its founding by Paul probably during his second journey (c.51-53 CE) until c.66-70 CE, therefore it existed for only about 20 years. Its first member was a woman (Lydia and her household cf. Acts 16:14-15) and it was brought to ruin by a woman. Evidently a woman claiming to be a prophetess had been influencing some in this church to join the local trade guilds without which a tradesman could not work in Thyatira. This meant participation in the guild feasts that included immoral acts and the worship of idols. Whether or not Jezebel was Julia Severa and whether or not her influence was felt beyond the synagogue in Akmonia (by the lucrative traders in purple at Thyatira) cannot be known but is certainly a possibility.

Whoever she was, the problem was one of Jewish syncretism which would have rubbed off on first century Jewish-Christians. Her punishment is to be put to bed (v. 22), “a bed of sickness in contrast with the bed of adultery” (Beckwith 1922:467). Her followers at Thyatira (those who commit adultery with her) still have time to repent, but are similarly in danger of intense, though unspecified, sufferings (v. 22). As for her children, that is, anyone who perpetuates her teaching, they will be struck dead by a plague (v. 23). Like Jezebel of old, her name and her influence will disappear from the earth (cf. 2 Kings 10.1-28). This is the only time in the book of Revelation that the expression “Son of God” appears; an allusion to “Son” in Ps 2.7 where the son is given the gentiles as his inheritance and he will “break them with a rod of iron” (Ps 2.9 cf. Rev 2.27). This gentile queen will be judged as Christ has eyes like flames (Rev 2:18 cf. 1.14-15 and 19.12) which speaks of judgement. Nevertheless those who persevered and kept the faith (even unto death) would become conquerors like him.
In the case of Pergamon we can do no better than cite Robinson’s argument:

“Even in Pergamon, which is stated to be 'Satan's throne' (2.13), there is no compelling evidence that the allusion is to emperor-worship. In so far as Satan is characteristically for this writer 'the old serpent' (12.9; 20.2), the allusion may well be to the snake-worship associated with the shrine of Asclepius, of which the city was a centre. [So Hort, ad loc.; Zahn, INT III, 411f.] Even if, as later commentators tend to argue, the reference is to the temple consecrated there to 'the divine Augustus and the goddess Roma', [I.T. Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John, New York 1919, 456, notes that Pergamon was the first place in the province of Asia to have such a temple. Yet Augustus also sanctioned temples in Ephesus and Nicea with the inscription 'To the goddess Roma and the divine Julius' (Dio Cassius, Hist.51.6.)] this had been founded in 29 bc [Tacitus, Ann. 4.37; cf. 3.63; 4.55; and Suetonius, Aug. 52.] and does not of itself require a late date. Yet though emperor-worship can be read into the letters to the seven churches it is not demanded by them (in strong contrast with the visions that follow). Even if a gigantic statue of the Emperor Domitian was indeed erected in a temple at Ephesus, [Cf. Reicke, NT Era, 279, for the references.] there is absolutely nothing in the letter to the Christians there to suggest that this was the issue they faced: their struggle was not with the state but with false apostles, the Nicolaitans, and loss of fervour within the church (2.1-7). This is not, of course, to deny that for the seer the final battle with the 'beast' underlay everything else. But the development of emperor-worship in the province of Asia cannot be used for determining the historical context into which the letters fit”.
Objections Considered

Objection 1: There was too little time for the churches to apostatize – if founded in between 40 and 50 how could they have fallen away in twenty years or less? Once more we turn to Robinson;

“While on the subject of the letters to the churches, it will be appropriate to consider the objection often raised that they presuppose a state of affairs so far beyond that of Paul's time as to point to a later generation.[So e.g. Beckwith, Apocalypse, 207, who refers vaguely to 'a considerably long interval'.] This is one of those contentions that it is very difficult to handle. How much time is required for the Galatians 'so quickly' to have followed a different gospel (Gal. 1.6), or for the church of Ephesus to have lost its early love (Rev. 2.4), or for the church of Laodicea to have grown lukewarm (Rev.3.15f)? - especially since what we can tell about the state of the last from the epistle to the Colossians (2.1; 4.13-16), our only other source, amounts to precisely nothing. It is obviously impossible to set any firm figure. Yet considering all that we know happened to the only well-documented church, that of Corinth, in the seven and a half years between late 49 and early 57, the ten and a half years from mid-58 (on our reckoning, the date of Colossians) to late 68 (the earliest date for the Apocalypse) could surely have seen quite as many changes in the Asian churches - changes indeed which, according to Acts 20.29 and II Tim. 4.31., Paul himself clearly foresaw, and of which the Petrine epistles have already given us more than a glimpse. And, as we have said, there is nothing to suggest that there is any great interval between where these last leave off and the letters of Rev. 1-3 begin.

One objection however can be dismissed, which is constantly repeated from one writer to another. [E.g. Zahn,INT III, 4121.; Moffatt,Revelation, EGT, V,317; ILNT, 507; Charles, Revelation I, xciv; McNeile-Williams, INT, 262; Kummel,INT, 469; and • most recently even the conservative L. Morris, The Revelation of St John (Tyndale NTC),1969,37.] This is that Polycarp in his epistle to the Philippians (i 1.3) states that his own church at Smyrna had not been founded till after the death of Paul - so that it could not therefore be addressed as it is in Rev. 2.8-11 as early as the late 60s. But, as Lightfoot [AF, 166.] observed long ago, all that Polycarp actually says [His words are (in Lightfoot's translation): But I have not found any such thing in you, neither have heard thereof, among whom the blessed Paul laboured, who were his letters from the beginning. For he boasteth of you in all those churches which alone at that time knew the Lord; for we knew him not as yet. Other editors prefer to supply a word in the difficult phrase 'qui estis in principio epistulac eius' and take it to mean 'who are praised (or mentioned) in the beginning of his Epistle'; but this does not affect the issue of dating.] is that 'the Philippians were converted to the Gospel before the Smyrneans - a statement which entirely accords with the notices of the two churches in the New Testament'. [This is recognized by Torrey, op. cit., 78f., and also by Guthrie, NTI, 955.] It is astonishing that so much has continued to be built on so little". 49
Robinson offers good counterpoints but few commentators touch on the fact that a campaign was waged by Judaist to deliberately sabotage the early church. There was no slow drift into apostasy over an extended period of time – there was a headlong rush, encouraged and promoted by “false brethren” a fifth column within the church with a “wrecking strategy”. As quickly as Paul put a patch on a leaking boat another boat sprung a leak. Paul was worn out by the constant burden of his pastoral work. In Studies in the Acts of the Apostles (Appendix 3) Whittaker reconstructs the Jewish plot. A brief synopsis of the most important passages follows:

**Galatians**: False brethren (Gal 2.4-5), tried to confuse/persuade Peter (Gal 2.11-14).  
**Thessalonica**: Forged letter attributed to Paul claims of messages from the Holy Spirit (2 Thess. 2.1-2).  
**Corinth**: Personal attack on Paul’s character (2 Cor. 10.9-10, 11.6), Satan disguised as an apostle (2 Cor.11.22-23).  
**Jerusalem**: Accusation that Paul taught all to forsake Moses (Acts 21.20-21).  
**Rome**: Christ preached out of envy and strife (Philip 1.15-17), Divisions (Rom 16.17-18), misrepresent Paul’s teaching (Rom 3.8)  
**Ephesus and Colosse**: Sleight of men and craftiness (Eph 4.14), Beguile you with enticing words (Col 2.4).  
**Timothy and Titus**: Jewish fables commandments of men (Tit 1.14) deceivers of the circumcision (Tit 1. 9-10) seducing spirits [claim of Holy Spirit gifts], doctrine of demons, hypocrisy (1 Tim 4.1-2).  
**Peter and Jude**: False teachers, damnable heresies (2 Pet 2.1), led to error by the wicked (2 Pet 3.3-4, 17), they distort Paul’s teachings (2 Pet 3.16), for there are certain men crept in unawares (Jude 1.4)  
**John**: False prophets, sprit of antichrist [this was not Gnosticising Christianity but Judaism] (John 4.1-5). There was an orchestrated campaign to undermine Paul’s work so much so that Paul said in despair “This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me” (2 Tim 1.15). They had lost their first love (warning to Ephesus), their “first love” being the Pauline gospel of justification through faith. Many of the churches had become irredeemably corrupted by Judaism and some (like Thyatira) were swept away when Christ judged Judaism in 66-70. However, even in those churches there were still some faithful and if they preserved to the end, (even if it meant death i.e., the Nero persecution cf. Rev 6.11), their reward would be waiting for them in the kingdom (when it arrived in the future). So Judaism was judged and also the Jewish-Christian churches and this occurred before the fall of the second temple in 70 CE.
Objection 2: Laodicea destroyed by an earthquake in c.60 yet described as “rich” (Rev 3.17) how is this possible as an earthquake would disrupt trade and require decades of repairs thus impoverishing the city—clearly this cannot refer to the church in the 60’s but must come from a later period (90s) allowing time for recovery.

Gentry [1989:320] comments, “Some suspicion is immediately cast on the argument when it is noted that it is avoided by such noteworthy late date advocates as conservative scholars Swete and Guthrie, and such liberal proponents as Charles and Moffatt. The refusal of these scholars to make reference to this argument is not necessarily destructive to the cause, of course. But it is at least curious that such vigorous liberal and conservative advocates do not deem it to be of merit”. 51

There are a number of objections to this hypothesis and Gentry discusses them all. Firstly, are the “riches” material or spiritual? Secondly, the region was prone to earthquakes and many minor quakes occurred but it depends on where the epicentre was. Perhaps the Church (i.e., their trades) was not damaged at all. Thirdly (and most importantly), the Laodecians were so rich that they didn’t even require government subsidy to do the repair work. Gentry [1989:321], responds;

Most ruinous to the entire argument is the documented fact of Laodicea’s apparently effortless, unaided, and rapid recovery from the earthquake. Tacitus reports that the city did not even find it necessary to apply for an imperial subsidy to help them rebuild, even though such was customary for cities in Asia Minor. As Tacitus records it, Laodicea “arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources, and with no help from us”. [Tacitus, Annals 1427] This is as clear a statement as is necessary to demonstrate that Laodicea’s economic strength was not radically diminished by the quake. Despite the quake, economic resources were so readily available within Laodicea that the city could easily recover itself from the damage. Interestingly, both Morris and Mounce make reference to this statement by Tacitus, despite their using the argument to demand a late date [Morris, Revelation, p. 37; Mounce, Revelation. p. 123].
Further considerations and resources

Did Domitian Persecute Christians? (An investigation: Opposing viewpoints and discussion by Arthur M. Ogden and Ferrell Jenkins). This debate is gracefully and intelligently conducted and cites all the relevant historical and scholarly sources. Reading both sides of the argument one cannot help but find agreement with Ogden that Domitian may have persecuted Christians but the case is overstated (not proven).

If there was a Christian persecution it certainly did not match the Nero persecution for ferocity and unlike Nero (1 Pet 5.8) the Domitian persecution (?) is not mentioned in the bible and this is a heavy point weighing against such a persecution ever having occurred. Another point not considered by either debater is that it was Domitian who introduced a very repressive form of the Jewish tax which was humiliating and discriminatory even to the point where Jews (and “God fearers”) had to drop their pants (or should I say lift their robes?), in order to prove that they were uncircumcised.

This tax would not have been levied against Gentile Christians of that period as they were uncircumcised. The tax was so abhorred that Domitian’s successor Nerva repealed the onerous elements of it and produced a coin to celebrate the fact. Many scholars have argued that later historians have confused Domitian’s stance toward the Jews with his attitude towards Christians. There is certainly no account of Domitian throwing Christians to the lions or setting them alight and using them as human torches to illuminate his garden parties. The whole drive to see Domitian as the persecutor is a damp squib produced to give substance to the testimony of Irenaeus in the push for a late date.

The “late date” (c.96 CE) for the Apocalypse is solely established on two planks of external evidence: --- the Domitian persecution and the testimony of Irenaeus; the first is debatable [Robinson, 1976: 207 onwards] and the latter has been challenged. The tradition in Irenaeus (Adv. haer. 5.30.3) states: “But it was seen not long ago, but almost almost in our own day, at the close of the principate [reign] of Domitian”. However, what is it? Is it “John” or the “Apocalypse” or “the beast” [Robinson, 1976:197-202]?
Moreover, Domitian ruled eleven months in Rome in 70 until his father Vespasian returned from the Jewish War; perhaps Irenaeus, wrong on other dates was confused. This means that John could have been banished by Domitian and restored by Nerva, as the tradition says—but in 70 instead of during the 90s [Robinson, 1976: 223-228]. But even if 70 is accepted that would still be too late for the internal evidence presented throughout the Apocalypse.

Whether or not Irenaeus was confused or is just misunderstood his credibility as a witness must be questioned for as Duncan W. McKenzie observes; “Irenaeus, a source that should be a Rock of Gibraltar in terms of the date of Revelation, is not the sure foundation one would expect. On a date of much greater significance than that of Revelation (the age of Jesus at his death), Irenaeus is out in left field, if not totally out of the ballpark. Irenaeus asserts that Jesus was at an elder age (which he defines as “after the fortieth and fiftieth year” of life) when he died.”

54
The Seven churches in the Olivet Prophecy

Perhaps the most interesting piece of evidence in support of an early date for the seven letters is an allusion to them in the Olivet prophecy. With the exception of v.38 and v.43 most of the allusions come from five verses grouped together ---

**Matthew 24:9-13**  
Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.  
And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.  
And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.  
And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.  
But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Matthew 24</th>
<th>Revelation 2-3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smyrna</td>
<td>…deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you</td>
<td>Tribulation…faithful unto death (2.10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Sardis  | And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.   
           | …in what watch the thief would come (v.43)                                | …that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.(3.1)                      
           |                                                                           | …come on thee as a thief (3.3)                                                  |
| Thyatira | …false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.                       | Jezebel false prophetess                                                       
           |                                                                           | seduce my servants(2.20)                                                       |
| Pergamos| And because iniquity shall abound                                         | …doctrine of Balaam to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication (2.14) |
| Ephesus | …the love of many shall wax cold                                          | …thou hast left thy first love(2.4)                                             |
| Philadelphia | But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved          | Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation (3.10) |
| Laodicea | …eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage (v.38)             | …Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing (3.17) |
Of course it could be argued that the language that Jesus uses is generic and therefore can be applied to any number of church situations in any century. A generic understanding can be countered by demonstrating that the Olivet prophecy is extensively linked to many other passages in Revelation (not just to the seven churches) and it is exactly those passages that saw a partial fulfilment in 70.

Most scholars (even critical scholars) would agree that Matthew was composed before the Apocalypse, somewhere between 80 and 90 CE, with a range of possibility between 70 to 110 CE. A pre-70 date for Matthew remains a minority view because many critical scholars regard the prophecies concerning the fall of Jerusalem as ex-eventu (written after the event). However, the date of composition makes little difference to our argument because even if Matthew was writing in 100 CE, and was recording earlier prophecy for posterity --- it was prophecy that was concerned with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE (that much is clear from the context). In that case Matthew is alluding to the Apocalypse because his audience was already familiar with that work. However, it makes little sense for both Matthew and the Apocalypse to be composed after 70 and for them both to warn about an imminent judgement that was already an event that lay in the past.

It is far more likely that the Olivet prophecy was given in ca 30 CE by Jesus himself and recorded in synoptic tradition by his disciples between 40-60. Jesus is then building on his own words uttered on the Mount of Olives concerning the fate of Jerusalem and his churches; therefore when Jesus gives the Apocalypse in c.65 he is expanding upon and explaining his earlier prophecies. This makes sense as both the Olivet prophecy and the Apocalypse point to the same events – the state of the churches and the fall of Jerusalem in the period 66-70.

It is both surprising and confounding that many conservative scholars who do not accept a late date for the Gospel tradition or for the Epistles of Paul and Peter so easily capitulate regarding dating the Apocalypse beyond 96 –especially when exactly the same issues are addressed as in the earlier material. Are we to believe that during the most catastrophic and difficult period for the Jewish-Christian church – the Nero persecution, Jewish War, fall of the temple, Judaist attack corrupting the churches etc….there was absolute silence from the Lord? For 66 years (30-96) there was absolute silence – only when all the church leaders (except John) were dead did Jesus deign to give his message to the churches – because (maybe) they faced a persecution (???) by Domitian(??).
A debt of gratitude is owed to Robinson for presenting a cogent argument for the dating of the whole New Testament before 70 CE. He rightly points out that the dates of NT writings have consistently been revised downwards over the last two centuries (even the 4G after a papyrus fragment found in Alexandria was dated to 130).  

When the bible talks about “eyewitness” testimony that is exactly what it means. Much of the writing of the NT and other early Christian writings has been assigned to the reign of Domitian by critical scholars causing Robinson to remark; “Is there not some danger of Domitian’s reign becoming rather overloaded with otherwise undated bits of Christian literature? The Apocalypse, Hebrews and I Clement, to say nothing of Barnabas and the Didache, have all been ascribed to this period. It has in fact become the favourite dumping-ground for doubtful writings with a hint of persecution about them”.

Conclusion

While it is true that the messages to the seven churches contain local elements such as warnings against reverting to paganism, or the dangers of materialism, they also embrace an overarching theme; namely, warning Jewish-Christians that Judaists would soon get their just rewards (so don’t go back to Judaism like a dog to vomit; 2 Pet 2.22). Even if we accept a late date for Revelation there are no specific warnings in the Apocalypse against systematic false teachings of Christianity (such as occurred in later centuries). In the first epistle of John we have a warning that is supposedly directed against Gnosticizing Christianity, but (even if that assumption is correct, but that is doubtful) —those false prophets left the true church (“they went out from us”). The situation in Revelation is one of enmity and persecution within the church by those who lay claim to a Jewish heritage. It is not Christian-on-Christian persecution such as we find in later centuries, or persecution engendered by refusal to participate in the Imperial cult but problems between Jews and Christians (mainly Jewish-Christians). All this would become largely irrelevant if Revelation were written after 70. The Apocalypse continues the theme of the whole NT where the Jews stirred up trouble all over Asia Minor, so much so that Paul despaired; “....that all those in Asia have turned away from me”(2 Tim 1.15). Therefore, early date advocates find no need to reconfigure OT symbols—the meaning is consistent across the Testaments – Israel was the harlot in the OT and she still plays the harlot in the NT.

The seven churches of Asia Minor were seven contemporary churches that existed side-by-side during the period 45-65 CE. Some individuals were spared the coming tribulation, other faithful members were killed; corrupt churches completely disappeared. The seven churches do not describe “seven church ages” nor do they describe later apostasy in the Christian church (although the lessons are timeless) they describe the historical situation found in Asia Minor just before the first Jewish war. The “seven churches” were supposed to be the “new Menorah” in the temple of God built out of faithful people. Unfortunately, by the time of the first Jewish war most of the churches had become utterly corrupted by the pernicious campaign waged by the Judaists. However, there were still faithful elements and those who preserved until the end (even if it meant death) would have their names written in the book of life.
This observation is valid whether you believe in a pre-70 CE or post-96 CE dating of the Apocalypse. For a comparison of the standard arguments see the following chart. [1]

The term is used 70 times in the 4G to symbolize the Sanhedrin. [2]


After discussing the relationship between Jewish synagogues and other associations Dunn says “The points of comparison with the churches established by Paul should already be obvious and already suggest answers to the questions which opened this chapter. They were not obviously like a neighbourhood association or trade guild. But since they met in the house of a (probably) prominent citizen, they could be likened to an extension of his (or her) household — a household association”. James D.G. Dunn, Beginning from Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 620. [6]

Often referred to is Brown’s categorization of the diversity within the varying types of ‘Jewish/Gentile Christianity’ — at least four diversities; Group 1 — ‘Jewish Christian and their Gentile converts who insisted on full observance of the Mosaic Law, including circumcision’: Group 2 — ‘Jewish Christian and their Gentile converts, who did not insist on circumcision but did require converted Gentiles to keep some Jewish observances’; Group 3 — ‘Jewish Christian and their Gentile converts, who did not insist on circumcision and did not require observance of the Jewish (“kosher”) food laws’: Group 4 — ‘Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts, who did not insist on circumcision or observance the Jewish food laws and who saw no abiding significance in Jewish cult and feast’. Raymond Edward Brown, John P. Meier, Antioch and Rome, (Paulist Press, 1983):1-9. [7]

Acts 13:42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. These “Gentiles” had not just accidently wandered into a Jewish synagogue, they were “God fearers” who regularly attended “church” and they were the ones who approached Paul afterwards because their world view was not clouded by bias. In fact, the message was probably understood with clarity and received with great joy….what an opportunity….they could become full members of the people of God. It is known that many Greek women converted. This was all seen as a threat to Judaism as they would lose their privileged position. No longer were they a guide to the blind (to the Gentiles). Paul said that God did this to provoke them to envy through those who were “not a people” or a “foolish nation” but instead it provoked rage. [8]

Dunn [2009:624] notes that this was largely due to the Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation of the OT. Greek was the “Lingua Franca” of the day, just as English is nowadays and “God fearers” were obviously versed in Scriptures because they attended the synagogues – there were probably special “classes” held to teach “interested friends” – so Paul had a receptive and knowledgeable audience – low hanging fruit ready for harvesting. [9]

James D.G. Dunn, Beginning from Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 623. Speaking of the churches at Corinth, Dunn concludes; “So once again, we have to envisage mixed congregations, perhaps one or two predominantly Jewish in composition, but, overall, within a predominantly Gentile church” [Ibid, 624]. [10]


Levine, Ibid, 119. [12]


Poppaea Sabina (30 CE – 65 CE) [14]


Map of the seven churches Jesus Christ addressed in Revelation 2 and 3 (artwork by Kelly Cunningham). [HYPERLINK "https://lifehopeandtruth.com/prophesy/revelation/seven-churches-of-revelation/"] (Retrieved June 2017) [17]


Sardis is believed to have gained its Jewish community in the 3rd century BCE, as that was when King Antiochus III (223–187 BCE) encouraged Jews from various countries, including Babylonia, to move to Sardis. Sardis Synagogue. (2017, March 30). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 10:04, June 4, 2017, [HYPERLINK "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sardis_Synagogue&oldid=772979675"]. This is a photo of an exhibit [19]
at the Diaspora Museum, Tel Aviv - Beit Hatefutsot a model of the Sardis Synagogue. This is a cutaway model – the synagogue had a trussed roof. “The upper walls and roof of the Synagogue would have been clearly visible rising above the shops and road colonnades, and citizens walking past would have been able to look directly inside, when the doors were open, through the entire length of both rooms” (Seager and Kraabel 1983: 168). The Forecourt may even have contained a “municipally licensed fountain” that could have been accessible to the population at large (Kraabel 1983: 184).

20 N. T. Wright, Revelation for Everyone, (Presbyterian Publishing Corp, 2011), 34
21 ibid, Horst, 154-155, See there for references
26 The “image worship” of Rev 13 is not the remit of this current article but will be dealt with elsewhere. Sufce to say that there are scholars who have questioned the application of the language employed in Rev 13 to the Imperial cult. On this see; Tonstad, Sigve. “Appraising the Myth of Nero Redivius in the Interpretation of Revelation” Andrews University Seminary Studies (AUS) Vol. 46. Iss. 2 (2008). [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/nero_revidius.pdf"] [Retrieved May 2017]
27 However, in reality the situation is far more complex on this see, James R. Harrison, A Survey of Recent scholarship on Romans 13:1-7 [pp.271-277]; in Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome: A Study in the Conflict of Ideology, ( Mohr Siebeck,2011). Harrison investigates the collision between Paul’s eschatological gospel and the Julio-Claudian conception of rule. He begins his survey by saying; “Among New Testament scholars, Romans 13:1-7 remains one of the most hotly debated passages of the Pauline corpus, with seemingly little hope of a consensus emerging in the future. However, this result is not as negative as it first seems. There have been advances in our understanding of the text”.
30 Yoder commences by offering a short history of research into Luke’s Political Views and Intentions [p.5], breaking it down into (Traditional view): Political Apology for the Church to Rome (Apologia Pro Ecclesia) [p.6], Apology for Rome to the Church (Apologia pro Imperio) [p.14], Equipping the Church for Witness [p.18], Legitimation for the Church’s Identity [p.21], No Definite Political Aim [p.25], Postcolonial Readings and Other Recent Work [p.30], and includes a discussion on the Problems with Previous Research [p.38]. Joshua Yoder, Representatives of Roman Rule: Roman Provincial Governors in Luke-Acts,(Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2014)
31 The term Maccabees as used to describe the Jewish army is taken from the Hebrew word for “hammer”.
32 J. Nelson Kraybill, Imperial Cult and Commerce in John’s Apocalypse,(A&C Black,1996),183-184
33 Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, p. 345. Terrullian observed that the fiscus judaicus won the Jews a ‘tribute-liberty’ that enabled them to worship freely. Apol 18.
34 J. Dunn, The partings of the ways: between Christianity and Judaism and their significance for the character of Christianity,(SCM, 2006), 312
36 Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. 2.25.5-8
37 Tacitus, Ann. 15.44
38 The noun θεατρον (theatron) translated “theatre” is employed in Acts 19.29, 31. Hebrews 10.33 employs the verb (passive nominative aspect) θεατριζομαι translated as “gazingstock” (KJV) or “spectacle” (NKJ) the noun θεατρον is used by Paul in 1 Cor. 4.9 probably in reference to the same event (i.e., Acts 19.29-31) as 1 Corinthians was composed at the end of his stay in Ephesus (1 Cor.16,8,19).
39 We cannot present evidence for this in such a short summary but Ephesus has traditionally been associated with the 4G by the early church. As for language and syntactical differences present between the 4G and the Apocalypse
my own stylometric research employing only function words finds the Apocalypse in the same cluster as the 4G. Any differences are therefore superficial and the result of the 4G being redacted and smoothed by John’s helpers (the Johannine school?). Obviously, John did not have the luxury of that option when he was imprisoned as he needed to send the Apocalypse out post-haste as a warning. Preliminary work indicates that within the Apocalypse Rev 2.3 and 21-22 have slightly different clustering aspects and that may indicate that the beginning and end of the book may have been “polished” by John’s disciples before sending out but the differences are minimal and more work is required before drawing any solid conclusions.  

39 Charles seems to realise this as he regards the letters to the churches as having been written “at a much earlier date than the Book as a whole. . . . In the closing years of the reign of Vespasian (75–9) but hardly earlier”. Charles, Revelation 1, 43–6 (44). However, his date is still stubbornly post-70 and the reasoning is subjective; on this see Robinson [Ibid, 206].


41 Robinson, Ibid, 203

42 We must not fall into the fallacy of believing that Judaism was homogenous. There were “good” and “bad” synagogues and “good” and “bad” groups within each synagogue.

43 Jezebel was a foreign queen, identified in the Book of Kings (1 Kings 16:31) as the daughter of Ithobaal I of Sidon and the wife of Ahab, King of Israel. Jezebel incited her husband King Ahab to abandon the worship of Yahweh and encourage worship of the deities Baal and Asherah instead. Jezebel persecuted the prophets of Yahweh, fabricated evidence of blasphemy against an innocent landowner who refused to sell his property to King Ahab, causing the landowner to be put to death.  

44 Contr. Marcion i. 1.  


46 Interestingly, both the Alexandrian codex and Tertullian have expunged the word church (ekklEsias, evkklhsi,aj); in those cases Rev 2.18 simply reads; “to the angel of Thyatira write”.  

47 In the second century (the year 156 according to Epiphanius, or if we follow Eusebius, in 172) this area was overrun with the Cataphrygian heresy but this heretical sect can hardly be called a “church”. By the fourth century a measure of Christianity emerged (but no longer Jewish-Christian in nature) as there was a bishop from Thyatira at the council of Nice. So to all intents and purposes there was no church at Thyatira during the period 70-156 when the Apocalypse was supposedly written and received by the members of Thyatira.

48 Robinson, Ibid, 204

49 Robinson, Ibid, 204-205


53 A coin issued by Neru reads fisci Iudaici calumnia sublata, “abolition of malicious prosecution in connection with the Jewish tax”. The fiscus Iudaicus (Latin for "Jewish tax") or fiscus Judaicus


55 Whoever hates his brother is dead (1 John 2.9-11)

56 Over the last century the dating of the 4G has come down in steps from about 170 to 130 and now to about 90-100.  

57 Robinson, Ibid, 140

58 This may be specifically directed at Gentile converts but is possibly also a warning to Jewish-Christians against pagan syncretic practices.
Chapter 4

The throne Room

A Door was Opened

**KJV Revelation 4:1** After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be **hereafter** (μετὰ ταῦτα).

**KJV Revelation 1:10** I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet…

**KJV Revelation 1:19** Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be **hereafter** (μετὰ ταῦτα).

Speaking of the vision of the exalted Christ in Rev 1.12-16, Osborne says; “It is interesting to note that the vision itself apparently does not end at 1:16 but continues through the letters of chapters 2 and 3. It is only with the “after these things” of 4:1 that this inaugural vision is ended”.¹ The phrase, “after this” or, “after these things” occurs in 1.19, 4.1, 7.1, 7.9, 15.5, and 18.1 delineating six revelatory units. The transition from one unit of revelation to the next does not necessarily indicate a change from one time period to the next, but indicates a change in point of view or subject matter. The phrase “after this” is often modified with ‘I looked’, ‘I saw’, or ‘I heard’, indicating a change in visions or perspectives.

**μετὰ τοῦτο εἶδον**

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When the modifier is not applied such as in Rev 9.12² it can indicate a change in time but that is not the case in Rev 4.1. John is invited into the heavenly throne room (“Come up hither” cf. Rev 11.12) by the same voice that he heard in Rev 1.10 (voice like a trumpet) and informed that he will be shown things “which must take place after this” (NKJ). This gives the impression that all subsequent events from this point onwards lie in the future and **yet in Rev 5 which is a continuation of the throne-room vision of Rev 4** John sees a scroll “in the right hand of him that sat on the throne” (Rev 5.1) which is obviously a circumlocution for God.
Therefore, John is present in the throne room when the challenge is announced to find a suitable man to open the scroll and the result is that no one can be found who is worthy to open the scroll. Note that we have deliberately left out the part where the Lamb suddenly appears in verse six (Rev 5.6). The implication of this is that John is in the throne room when Christ is absent. During this time Jesus is simply not there. Therefore, the perspective of the scroll-vision lies in the past and the sudden appearance of the “slain Lamb” can only occur immediately after the resurrection (this will be fully explored in Rev 5). So, whatever “here after” implies it cannot be exclusively concerned with the future as the context does not allow it.

It was noted in the commentary on Rev 1.19 that the different tenses are a play on the tripartite covenant formula (was-is-will be) which is timeless. Our human minds are constrained by time - therefore, this is a difficult concept to understand. Recently the very premise of “time” is questioned - i.e., does it exist (is it a fundamental or an emergent property)? Does time describe causal events that occur sequentially? To question the existence of time may seem utterly counterintuitive but science does in some models (i.e., in a block universe). In such a case an outside observer of our universe can view past and future as coordinates of a fourth dimension. In this picture past and future are not absolute; rather, they depend on the reference point of the observer. In this theory, the concept of past and future for time are as relative as the concept of right and left for location (which also depend on where the observer stands). This would accord with a God who is not “time dependent” – has no beginning or end – and knows every possible outcome. However, the whole concept of “time” is still not fully understood.

John is transported into the presence of the divine in a spirit induced trance; it is in this context that “here after” should be placed. It is not an absolute term but a relative one defined by the terminus a quo. The starting point of the vision proper, which commences the “here after” is the scroll “in the right hand of him that sat on the throne” (Rev 5.1). The “here after” cannot commence until the scroll is opened and the scroll cannot be opened until a “worthy” candidate is found. In reality this vision commences in John’s past but John is no longer on earth, in fact he is no longer time-bound as he is in the divine presence. John is given a different perspective – the perspective of an “outside observer” in heaven, a view that is usually only accorded to the Creator who is enthroned in the midst of the “living creatures”. John stands outside of himself, outside of time and space and is allowed to observe from the divine perspective, in effect he becomes an omniscient narrator. Therefore John can see the “beginning and the end” and this is necessary so that he can understand that everything is under divine control and nothing is random. The sufferings, persecutions, hardships and martyrdoms that follow are all essential to the divine purpose. What seems like defeat is actually a great victory. What happens to the saints has already happened to the beloved son, therefore the victorious conquers mimic their Lord; it is a repeat pattern.
The “foolishness” of God is indeed wiser than the wisdom of the world. The Greek \( \delta\epsilon\iota \) means that it is a *necessity in reference to what is required to attain some end* and ISA translates this literally as *it-is-binding*:

\[
\kappa\alpha\iota \ \delta\epsilon\iota\xi\omega \ \sigma\iota \ \dot{\alpha} \ \delta\epsilon\iota \ \gamma\epsilon\nu\epsilon\sigma\sigma\alpha\iota \ \mu\epsilon\tau\a \ \tau\alpha\upsilon\alpha
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I will show you what *must* take place after this (NIV) what *it behoveth* (YLT) all that follows is *therefore necessary*, no matter how difficult, above all this includes the Lord’s sacrifice;” “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb 5.7-8).
The One on the Throne

Revelation 4:2-3 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

It is fitting that there is a rainbow around the throne “like unto an emerald”. The emerald is a green stone and therefore the throne is shrouded in green light. From the ground a rainbow looks like a bow, but from above (i.e. an airplane) it is a circle and the throne sits in the “green” band of the circle (which is the middle band). It is impossible for an observer to see a rainbow from water droplets at any angle other than the critical angle of 42 degrees from the direction opposite the light source. The observation angle of 42 degrees is surely not a coincidence.

The green represents divine covenant mercy extended to the house of David. Just as God promised not to destroy the earth by flood, likewise He promises not to hurt any green thing (Rev.9.4). The tribe of Judah has replaced (first born) Reuben (the green emerald on the priestly breastplate Exod.28.18) as the firstborn son – Judah (rather than Reuben) now becomes the one destined to have the Excellency of Dignity (the priesthood) and the Excellency of Power (the kingship). Thus the “green things” are those who share Davidic covenant mercy provided by the promised messiah from the tribe of Judah. Although the one who sits on the throne is deliberately not named the reference is to Yahweh in his covenant capacity (rainbow) which focuses on the outworking of the atonement wrought by God and by Christ through the tribe of Judah. Atonement was a “joint venture” and the attributes of the “one who sits on the throne” are equally applicable to both parties as God reconciles the world to himself through Christ which is his “new creation”. It is for this reason that John is deliberately ambiguous and does not name the occupant of the throne.

Therefore the “one on the throne” becomes an expression of the covenant purpose of Yahweh in an abstract sense because Christ does not appear on the scene until Rev 5.6. The throne vision is a prolepsis as it anticipates the victory but that victory is owned by and set in motion by God himself. Thus “the one on the throne” is described as bearing the characteristics of Christ because those features are embedded in the covenant that God upholds --- therefore the throne presence of Yahweh becomes a personification of the covenant and this is achieved through the literary device of leaving the occupant of the throne unnamed.
He was to look upon like a Jasper and a Sardius (4.3). These are the last and first stones of the high priestly breastplate – signifying the first and last (1.17) in reverse order, for he was dead (last of the old covenant) and is alive forevermore (first of the new covenant 1.18). Once again the Sardius represents Judah (on the breastplate) and Jasper, the tribe of Naphtali, signifying the struggle or overcoming.

In Hebrew Sardius is *odem* signifying redness, and jasper is *Yashepheth* signifying Yah polishes. Jasper is an opaque stone that mainly tends to be red (it can also be found in yellow, green and greyish blue). The Hebrew for Sardius is identical for the word man; Adam (from red clay) except for the vowel pointing, which is not found in the original. Although John wrote in Greek these associations with the Hebrew are not coincidental, but came from his spirit inspired mind.

We have then another firstborn (Adam) who lost the birthright, which was regained by the second Adam, whose redness was polished to perfection by Yah. The Hebrew for ‘the enthroned one’ is *yôšeb* phonetically very similar to *yashepheth* (Jasper). Since Jasper is used as a simile for the appearance of God (4.3), it is used later in Revelation as an image for the overall appearance of the New Jerusalem, which manifests the glory of God (21.11), and is the material from which its walls are constructed (21.18), as well as the first of its twelve foundations (21.19).

To summarise, the rainbow represents covenant mercy extended to all creation, with the green (emerald) light concentrating that mercy in a Davidic descendant. God’s holiness is shrouded by his covenant promises (mercy and truth), which were brought to fruition in Jesus Christ – the last and the first – the son of David – the firstborn son (emerald) from the dead. At this juncture of the vision, Christ has not yet been elevated to the “midst of the throne”, that happens later in Rev 5.6;

**Revelation 5:6** And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.
The throne scene and Daniel

Once again the book of Daniel comes into play as the heavenly throne scene is based on Dan 7 and the following parallels have been noted by Beale;

1. Introductory vision phraseology (Dan. 7:9 [cf. Dan. 7:2, 6-7]; Rev. 4:1)
2. A throne(s) set in heaven (Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:2, 9)
3. God is sitting on a throne (Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:2)
4. God's appearance on the throne is described (Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:3)
5. There is fire before the throne (Dan. 7:9-10; Rev. 4:5)
6. Servants surround the throne (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 4:4; 6-10; 5:8, 11, 14)
7. Sea imagery is found in both chapters (Dan. 7:2-3; Rev. 4:6).
8. Book are before the throne (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:1ff)
9. The book(s) opened (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:2-5, 9)
10. A divine / messianic figure approaches God’s throne to receive authority to reign forever over a kingdom (Dan. 7:13-14; Rev. 5:5-7, 9, 12-13)
11. The kingdom’s scope is described as encompassing “all peoples, nations, and tongues” (Dan. 7:14; Rev. 5:9)
12. The seer undergoes emotional distress on account of the vision (Dan 7:15; Rev. 5:4)
13. The seer receives heavenly counsel concerning the vision from one of the heavenly servants (Dan. 7:16; Rev. 5:5)
14. The saints are given divine authority to reign over a kingdom (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27; Rev. 5:10)
15. There is a concluding mention of God’s eternal reign (Dan. 7:27; Rev. 5:13-14).
**KJV Revelation 4:4-5** And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

The twenty-four elders are obviously the heavenly counterpart of the 24 courses of priests instituted (reinstituted?) by David (1 Chron.24.1). They probably represent both Jew and Gentile, as does the naming of twelve tribes and twelve apostles in the New Jerusalem (Rev.21.12-14). The picture of the heavenly sanctuary is now complete, the throne (ark) with the cherubim (host of Israel) encamped around and the priests doing service (elders) and the seven spirits (candelabra) illuminating the scene. These elders cast their crowns (priestly diadem) before the throne (v.10) this symbolic act of submission in the heavens, is probably in anticipation of the victory on the cross, when the Aaronic priesthood was superseded by a better priesthood – the Melchizedek priesthood of the firstborn son.

The elders therefore, do not represent redeemed saints as some suggest. Although the white garments and golden crowns (v.4) may point to this conclusion, they do not require it. The elders are also encountered in 11.17 where they praise God because the time has arrived to judge the dead and to reward the saints. This demonstrates that the elders are not the same as the saints. God is eulogized in Rev 5.10 for “making us a kingdom of priests” and this is taken as referring to the elders of Rev 5.8 but various Codices render this as “made them (i.e., the saints) a kingdom of priests”(cf. Rev 1.6, 20.6).

It is entirely appropriate to the symbolism that the “heavenly priests” (elders/angels) should praise God for elevating the earthly saints to the same status as themselves (i.e. fellows servants, see Rev 22.9). To this we might add that in 14.3 and 19.4-7 the redeemed saints appear as a group separate from the cherubim and elders and therefore cannot possibly be one and the same.
The glassy sea

**KJV Revelation 4:6** And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

The glassy sea or clear crystal is a reference to the “firmament” in the midst of the waters – “which divides the waters under the firmament from the waters which are above the firmament” – this was called heaven. (Gen.1.7-8). A “paved work of a sapphire stone, as it were the body of heaven in his clearness” was seen in the vision vouchsafed to Moses and the seventy elders of Israel at Sinai (Exod. 24.10).

Upon (or above) this “glass sea” sits the throne (v.6 literally before the throne). Similarly, in the tabernacle a brass sea sat “before the throne” (before the ark). The laver was used in connection with the services. It stood on a base of brass in the court between the altar and the door of the tabernacle. Both laver and base were made of the mirrors donated by the women who assembled to minister at the door of the tent of meeting (Exod. 38.8; 33.7). In Solomon’s temple there was a molten sea and ten lavers (2 Chron. 4.6). The molten looking glasses (i.e., the brass mirrors of the women) from which the “sea” (laver) was fashioned represented the expanse of heaven; “Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong and as a molten looking glass?” (Job 37.18)

Heaven and earth is a transient, temporal order. The heaven (glass sea) forms a barrier which the redeemed must pass through in a new exodus, if they are to win access to the Promised Land. God will again make the depths of the sea a path for the ransomed to cross (Isa.51.9-10) he will break the head of dragons that emerge from the sea (Rev.13.1) and will divide the waters by his strength (Ps.74.13-14). It is significant that, when John comes to speak of the new heaven and earth, the first thing he has to say is that the sea was no more (21.1). The throne is no longer situated above an impenetrable barrier, but amongst his people. No longer is there a glassy crystal sea, but a clear crystal river flowing from beneath the throne (22.1).

This river functions like the smaller lavers; it is for the healing or cleansing of the nations, specifically the Jewish nation, for, “there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness” (Zech.13.1). Washed from sin they are now presented as a living sacrifice to their God.
The four beasts

Revelation 4:7-11 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. 8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. 9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

The overwhelming theme of the throne room is one of mercy and glory. The “throne” was the covering on the Ark of the Covenant known as the “mercy seat” (kapporet) --- the rainbow was also a token of divine mercy. The “living creatures” are the four faced cherubim on the ark, symbolising that the divine presences (glory) dwells in the midst of the natural and spiritual creation. Inside the Ark were the tokens of new life ---resurrection life (imperishable manna, the new Law tablets, the rod that budded) leading some commentators to call the Ark “a resurrection box”. This has Jesus declare that Yahweh is a God of the living (Living creatures) not of the dead (Matt 22.31-32).

The four faces of the Cherubim (living creatures) originally represented the tribal ensigns of the tribes of Judah, Reuben, Ephraim and Dan looking towards the mercy seat in a formation reminiscent of the Zodiac. When the earth was destroyed by flood God made a rainbow covenant with Noah and “and every living creature that is with you” (Gen 9.12), which included domesticated and wild animals as well as birds (Gen 9.10).

In other words, the four faces of the “living creatures” represent all of creation as well as the tribes of Israel. They also project further spiritual dimensions, with the glory of God reflected in the man-face (Christ), the Ox-face (Israel under the law), the Lion-face (Davidic king that tames death) and the eagle face (immortalized saints). The “heavenly sanctuary” (itself is a symbol of a more profound reality), formed the template for earthly worship ---;
## The Temple and the Tabernacle

### Revelation 4

1. The throne (Rev 4.5)
2. God seated on the throne (4.2)
3. Four cherubim (6-8)
4. Seven lamps (4.5)
5. The sea (4.5)
6. The altar (6:9)
7. The incense altar (8.3)

### The Tabernacle and Temple

1. The ark (Exod.25:10, 1Kgs.8.6)
2. The glory of God on the ark (Exod.25.22, 40.34, 1Kgs.8.11)
3. Cherubim (Exod.25.19, 1Kgs 6.24)
4. The Lampstand (Exod.25.31)
5. The sea (1 Kgs 7.23) and the laver (Exod.30.18, 1 Kgs.7.30)
6. The altar (Exod.27:1, 1 Kgs.8.22)
7. The incense altar (Exod.30.1)
1 Grant R. Osborne, Revelation, (Baker Academic, 2002), 85
2 One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter (μετὰ ταῦτα).
3 Whereas the block universe is the outworking of General Relativity where the space-time continuum is the result of the curvature of space, Quantum Mechanics uses “time” as a variable. Thus a contradiction is present between General Relativity and Quantum Mechanics and the understanding of time lies at the heart of it. [HYPERLINK "https://www.closetotruth.com/series/time-fundamental"]
4 Rainbows can be full circles. However, the observer normally sees only an arc formed by illuminated droplets above the ground
5 The rainbow consists of the seven spectral colours of light, in order: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.
6 Our 360 degree subdivision of the circle comes from the Sumerians and Babylonians and is therefore very ancient but the ancients could not possibly have known that the critical viewing angle was 42 degrees.
7 The number 42 has unusual characteristics in mathematics (magic cube etc) and is used throughout Scripture.
8 Psalms 52:8 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.
10 The Menorah (Lampstand) of the seven churches
11 Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Vulgate and Syriac have ‘made them a kingdom.’ Codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Alexandrinus have ‘they shall reign’, again supported by the Vulgate.
13 See [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/Digressions/tribes.pdf"]
14 The Latin term zodiacus was derived from the Greek, and the Greek term comes from the word ζώδιον (zōdion), which is the diminutive of ζώον (zōon), or animal, living creature. See the digression on the Zodiac Constellations [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/Digressions/zodiac.pdf"]
15 “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person” (Heb.1.3); “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor.4.6).
16 The nation was meant to reflect the glory of God by keeping his Law, but Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked (Deut. 32.15). The ox knew its owner and its master crib (the oxen looking at the manger are like the cherubim looking at the mercy seat, Isa.1.3; Lk.2.12) but the nation of Israel did not.
17 The lion is the symbol for royalty and is used to represent the tribe of Judah but in scripture the “king of beasts” is ‘made to eat grass as oxen’ (Dan.4.25). The destiny of the lion is to, ‘eat straw like the ox’ (Isa.11.7). The lion will be domesticated like the ox. The lion represents the untamed natural creation. The power of the lion is death – but God will tame even this natural force, for ‘He delivered and rescued, and he worked signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions’ (Dan.6.27, Ps.35.17; 57.4).
18 “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things” (fruit of the tree of life Rev.2.7) –; “So that thy youth is renewed like the eagles” (Ps.103.5)–; “They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint” (Isa.40.31).
The Scroll

The vision that follows is bracketed by the Lamb, it is an inclusio -- the slain Lamb appears in Rev 5.6 and the wrath of the Lamb is manifested in Rev 6.16. This vision begins and ends with the Lamb. Although Lamb imagery is also found in the following visions they introduce new topics i.e., “after these things” (Rev 7.1). Therefore the Lamb is first introduced into the throne room in Rev 5.6 and we note that the Lamb is characterised as a “slain Lamb” and the “Lamb that was slain” (Rev 5.12). At some stage this Lamb was dead but is dead no longer and carries the wounds of his overcoming. Moreover, this Lamb is able to save those who have washed their robes in his blood (Rev 7.14) they also overcome through the blood of the Lamb (Rev 12.11), this Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world (Rev 13.8), the saints follow the Lamb wherever he goes (Rev 14.4), and they sing the Song of the Lamb (and Moses) in Rev 15.3, the Lamb overcomes his enemies (Rev 17.14), invites his followers to a marriage supper (Rev 19.9) and the Lamb becomes the temple of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21.22).

The Lamb is obviously Jesus Christ who was pointed out as such by the Baptist; “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world” (John 1.29), Jesus encourages others to follow him (John 1.43) and Revelation shows that the faithful do follow him everywhere (even into death).

This Lamb is therefore the Passover Lamb slain at the Passover and subsequently resurrected. The Exodus “from Egypt” is celebrated in the Song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev 15.3). The visions that follow in Rev 5 and 6 are therefore related to the Passover. The vision commences at the foot of the cross and ends with the fall of Masada 42 years later the day after Passover when 960 men, women and children committed suicide. Josephus records this;

This calamitous slaughter was made on the fifteenth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan].

From CE 31 (crucifixion) to the fall of Masada in CE 73 is exactly 42 years to the day. This means that each seal is 7 years and the 6 seals cover a period of 42 years. Therefore the Passover forms the beginning and end of this period.
This can be schematically represented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Seal</th>
<th>Second Seal</th>
<th>Third Seal</th>
<th>Fourth Seals</th>
<th>Fifth Seal</th>
<th>Sixth Seal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>7 years</td>
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<td>= 42 years</td>
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 Starts at Passover

Lamb Slain (Rev 5.6)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ends at Passover</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wrath Of the Lamb</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Rev 6.15)</td>
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The Apocalypse is structured around the **Jewish Festal Calendar** --- Seals (Passover), Trumpets (Atonement) with allusions to minor feasts such as Hanukkah and Purim etc. A conceptual framework of three-and-one-half years of feasts can be established.\(^3\) Despite prolific Temple imagery/liturgy occurring in the Apocalypse the impact has been marginal on interpretive approaches and the topos is barely noted in commentaries.

Recently this neglect has been addressed (1997/1999) by studies from Brigg\(^4\) and Spatafora(s)\(^5\), who investigate the use of Temple imagery in apocryphal and OT sources and the subsequent development of the Temple theme in the Apocalypse. The common feature shared by these recent works is recognition of the importance of **temple imagery/liturgy** in the Apocalypse, particularly the importance of the Day of Atonement, a feature also noted by H. A. Whittaker.\(^6\)
The Challenge to open the scroll

KJV Revelation 5:1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

The scroll is held in the hand of the “one who sits on the throne” which is a circumlocution for God. This is the same terminology as was employed in Rev 4.2 and we noted there the abstract nature of the description referring to “one on the throne” which has a duality of function indicating both the divine presence and the personification of the covenant. At this point the covenant is about to achieve a tangible form in the person of Christ and when this happens the Lamb will be seen “in the midst of the throne” (Rev 5.6). The outworking of the covenant invested in the “one who sits on the throne” (Yahweh) is realized by Christ who “took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne” (Rev 5.7). At this juncture we have “one sitting on the throne” (Yahweh) and the Lamb standing in the midst of the throne (Rev 5.6). This is the vision that David saw; “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Ps. 110.1).

John introduces the vision with the words, “I saw”, a formula he uses 33 times to emphasise his personal involvement as an “eyewitness”. This book (biblion) is a scroll written on both sides and sealed with seven seals. It is found in the right hand of God himself, denoting the importance of the scroll, and the privilege associated with receiving it. In similar fashion the strong (mighty) angel of 10.9 has a small book (bibliaridion) in his hand. However, whereas that ‘little book’ was open (10.8), this one is sealed. Here, even the same strong angel (5.2) cannot open the scroll, only issue a challenge.

The scroll was written on both sides, an unusual, but not unheard of practice in antiquity. John no doubt intends to draw our attention to Ezek.2.10, “written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe”. Like Ezekiel’s scroll, this one contained judgements on the house of Israel. The scroll of Zech.5.3 was also written on both sides – one side containing a curse against those who steal, the other side against those who swear falsely (cf. Rev 9.21). Zechariah’s scroll flew into the house and destroyed it. This was realized in 70 CE with the destruction of the temple. A copy of the Apocalypse scroll was probably placed in the temple by a faithful priest.
No one worthy

**KJV** Revelation 5:2-4 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?  
And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.  
And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

A challenge is now issued; in principle it is open to all God’s creatures. “Worthy” does not mean “able” but rather “qualified”, in the sense of having the proper qualifications to perform this special task. The logical sequence of events is reversed in the above quote, “…to open the book, and to lose the seals”. Obviously the book cannot be opened until the seals are loosed. This is an example of a figure of speech known as *hysteron-proteron* which occurs several times. (Rev 3.3, 17; 5.4, 5; 6.4; 10.4, 9; 20.4-5, 12-13; 22.14).

This comprehensive way of referring to each of the three major zones of the cosmos is a way of saying “nowhere in the universe”. The same three divisions of the cosmos are mentioned in the context of the Christ hymn Phil.2.10, “every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth”.

The principalities and powers of heaven (angels) could not open it, for they were immortal beings in possession of divine nature. No one on earth could open it nor under the earth, not because they were dead (they could be raised), but because they were human. Only Christ qualified to open it, for he possessed both divine and human nature. But, even though he was qualified to open it, he still had to win the right to open it.

When no one in creation is able to open the scroll John weeps: John weeps tears on behalf of all the prophets and saints. Not because he is thwarted of seeing into the future; His frustration goes deeper than that. Until the scroll is opened God’s purposes remain, not merely unknown, but unaccomplished.
John has been nurtured on the messianic hope of the Old Testament, which promised that one day God would assume His kingly power and reign openly on earth, punishing the wicked and redressing the wrongs of the oppressed. Especially in persecution God’s people had longed for that day to bring an end to their sufferings, and also to vindicate their faith. For there is a limit to the capacity of faith to survive in the face of hostile fact: unless in the end right obviously triumphs over wrong, faith in a just God is utter illusion. God must “vindicate his chosen who cry out to him day and night” (Lk.18.7). John weeps with disappointment because the hope of God’s action appears to be indefinitely postponed for lack of an agent through whom God may act.

**To read the book neither look thereon** - this is another *hysteron-proteron*. One must first look upon the scroll in order to read it. John himself saw the scroll and the seven seals on the outside, the purpose for opening the scroll is not that it can be read but so that the eschatological events can begin to take place. The reason John emphasises the reading of the scroll is to draw us to Isa.29.11-14:

> And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

Isaiah highlights man’s failure to redeem himself, those who thought themselves qualified (the readers i.e., priests, scribes) could not open the scroll and the common people admitted they were not qualified (non-readers). The cross was a work of foolishness to the world, but as the apostle says, “the foolishness of God is wiser than men”. (1 Cor.1.25)

It must be recognised, that in this vision John is transported to the past, he sees the situation from the viewpoint of the Old Testament prophets and saints. The very next verses take him to the foot of the cross and to the enthronement of the resurrected Lamb.
The implications of the vision

The vision of the scroll has profound theological implications. Firstly, it demonstrates that no one with divine nature (even God himself) was able to open the scroll. This means that God was inhibited from setting “end time” events in motion until the right candidate appeared on the scene.

Secondly, no human candidate was suitable to open the scroll. Even if Moses was resurrected he could not have opened the scroll. It required a party that was in possession of human and divine nature – an intercessor between both parties. A “new creation” was necessary. But more than this, that “new creation” was required to destroy sin completely and voluntarily submit to death the nature that is in fundamental opposition to God. Thus a new relationship is established between God and Man and a new “federal head” can now represent mankind. Humanity has now been offered a choice – to remain in Adam or be joined to God in Christ. This is the basis of atonement theology and it carries no ideas of “penal substitution” or the “Trinity”.

Thirdly, the vision must have commenced at the Passover – crucifixion/resurrection event in 31 CE not in 96 CE (66 years later). John is transported back in time to a point just before the Passover where no one can be found it is therefore impossible and inconsistent to contemplate this vision starting at any other time in history than the Passover crucifixion. The vision is therefore retrospective from John’s viewpoint.
Both Harry Whittaker and Peter Watkins interpret the scroll as the “book of life” mentioned in Rev 22.19 but the arguments against this theory are overwhelming. As each of the seven seals is broken, events happen; and the whole process of the breaking of the seals, with accompanying events, is meaningless unless it is somehow related to the contents of the book. By opening the scroll the Lamb does not merely disclose the contents, but puts them into operation.

Beale says, “The idea of sealing and opening books in connection with end-time happenings is found in the OT only in Daniel 12 and 7” (Beale, 339). Beale continues later in his commentary making the same point. “Most futurist commentators would disagree with my argument thus far, which has been that Revelation 5 portrays a vision of inaugurated fulfilment of OT prophecy. The metaphor of seals can be found outside Daniel elsewhere in the OT and Jewish apocalyptic, but the seals in Rev. 5:1ff come from Dan. 12:4, 9” (Beale, 347). 8

Beale is certainly correct in his observation “Seal the book, even to the time of the end” (Dan 12.4). There can be no doubt that first century Christians expected the return of Christ and the realization of Daniel’s prophecies to occur during their lifetime. 9

KJV Revelation 5:5-6 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. 6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. 10

John’s tears are checked by what he now hears and sees. It is always worthwhile to examine closely the connection between what John hears and what he sees, and it is particularly unfortunate that in most editions and translations a paragraph break has been inserted between verses 5 and 6, so that we miss the full impact of the juxtaposition of images: One of the elders said, ‘….the Lion….has conquered…’ Then I saw a Lamb. What John hears is couched in the traditional messianic imagery of the Old Testament; what he sees constitutes the most impressive rebirth of images he anywhere achieves.
The Lion of the tribe of Judah is a title with an obviously martial ring, recalling the prophecy that ‘the sceptre shall not depart from Judah….and the obedience of the nations shall be his’ (Gen.49.9-10). This prophecy had been adapted by the pharisaic author of the seventeenth psalm of Solomon in his portrayal of the militant Messiah, who would drive out the tyrannical and impious Gentiles and establish the reign of God with Israel as the imperial nation. The words of the elder therefore, encourage John to think that all the hopes and aspirations of the Old Testament are now on the point of fulfilment; and so they are, after being totally transformed by the alchemy of Christ. For John looks for the Lion of the tribe of Judah and sees a Lamb. We need not waste time searching through the Old Testament and other Jewish literature to find the meaning of this symbol, for John has told us what he means by it. The Lamb bore the marks of slaughter, which were explained by the heavenly choir: with his life-blood he had ransomed for God men from every tribe, tongue, people and race.

The Lamb is the symbol of self-sacrificing redemptive love. By this one stroke of brilliant artistry John has given us the key to all his use of the Old Testament writings (without ever quoting them). Partly because this was the language which came most naturally to him, partly because of the powerful emotive effect of familiar associations, and partly no doubt because his vision had actually taken its form, though not its content, from the permanent furniture of his well stocked mind. But to all this we must add that he believed the Old Testament scriptures to be the oracles of God, and that the same God who had spoken in partial and shadowy ways through the prophets had now spoken fully through his Son.

The Old Testament was indispensable to the understanding of the character and purpose of God, but it must be read in the light of the fuller illumination of Christ. Throughout the welter of old testament images in the chapters that follow, almost without exception the only title for Christ is the Lamb, and this title is meant to control and interpret all the rest of the symbolism. It is almost as if John was saying to us in one point after another: 'whenever the old testament says “Lion”, read “Lamb”.

Whenever the Old Testament speaks of the victory of the Messiah or the overthrow of the enemies of God, we are to remember that the gospel recognises no other way of achieving these ends than the way of the cross. Jesus Christ was the son of God but also the root of David (see Isa.11:1).
Through his pedigree he was therefore imminently *qualified* to open the seals, but, nevertheless, he still had to *win the right* to open them. This he did by conquering his human nature – *hath prevailed to open* – literally *overcame (conquered) to open*. His followers are also urged to overcome (2.7, 11, 17, 26; 3.5, 12, 21; 21.7), even Jacob, symbol of unreformed fleshly Israel had to overcome (Hos.12.3-5) before he was renamed Israel (God rules).

...in the midst of the throne, and the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders – This is a Hebraism (we say between A and B, Hebrew says between A and between B). Here we have the throne surrounded by the living creatures on the one hand, and the elders on the other. The Lamb stands between these two groups. Initially the Lamb cannot be ‘*in the midst of the throne*’ seeing that v.7 says, ‘*he came and took the scroll*’. Having done this he may well have taken his rightful place on the throne.

**I saw a Lamb standing as if it had been slain** – The tense of ‘*it had been slain*’ is perfect, meaning a past action still having effect in the present – appropriate, needless to say, as regards the death of the Saviour. Again we note the retrospective character of certain aspects of John’s vision. The references to “*has overcome*” and “*had been slain*”, plus the perfect participle in v.1, ‘opened’. All these things took place prior to John entering heaven – indeed he could only come into the divine presence because of them. The victorious death of Christ had truly opened a door in heaven permitting access by those with faith – “we have boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the veil…” (Heb.10.19-22, cp.4.14-16)

The description of Messiah as a lamb is first explicitly found in Isa.53.7, “He was led like a lamb to the slaughter”. This was taken up by the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world” (John 1.29, 36). Yet long before the concept of the suffering was present in the Passover (cp.1 Cor.5.7), and this probably is the main basis for its use here in Revelation. We recall the Passover theme observed in 1.5.

...*with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth* – This is John’s way of taking us to Zech.3.8-9:
Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

Here Christ is typified by both Joshua and the stone. God engraveth the stone (virgin birth), for, no tool of man was to be used on the altar (Ex.32.16). The seven eyes are not on the stone – they are focused on it, watching it closely. These are the seven spirits, or angels. After the passion these seven become the eyes of Christ. They are the seven spirits before the throne (1:4), they are also the seven stars in his right hand, sent out to care for his seven lampstands (1:20). In chapter 4.5 they are called “the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God”. The seven spirits are then the heavenly Menorah in the sanctuary, with the seven churches forming their earthly counterpart.

In the Zechariah prophecy Joshua had his filthy garments changed – with Christ this was the clothing upon with immortality. If Joshua was obedient he was promised; “A place of access among these that stand by” (3.7 RV) – in John’s vision this becomes Jesus (Joshua) Christ standing between the elders and the throne. The Horns are a symbol of strength (Deut.33.17, Psa.18.2, 89.17, Lk.1.69) and possibly a reference to the crowns made for Joshua (Zech.6.11). The BRANCH or sprout is also used by John in v.5 and relates to his Davidic descent and therefore his legitimate claim to the throne. “He shall sit and rule upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them (the monarchy and the priesthood) both” (Zech.6.13).

**KJV Revelation 5:7-8** And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

And he came and took the scroll – The Greek word “took” may also be translated “received”, which is perhaps more suitable to the context. Because Christ had overcome, he, and only he, was now worthy to open the scroll. In giving the scroll to Christ, God is passing all judgement, revelation and the outworking of his purpose into the hands of his Son.
This action is symbolic for the previous verse has shown us the Lamb (immediately after his resurrection) as all-powerful (the horns) and all-knowing (the eyes). By these symbols John undoubtedly invests Christ with the attributes of deity, but he does something more important still: he redefines omnipotence. Omnipotence is not to be understood as the power of unlimited coercion, but as the power of infinite persuasion, the invincible power of self-negating, self-sacrificing love.

…the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb – The same obeisance given earlier to God is now rendered to his Son. “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son, that all may honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him” (John 4.22).

…with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints – It is appropriate that the prayers of the saints should be included in the following praise since it chiefly concerns the theme of redemption.
A New Song

KJV  Revelation 5:9-14  And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. 11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. 14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth forever and ever.

This new song is probably the same one as “the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” (15.3). The theme is exodus redemption. It is, as it were a new song set to an old familiar tune. This is the song that the children of Israel sang unto the Lord in Exodus chapter 15, but now it finds its true expression. It is not only the song that is ‘new’ but we have a ‘new name’ (2.17, 3.12), the “new Jerusalem” (3.12, 21.2), the “new heaven and earth” (21.1), and finally, God makes “all things new” (21.5). Psalm 98 begins as follows: “Sing to the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory”. The song can be described as new for two reasons; first it is addressed to Jesus, and second it includes the Gentiles among the redeemed. Previously it had been Israel alone who constituted the kingdom and priests to God (Exod.19.6).

You are worthy to take the scroll – the same words are used of God himself: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (4.11).The force of the language is in no way diminished when the Lamb is addressed, the words used in 4:11 concerning praise for the Father’s physical creation are used here to praise the Son (and so also the Father) for the new spiritual creation.
...you redeemed to God by your blood – The verb translated “redeem” (agorazo), in plain terms signifies purchase (cp., agora, “market place”). Ownership is indicated by “to God”, and the price – “your blood” (cp.1 Cor.6.20). John also applies the language of Dan 7.14, 18 to the redemptive death of Christ, which has “enthroned” Christians as kings and priests. John has overlaid the existing language of Daniel with the ‘kingdom and priest’ language from Exod 9:6 (which he also used in 1.7; 20.6). The reference in Dan 7.9 to thrones that were set in place becomes the 24 thrones on which the heavenly elders sit. (Rev 4.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revelation 5.9-11</th>
<th>Daniel 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every tribe, tongue, people, and nation</td>
<td>All peoples, nations, languages [14b]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...and made them a...</td>
<td>...to him was given [14a]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...kingdom and priests and they will reign on the earth</td>
<td>Dominion and glory and kingship [14a]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of angels was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands</td>
<td>Thousand thousands ministered unto Him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him [10]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The language used in chapter 4 for God, is continued into chapter 5 for his Son. Now an innumerable host of angels join the cherubim and elders in the praise of the Lamb. The fact that seven expressions are used (v.12) no doubt indicates the perfection of the one addressed. Each of the seven is found of Christ elsewhere in the New Testament: power (1 Cor.1.24), riches (2 Cor.8.9), wisdom (1 Cor.1.24), might (Eph.6.10), honour (Heb.2.9), glory (John 1.14) and blessing (Matt.21.9). To bring the anthem of praise to a climax every creature in heaven, on earth and under the earth and in the sea ascribe blessing, honour, glory and might to both Father and Son (v.13). “And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the elders fell down and worshipped.”
1 An obvious reference to the “Jewish Cosmos”, the Jews slaughtered a Lamb at Passover in order to Exodus from Egypt.
3 This is linked to the triennial reading cycle of the Old Testament…..see HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/Digressions/rev_feasts.pdf".
5 Spatafora(s) observes that, “All other studies and commentaries appear to analyse the individual recurrences, but they fail to see a relationship between them”. Andrew Spatafora and Andrea Spatafora, From the ‘Temple of God’ to God as the Temple: A Biblical Theological Study of the Temple in the Book of Revelation,(Pontificia Univ. Gregoriana:Italy,1997), 7-9
7 Under the earth is the equivalent of Hades (Sheol) or the abyss – see Ezk.32:21
10 For the following paragraphs ad loc. George Bradford Caird, The Revelation of Saint John, (Hendrickson Publishers, 1966), 73
The Four horsemen

The symbolism is drawn from the Old Testament but modified to carry a radically new meaning. Zechariah had two visions, one of four chariots, but both were sent out only to patrol the earth and to report on its peaceful condition; and the different colours of the horses correspond to the different winds or points of the compass (Zech.1.8-11, 6.1-8). But in John’s vision the four colours indicate a difference of commission and the emergence of each new rider betoken the release of a new disaster on earth: the victory of the gospel (a disaster for Judaism), the Herodian persecution, famine and the last horseman an intensification of all the previous. The heavenly voice which says, “come!” is not calling disasters into existence, rather the voice is declaring that nothing can now happen (not even the most fearsome evidence of man’s disobedience and its nemesis) which cannot be woven into the pattern of God’s gracious purpose. Because Christ now reigns from the cross onwards; even when the four horsemen ride out on their destructive missions they do so as emissaries of his redemptive love.

First Seal - White Horse

KJV Revelation 6:1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. 2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

This seal represents the victorious course of the gospel by the rider on the white horse. Some commentators contend that as the other seals represent judgments against Israel, especially with the last horsemen acting as a kind of summary, or epitome of all the others (to kill by sword, famine, plague and wild beasts), the first seal must therefore be similar in character. Moreover a crown, ‘was given’ (εδόθη) to the rider, a word frequently associated with divine permission to carry out retributive judgments.²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revelation 6</th>
<th>Revelation 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- white horse</td>
<td>- white horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- had a bow</td>
<td>- out of his mouth a sharp sword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- given a crown</td>
<td>- many crowns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The cavalier on the white horse is the Lord Jesus Christ. That the cavalier is awarded a crown before he rides out may be constructed as a promise of victory: **he went forth conquering and to conquer.** Literally — conquering (overcoming) that he might conquer. This conveys a different meaning i.e., overcoming (his flesh) that he might conquer (his enemies) and compares favourably with the literal translation of Rev.5.5; **conquered to open** i.e., he overcame his flesh in order to open the book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gen 49</th>
<th>Psalm 21</th>
<th>Psalm 89</th>
<th>Revelation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>His bow abode in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty one (R.V.) of Jacob. [v.24]</td>
<td>The King shall joy in thy strength, O Lord [v.1]</td>
<td>Mine arm shall also strengthen him [v.21]</td>
<td>He that sat thereon had a bow [6.2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blessings of El Shaddy (= blessing of children) [v.25-26]</td>
<td>Thou shalt make ready thy bowstrings against the face of them [v.12]</td>
<td>Thou hast scattered thine enemies with thine strong arm [v.10]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They shall be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren [v.26]</td>
<td>For thou hast made him most blessed forever [v.4]</td>
<td>His seed also will I make to endure forever [v.29]</td>
<td>Tribe of Joseph sealed [7.8]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head [v.3]</td>
<td>A crown of gold was given him [v.2]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The bow and the crown are both featured in the blessing of Joseph which stresses the blessing of children. Psalm 89, (a Hezekiah Psalm that contemplates the annulment of the covenant because the King is about to die without an heir) has similar themes. Psalm 21 is a coronation Psalm from the Davidic period.

The “judgement” against Judaism was the expansion of the Gospel and the inclusion of the Gentiles. Joseph — means, “add to me another son” this period sees the persecutions instigated by Saul of Tarsus who was converted on the road to Damascus. The apostle Paul (formerly Saul) was from the tribe of Benjamin (Philip.3.5) and just as his progenitor and namesake Saul had persecuted David in the **morning** of Israel’s history, so too Paul had persecuted Christ in the **evening** of Israel’s history (Acts 9.4).
KJV Genesis 49:27 Benjamin shall rav in as a wolf: In the morning he shall devour the prey, and at even he shall divide the spoil.

KJV Acts 9:1-5 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. 3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

This persecution was however for a purpose, the proclamation of the gospel to the gentiles was the outcome – God had, ‘added another son’.
KJV Revelation 6:3-4 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. 4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

The red horse (πυρρός purhos) stands for Edom; the first time red is used in the OT (LXX Greek) is for the “red pottage” that Esau the father of the Edomites sold his birthright for in Gen 25.30. The Herodians were Edomites (Greek Idumean) by descent and their opposition to the gospel was prophesied by Malachi. In the Hebrew the unpointed “Edom” and “Adam” are closely related.

The early church suffered under the Herodian dynasty. Herod the Great (reigned 37-4 BCE) sought to murder the messiah and slaughtered the innocents in Bethlehem. Herod Antipater (reigned 4 BCE-39 CE) was involved in events that led to the executions of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. Herod Agrippa (reigned 41–44 CE) had James (the brother of John) murdered. This seal is specifically about the murder of James the brother of John at the Passover:

KJV Acts 12:1-3 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. 2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

James and John had both been disciples of the Baptist who had condemned Herod Antipater for his adultery and James the son of Zebedee (brother of John) also condemned the Herod’s:

James 4:2-4 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. 4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.
The Epistle of James was written by James the brother of John and NOT by James the Just (brother of Jesus). It reflects a time when the church had not yet split from the synagogue – the “parting of the ways” had not happened yet and therefore Christians were still a minority within the synagogue. This explains why James address them as “adulterers” and “murderers” after all, Jewish “Herod” supporters were promoting pseudo-Jews (Edomites) who had killed the Baptist and killed Christ and who were now busy committing adultery. James was directing the same message as John the Baptist at the same “Herod family” (and their supporters) and paid the same ultimate price as the Baptist (beheaded). The gospel of Jesus “took peace way from the earth” (cf. Matt 10.34-39) and resulted in factional infighting and murder as the Jews sought to dominate and extinguish the primitive church.

James himself was killed with the sword (Acts 12.2). Clement of Alexandria has an impressive story, preserved by Eusebius in his church history (2.9), that the man who ‘led James to the Judgment-seat’ (betrayed him? Was chief witness against him?) was so impressed with the apostles’ bearing that he thereupon confessed belief in Christ and was condemned to the same fate. ‘On their way, he entreated James to be forgiven of him; and James, considering a little, replied: “Peace be unto thee”, and kissed him; and then both were beheaded at the same time. The rider on the red horse had come to take away peace on the earth but James, showing the spirit of Christ forgave his persecutor (Stephen cried for Saul’s forgiveness and Christ answered the prayer by converting Saul) and granted him peace. James did indeed drink from his Lord’s cup and suffer the same baptism! (Mtt.20.23)

How strange, and comforting that the apostle John should find himself recording a vision relating to the death of his brother James. The death of James was already an historic event when John received the RED HORSE vision on Patmos. This would have reassured the brethren that the witnessing, persecution and martyrdom of the saints was all part of the divine redemptive purpose - Herod and the Jews may kill and persecute, but God rules in the kingdom of men. The date of these events is precisely fixed by the death of Herod as being the spring of A.D.44.
Krnl 
Revelation 6:5-6

And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

This is a strange famine indeed, for it does not affect the oil or the wine. During the occasion of the famine in 1Kgs.17, Elijah produced the miracle of the constantly full cruse of oil, which would not fail, “until the Lord send rain upon the earth” (v.14). Later, in 2 Kgs.4.6 he produced a similar miracle for another widow, who was in danger of having her sons sold into bondage (cf. Judaism). The widows are obviously types of the Jews and Gentiles and the oil, is olive oil; “…pure olive oil beaten for the light to burn before the Lord continually.” (Lev.24.2)

This represents the gifts of the Holy Spirit, given for the enlightenment of the ecclesia. The ecclesia at Ephesus was warned that these gifts would be removed (lampstand) unless repentance was forthcoming, but at this juncture in time the oil would not fail. During his flight from the rebellion of Absalom David had been provided with a bottle of wine, “that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink” (2 Sam.16.2). This was the ‘new wine’ (Mk.2.22) of the covenant provided to sustain them in the wilderness wanderings.

Although there was a literal famine during this seal, the Holy Spirit and the breaking of bread would sustain the brethren. The famine conditions are severe; a quart of wheat will cost a day’s wages (a denarius). Agabus the prophet (Acts 11.27-30) warns of a famine throughout the Roman world, which the author of Acts links specifically with the reign of Claudius (41-54 CE and especially severe in 45-46 CE) a period we know from other sources to have been a troubled one.

As Bruce de Winter remarks; “The unearthing of epigraphic evidence relating to the experience of grain shortages has provided insights into a first century situation of civil unrest and benefaction which relates in revealing ways to the actions and motivations of characters in the book of Acts, and the conditions in which they find themselves”. Eusebius Pamphilius in his Church History has the following to say about the famine which took place in the reign of Claudius;

...
1. Caius had held the power not quite four years, when he was succeeded by the emperor Claudius. Under him the world was visited with a famine, which writers that are entire strangers to our religion have recorded in their histories. And thus the prediction of Agabus recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, according to which the whole world was to be visited by a famine, received its fulfilment.

2. And Luke, in the Acts, after mentioning the famine in the time of Claudius, and stating that the brethren of Antioch, each according to his ability, sent to the brethren of Judea by the hands of Paul and Barnabas, adds the following account (Acts 11.27-30); “And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul”.

Margaret Barker comments as follows; ‘A quart of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius but do not harm the oil and the wine’ are probably the oracle of the Christian prophet Agabus who predicted the great famine in the reign of Claudius (Acts 11.28). The enigmatic words ‘Do not harm the oil and the wine’ were probably rather different in the original. ‘Harm’ here translates the Greek adikeo, but in the LXX, words from this root are used to translate the Hebrew ‘w’ which means ‘to act unjustly or unrighteously’ as in Psalm 58.3, Psalm 71.4 or Ezekiel 28.15. The original was probably ‘Do not act unjustly in the matter of the oil and the wine’. Josephus records the original context:

When Claudius was emperor of the Romans and Ismael was our high priest, and when so great a famine was come upon us that one tenth of a measure of wheat was sold for four drachmae and when no less than seventy cori of flour were brought into the temple at the feast of unleavened bread ... not one of the priests was so hardy as to eat one crumb of it, even while so great a distress was upon the land; and this out of dread for the Law and of that wrath which God retains against acts of wickedness ... (Ant. 3.320-21)

‘Do not act unjustly in the matter of the oil and the wine’ was an exhortation to the priests to show similar restraint with regard to the other offerings brought to the temple. They were to act with righteousness. The great famine fulfilled the prophecy of the third seal. The third seal is also characterised by the Passover revolt under the Roman procurator Ventidius Cumanus (48-52 CE). Josephus informs us that on the day of the feast one of the Roman soldiers, “pulled back his garment and, cowering down after an indecent manner, turned his breech towards the Jews and spake such words as you might expect upon such a posture.” (Jos. Wars 2.12.1) As a consequence a riot ensued in which 10,000 were killed in the crush.
KJV Revelation 6:7-8 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 

8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

The language of this passage links inter-textually with Ezek.14.21; “For thus says the Lord God: “How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, famine, evil beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and animal”’. Ezekiel pronounced divine judgments against the land and in particular Jerusalem; the same judgments prophesied by Moses in Lev.26.25-26 --- sword, famine and pestilence is a trio of divine judgment that is directed at Israel in scripture (and no one else). This trio is now expanded with “beasts of the earth” – note the plural “beasts”- in the first century the “beast” was the Roman Empire in the early second century the “beast” (of the earth) was a two-horned lamb. The plural “beasts” indicates continuity with Daniel’s beast-empires. The fourth seal summarises the previous seals and intensifies their judgments. Thus God’s wrath is already seen in the fourth seal—well in advance of the sixth and seventh seals.

The rider of the fourth horse who has the name “Death and Hell” is a personification of the angel of death who is called the destroyer in Rev 9.11. The colour of the horse is χλωρός, chloros (from which chlorophyll is derived) being the greenish pallor of a decaying corpse or diseased flesh. The pale hue is reminiscent of Jer. 30.4-6 where, “all faces are turned into paleness” (ἴκτεον, ikteron) which carries the meaning of jaundice or paleness. Jacob was not saved out of his time of trouble and Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon in 586 BCE, the pattern was set to repeat in 70 CE.

This whole period is defined by, “[…] robbings, rapings and insurrections of the bolder sort… over the whole country.’ (Jos.Wars.2.12.5) During the procuratorship of Antonius Felix (52-60 CE) we have the incident of the Egyptian false prophet who gathered 30,000 people on the Mount of Olives and attempted to expel the Romans by force. This was followed by a band of robbers and insurrectionists who, ‘filled all Judea with their madness and thus the flame was every day more blown up, till it came to direct war’.
As if this was not bad enough, trouble erupted between the Syrian Greeks and the Jews of Caesarea. The Galilee region was a hotbed of trouble, this was originally the domain of Herod, tetrarch of Galilee – the Romans adopting the term tetrarch from Philip of Macedon, a term meaning a *fourth* *part* (power was given over a *fourth part* of the earth). Later the term was applied to minor dignitaries.

This was also a period of terrorism in which assassins known as sicarii killed prominent people in broad daylight (Jos. Wars. book 2. – read chpt.13). The background to all this civil unrest was the famine that still continued to affect the population until 53-54. Famine is always the precursor to civil unrest and plague. Nero’s reign (54-68) also began during this period (52-59), setting the scene for the horrors to come.
Fifth Seal – Slain under the altar

**KJV Revelation 6:9-11** And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:  
10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?  
11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” (Ps.116.15). This period is characterised by the Nero persecution, the death of Paul (64 CE?) and the death of Peter (66 CE?). The persecutors of the ecclesia are called “inhabitants of the earth,” in contrast with those whose citizenship is in heaven. More specifically, the “inhabitants of the earth” refers to the Jews. It was the Jews who caused the Paul’s arrest and even the Nero persecution had its roots in Jewish antagonism, for Nero’s wife was a convert to Judaism. The altar is the altar of burnt offering in the heavenly sanctuary. The incense altar is found in the trumpets (Rev 8.3). Martyrdom of the saints is connected with self-sacrifice in order to “complete that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ” (Col.1.24).

It was during this period that James the Just (the brother of Jesus) was murdered. Margaret Barker says; “When James the Righteous was martyred in 62 CE, Eusebius records that he was stoned and clubbed to death in the temple court. The presence of James the Righteous was believed to protect Jerusalem from the wrath, and so his death left the city in danger as another seal was opened (see pp. 192—4). James was buried where he died, ‘on the spot, by the holy of holies, and his headstone is still there by the holy of holies’ (History 2.23). If James was interred at that spot, he was almost literally under the great altar, which stood in the court of the priests, by the holy of holies”.

Christians were blamed for the fire of Rome. Robinson describes the persecution as follows;

But we must return to the evidence of Tacitus, which is important enough to be set out in full. After giving a graphic and detailed description of the ravages of the fire and the immediate relief operations for the temporary re-housing of some hundreds of thousands of homeless (Ann. 15.38-41), he proceeds (15.421.) to describe the rebuilding of the capital to a carefully thought-out plan with built-in fire precautions for the future, together with the construction by Nero of a palace for himself of unrivalled magnificence, the celebrated Domus Aurea. [Described by Suetonius, Nero 31.] Then, in 15.44, he goes on: So far, the precautions taken were suggested
by human prudence: now means were sought for appeasing deity, and application was made to the Sibyl Book; at the injunction of which public prayers were offered to Vulcan, Ceres, and Proserpine, while Juno was propitiated by the matrons, first in the Capitol, then at the nearest point of the sea-shore, where water was drawn for sprinkling the temple and image of the goddess. Ritual banquets and all-night vigils were celebrated by women in the married state. But neither human help, nor imperial munificence, nor all the modes of placating Heaven, could stifle scandal or dispel the belief that the fire had taken place by order. Therefore, to scotch the rumour, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judaea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue. First, then, the confessed members of the sect were arrested; next, on their disclosures, vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race. And derision accompanied their end: they were covered with wild beasts’ skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed, were burned to serve as lamps by night. Nero had offered his gardens for the spectacle, and gave an exhibition in his circus, mixing with the crowd in the habit of charioteer, or mounted on his car. Hence, in spite of a guilt which had earned the most exemplary punishment, there arose a sentiment of pity, due to the impression that they were being sacrificed not for the welfare of the state but to the ferocity of a single man.


Be sober be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5.8)
The souls under the altar is an allusion to the old covenant ritual of pouring out the blood at the foot of the altar (Lev. 1.5, 3.8, 4.25), the reason being that, “the life (nephesh = soul) is in the blood” (Lev. 17.11). These martyrs had been “slain for the word of God and the testimony (witness) which they held”. Several commentators, including H.A.W., point out that the souls are under the altar because at some time in the past they have been offered upon it. This view equates the martyrs with the saints of the old covenant, such as Abel, whose blood cries from the ground (Gen. 4.10). H.A.W. quotes Matt. 23.34-35 to show that from the blood of Abel (in Genesis – the first book in the Hebrew Bible) to Zacharias (2 Chron. 24.20-21 – last book in the Hebrew Bible) refers to all the martyrs under the old covenant. The point that requires emphasis here is that all the blood-shed from the foundation of the world would be required from this generation (Lk. 11.50). They were encouraged to fill up the measure of their fathers (Mt. 23.32) and they did! The Old Testament saints could not be made perfect until their numbers had been complemented by their New Testament counterparts (Heb. 11. 39-40). They were told that they should, “rest for a little season” (cf. Daniel 12.13; “..thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of days”). Once again there is every indication that it would only be a short time before their prayer for vengeance would be answered. Is this then a vindictive prayer for personal vengeance? God forbid! They have gone to their death in the confidence that God’s word, attested in the life and death of Jesus, is the ultimate truth; but unless in the end tyranny and other forms of wickedness meet with retribution, that faith is an illusion. “Vengeance is mine saith the Lord” and it requires faith to leave matters of justice in the hands of the righteous judge (Deut. 32.35, Rom. 12.19).

The martyrs had been condemned in a human court of law, and that decision stands against them unless it can be reversed in a higher court. But the heavenly judge cannot declare them to be in the right without at the same time declaring their persecutors to be in the wrong and passing sentence against them. Justice must not only be done; it must seen to be done. The souls under the altar had to wait until their fellow-servants (Gentile Christians) and their brethren (Jewish Christians) which should be killed (even) as they were, should be fulfilled. The living and the dead share the solidarity of the same faith, metaphorically they are not dead at all, for our God is a God of the living not of the dead! Though John writes here about the dead, he does so in the interest of the living, for whom the question of the martyrs’ faith is a question of supreme moment, because they are experiencing the same tribulations. The cry, “How long?” had echoed down centuries of oppression (Ps. 6.3, 13.1; 35.17, 74.9; 79:5, 80.4, 89.46, 90.13, 94.3, Isa. 6.11, Jer. 47.6, Hab. 1.2, Zech. 1.2). The cry is particularly pertinent to these fellow-servants and brethren for they are also facing martyrdom.
**Was their cry (prayer) answered?** The answer was two-fold; (1) The giving of the book of Revelation in c. 65; (2) The vindication of the martyrs by the destruction of Jerusalem. The parallel between the first century and the future is instructive: During the **first century witnessing** the cry, “how long” goes forth. They are given the book of Revelation and martyred – their death is followed by a great earthquake (sixth seal). The **future witnessing** echoes the same cry, “how long?” they are given a little book (10.8), are also killed, and their death is followed by a great earthquake (11.13). “And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?” (Luke 8.1-7)
Sixth seal – great earthquake

KJV Revelation 6:12-17 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. 14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; 16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

“And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away”. (Matt. 21.19)

The inter-texts for Revelation 6.12-17 is discussed in the digression “Dating Matters” suffice to say that Isaiah 34 (a prophecy about Edom) is used because the Edomite (Idumean) Herod the Great built the temple.

The sixth seal concerns the “wrath of the Lamb” and the, “great day of their (R.V.) wrath”. This is the day of vengeance, in accordance with the prayers of the saints in the previous seal, who ask to be avenged (justified). At the commencement of his ministry Jesus had refused to proclaim the day of vengeance, for he “closed the scroll and gave it back to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were upon him” (Lk.4.20).
The Lamb breaks all the seals and opens the scroll. The penultimate seal to be opened, is the **great day of wrath**, it describes the fall of Jerusalem and the end of temple worship – a cataclysmic event in Jewish cultic history. As one scroll is about to be opened, another is about to be closed; for “heaven and earth was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up”. Just as the Lord had closed the scroll in the synagogue, even so now, he again closes the scroll of the Law.

Jesus had warned them in the Olivet prophecy: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt.24.35). Although that whole dispensation would disappear, **Christ’s words would still have a future application.** This indicates that “heaven and earth” will pass away again, sometime in the future, when it will be replaced with, “a new heaven and earth” (Rev 21.1).

The sixth seal describes the end of an epoch, the closure of the Mosaic dispensation, it is fitting that we receive a vision of the 144,000 sealed at this juncture. The 144,000 sealed are in answer to the question, “who is able to stand?” Indeed, this was terrible, but deserved retribution; for what will the Lord of the vineyard do? “He will miserably destroy those wicked men and let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons” (Mtt.21.41 and this sentence came from their own mouths!) Jesus pronounced that – “there shall be great distress in the land and **wrath** upon this people” (Lk.21.23).

The Lord found no figs on the tree and cursed it (Matt.21:19-20) he had sought fruit on the tree for three years and finding none, ordered it cut down. The vinedresser begged his Lord for one last chance; “Lord let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit well; but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down” (Lk.13.6-9). The fig tree in the sixth seal was already withered and dry and its immature fruit ready to drop. “Then they will begin to say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!” For if they do these things (i.e. arrest and crucify Christ) when the **tree is green**, what shall be done when it is dry?” (Lk.23.28-31) These words were spoken by Christ to the ‘daughters of Jerusalem on his way to the cross, in so doing he paraphrased Hosea 10:8, which **he repeats** in Revelation 6:14-15: “…every mountain and island were moved out of their places….to the mountains and rocks fall on us, and hide us…”
The metaphor of the most stable features of the world, such as mountains, islands, coastlands, “shaken” and “moved” occurs in the context of divine theophany or divine judgment (Judg.5.5, Ps.18.7 [LXX 17.7], 46.2-3, Isa.5.25, 54.10, 64.1, Jer.4.24, Ezek.26.18, 38.20, Mic.1.4, Nah.1.5, Hab.1.6, Zech. 14.4). This shaking is referred to in Hebrews; “And this word, yet once more signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain” (Heb.12.27). The mountain represents the temple mount (Mtt.21.21 – this passage also mentions the fig tree) and the island represents Masada, Herod’s fortress, which rocky prominence was isolated like an island in a sea of sand. This fortress in the Negev desert was the last bastion of Jewish resistance, where nearly a thousand Jews committed suicide rather than surrender to the Romans. The etymology of the word Masada probably comes from the Hebrew word foundation, but this house was built on a foundation of sand; “...and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of that house” (Matt.7.27). Isaiah reflects the terror of these judgments and confirms that this is a judgement against Judah and Jerusalem ( Isa.2.1);

\begin{align*}
\text{Rev 6.16} & \quad \text{from the presence of} \\
& \quad \text{the one seated on the throne} \\
& \quad \text{and from the wrath} \\
& \quad \text{of the Lamb} \\
& \quad \text{shaken of a mighty wind (v.14)} \\
\text{Isa 2.19} & \quad \text{from the presence of} \\
& \quad \text{the fear of the Lord} \\
& \quad \text{and from the glory} \\
& \quad \text{of his might} \\
& \quad \text{to shake terribly the earth}
\end{align*}

“The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day” (Isa.2:11). Isaiah 34.1-5 also forms part of the woven Revelation context:

\begin{align*}
\text{Isaiah 34} & \quad \text{The host of heaven dissolve} \\
& \quad \text{The heavens rolled up like a scroll} \\
& \quad \text{All their host shall fall down} \\
& \quad \text{As leaves fall from the fig tree} \\
\text{Revelation 6} & \quad \text{heaven and earth shall pass away} \\
& \quad \text{heaven rolled up like a scroll} \\
& \quad \text{the stars of heaven fall to earth} \\
& \quad \text{fig tree, casting unripe figs}
\end{align*}
The History of the Jewish War

The great earthquake covers the seven-year period of the Jewish war, starting in 66½ CE when Roman soldiers looted Jerusalem and it was consequently seized by Zealots. The Romans{E "Romans" } sent reinforcements from Syria who were defeated by the Zealots. In the meantime the Jews began fighting amongst themselves, there being three different factions within Jerusalem. In 67 CE Vespasian who was Nero’s general landed at Antioch and received the submission of the Jews of Sepphoris. The Jewish garrison of Jodepath was massacred after a two month siege, and by the end of 67 the Romans had overcome Jewish resistance in Galilee. In 68 a revolt broke out in Italy against Nero, who committed suicide. Civil war raged in Rome as one military leader after another tried to gain control of the city and the Empire. Vespasian suspended the siege against Jerusalem and withdrew. This was seen by the Jews as divine intervention – the city was invincible. Huge numbers of Jewish pilgrims came up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover - the first century Christians, however, heeded the Lord’s warning (Matt.24.15-21) and fled Jerusalem, for they knew that no deliverance would be forthcoming – the siege was about to start in earnest. Vespasian was proclaimed emperor at Alexandria then left for Rome to restore order, leaving his son Titus in charge of the siege. The horrors now began in earnest, with the population of Jerusalem swollen for the Passover. Titus arrived a few days before the feast in 70. As the siege wore on, the horrors of famine, and even cannibalism, were added to the dangers of the war. The vicious internal fighting amongst the Jews caused them to burn the city’s store of grain, stockpiled to withstand the siege. Joseph’s comments; “Yet did God avenge himself upon them, in a manner agreeable to justice” and “the Romans slew some of them, some they carried captives, and others they made search for underground, and when they found where they were, they broke up the ground and slew all they met with.” (Jos.Wars.6.9.4) They were indeed hiding in the labyrinth of tunnels under the Temple; the temple mount literally fell on them (‘to the mountains fall on us! Cover us!’). Archaeologists have recently found the bones of people who had taken refuge in water tunnels beneath the streets and had been sealed up there by the Romans. Even though the Romans met no further opposition when they did enter the upper city three weeks later, they engaged in wholesale slaughter, rape and looting. In April 73CE the last Jewish resistance was crushed by the Romans.
Masada was the last island of resistance and was surrounded by the Romans. The prominence upon which the fortress is built even looks like an island stranded in a sea of sand; “And every mountain (Mt Zion) and island (Masada) was moved out of their places (Rev.6.14). At Masada the last defenders killed themselves (after first killing their wives and their children) death being preferable to slavery. Masada, the first Roman garrison to be captured by the Zealots in 66 was the last to fall – seven years later on the day after Passover. (Jos.Wars.10.9.1.).

Gentry describes the situation as follows; “The evidence for the awfulness of the destruction is not based solely upon documentary testimony from Josephus, but it is also well-evidenced archaeologically:

The recent excavations have provided striking evidence of Titus’s destruction. . . .In the destruction of these buildings, walls were razed, paving stones torn up, and the drain clogged with material firmly dated to the last part of the century by the pottery. In the drain were human skulls and other bones, washed down from the ruined city higher up the slope.

Even more dramatic were the finds in Site N, the area in which the fine street of Herod Agrippa was uncovered. Reference has already been made to the collapse of the staircase leading east from the street (p. 165). The tumble of stones was remarkable even for Jerusalem where tumbles of stones are a phenomenon all too common in excavations. The magnitude of the disaster perhaps made a special impact owing to the excellence of the destroyed buildings as shown by the magnificently-dressed stones, and the period of the collapse was very precisely pin-pointed by the discovery at its base of a hoard of coins of the First Revolt, hidden by defenders who could not recover them before the city was overwhelmed by Titus. Even more indicative of the complete desolation of this area that had formed part of the city of Herod Agrippa was the state of the ruins. . . . It was two centuries or more before human activity began once more to make its mark in the whole area of ancient Jerusalem. Of Titus’s final siege, it can be asserted that “the ensuing slaughter and destruction were terrible.” The land after the war was devastated; the Roman troops settled in as a policing presence: “When Titus departed after his capture of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the city was in ruins, and the Xth Legion Fretensis was left to control the ruins.” Consequently, upon
the A.D. 95-96 hypothesis, there would be no need for the angels protectively to seal Christians from the devastation: it already would have occurred.

After Titus’s final five-month siege, however, the city was totally destroyed, the Temple was dismantled, and all fell under Roman control. Josephus, a witness to the tragedy and the author of the only surviving contemporary eyewitness account of Jerusalem’s fall, writes: “and now the Romans set fire to the extreme parts of the city, and burnt them down, and entirely demolished its walls.”

Later he reports that 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 such work to be done), Caesar gave orders that they should not demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and which the Roman valour had subdued; but for all the rest of the wall, 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 had ever been inhabited. This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind. This corroborates Kenyon's remarks, already cited: “The recent excavations have provided striking evidence of Titus's destruction. . . . In the destruction of these buildings, walls were razed, paving stones torn up, and the drain clogged with material firmly dated to the last part of the century by the pottery.”

When the sack of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was completed, Titus left the Xth legion Fretensis to watch over the ruins. Its headquarters were on the site of Herod's palace on the western ridge, where the three towers of the palace and a part of the west wall were left standing to form part of the defences of the legionary headquarters, which continued there until A.D. 200. . . .some Jews continued to live in Jerusalem, but the tragic difference was that there was no longer a Temple in which the full ceremonial of the worship of Yahweh could be carried out. Reicke writes of the aftermath:

Under the emperors of the Julio-Claudian house, the Holy Land had been a procuratorship and temple territory. After the fall of Jerusalem in 70, its population had been reduced, but the country was by no means dejudaisized. It did, however, lose its relative independence and autarchy; it remained the land of the Jews only ethnically, not politically. Palestine was in fact treated as an imperial province and, for the first time during the Roman period, expropriated. Important sites were claimed as Roman colonies for soldiers and veterans, including Caesarea, the newly-founded Flavia Neapolis near Shechem, Emmaus, and the environs of Jerusalem. Caesarea remained the official residence; the governor, however, was no longer a procurator but the general of the Tenth Legion (called “Fretimis”), whose soldiers were quartered after the war mostly in the vicinity of Jerusalem, in partat Qumran.

History records that after the Jewish War there was a “permanent presence of a legion defiling the holy city with military standards which were objects of cult, and . . . [an] accompanying civilian settlement containing pagan shrines as well as baths, shops and other amenities. . . .” All of this fits well with a pre-A.D.70 situation.
Barker says, “The most detailed interpretations of prophecy — the sixth seal and the sixth trumpet — depict events in the mid-60s: Nero’s persecution of the Christians in Rome in 64 CE and Gessius Florus’ reign of terror in Palestine in 66 CE and [p.270]; Josephus described how the famine was at its most acute in the days immediately before the temple was burned: ‘Necessity drove the victims to gnaw anything and objects which even the filthiest of brute beasts would reject they condescended to collect and eat: thus in the end they abstained not from belts and shoes and stripped off and chewed the very leather of their bucklers. Others devoured tufts of withered grass’ (War 6.197-98). One woman ate her own child and [p.254]; Fifty days after the Omer had been brought to the temple, the new wheat was offered. In the summer of 70 CE, the Romans completed the earthworks around the city at about this time (War 5.466), and the fighting became more desperate. All hope of escape was gone; there was famine in the city, the streets and squares full of corpses which their families had not the strength to bury (War 5.511-15). Some 600,000 were flung from the ramparts into the ravines around the city (War 5.569). At this time of acute famine, the new corn arrived for the Roman troops and was shown to the starving people in the city to weaken their resolve (War 5.520) and [p.251]; Excited watchmen saw the huge stones being hurled into the city and believed they were the supernatural hail which announced the coming of the LORD. They called out ‘The Son is coming’ (War 5.2 72). During the critical weeks of the siege, several prominent people had taken advantage of the Roman offer to leave the city, and John the beloved disciple was probably one of them”.
Portents of Destruction

“Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as the whirlwind” (Jer.4.13) “For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.” (Isa. 66.15, cf. 19.1) Jesus - “there will be terrors and great signs from heaven” (Luke 21.11)

The Roman historian Tacitus (115 CE) recorded the following:
“Prodigies had occurred, but their expiation by the offering of victims or solemn vows is held to be unlawful by a nation which is the slave of superstition and the enemy of true beliefs. In the sky appeared a vision of armies in conflict, of glittering armour. 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. Few people placed a sinister interpretation upon this. The majority were convinced that the ancient scriptures of their priests alluded to the present as the very time when the Orient would triumph and from Judaea would go forth men destined to rule the world.” (Histories, Book 5, v. 13).

The Jewish Historian Josephus (75 CE) recorded the following:
“Besides these [signs], 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 sunset, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armour were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. 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.”” (Jewish Wars, VI-V-3). “A supernatural apparition was seen, too amazing to be believed. What I am now to relate would, I imagine, be dismissed as imaginary, had this not been vouched for by eyewitnesses, then followed by subsequent disasters that deserved to be thus signalized. For before sunset chariots were seen in the air over the whole country, and armed battalions speeding through the clouds and encircling the cities” (Rendered in Chilton).

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<tr>
<th>DURING THE FESTIVAL SEASON OF A.D. 66</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Judgment on Jerusalem According to History</td>
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<td><strong>Heavenly phenomena</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Earthly phenomena (reported by priests)</strong></td>
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Source: The Last Days According to Jesus, R.C. Sproul
Conclusion and Summary

In her preface to Revelation Barker\(^3\) writes; “The book is unique among New Testament texts insofar as a date and place of origin are recorded in tradition. The book itself claims to have been written on Patmos, and Irenaeus, writing about 180 CE, says it was seen by John at the end of the reign of Domitian. The internal evidence of the book, however, seems incompatible with both of these. Although few have questioned that it came from Patmos and was sent to Asia Minor, scholars long ago recognized that the cryptic allusions to contemporary events pointed not to the reign of Domitian but to 68-70 CE and that the ‘John’ of the Book of Revelation wrote a very different Greek from the ‘John’ of the Fourth Gospel.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the great New Testament scholars such as Westcott, Lightfoot and Hort gave weight to the internal evidence and favoured the earlier date. In the twentieth century, although there was no new evidence, there was a new fashion and so Charles, who published his great commentary in 1920, favoured the external tradition and accepted the later date”.

It is difficult to understand how interpreters can reach any other conclusion other than the realization of the seals in the first century. The evidence for an early date of Revelation is overwhelming and a Domitian persecution pales to insignificance by comparison.\(^3\) An interpreter’s greatest nemesis is confirmation bias and continuous historic approaches lack self-awareness. The seals can be summarised as follows:
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<th>Seal</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>White Horse</td>
<td>Conquering gospel – Controversies with Judaism and persecution</td>
<td>Passover crucifixion and resurrection of the Lamb (31)</td>
<td>Acts 1-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>(31-38 CE)</td>
<td>conversion of Saul, preaching to the Gentiles</td>
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<td>Red Horse</td>
<td>Edomite persecution</td>
<td>Herod kills James, Peter arrested at Passover (44) 40</td>
<td>Acts 12</td>
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<td>(38-45 CE)</td>
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<td>Epistle of James</td>
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<td>Black Horse</td>
<td>Claudian Famine</td>
<td>Passover riots when Roman riots when Roman riots when</td>
<td>Acts 11.27-30</td>
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<td>(45-52 CE)</td>
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<td>Roman riots when</td>
<td>Jos. Ant. 20.5.3, 106</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pale Horse</td>
<td>Sword, famine, plague and wild beasts Period of the procurators</td>
<td>Egyptian false prophet</td>
<td>Acts 21.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>(52-59 CE)</td>
<td>Ventidius Cumanus and Antonius Felix – Sedition, robbery, terrorism,</td>
<td>(c.55) leads wilderness</td>
<td>Jos. War. 2.13.3</td>
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<td>famine, start of Nero’s reign.</td>
<td>Exodus (at Passover?)</td>
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<td>Slain under the</td>
<td>Nero persecution – death of Apostles, Saints cry, ‘How Long?’</td>
<td>Passover Protest against</td>
<td>1 Peter 5.8-13</td>
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<tr>
<td>altar (59-66 CE)</td>
<td>Answer: It will shortly come to</td>
<td>Florus – start of Jewish war (66) James the Just</td>
<td>2 Peter 3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Revelation given</td>
<td>disaster at Passover (66)</td>
<td>History 2.23</td>
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<td>Jos. War 6.5.3,</td>
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<td>Great Earthquake</td>
<td>Jewish war - dissolution of the</td>
<td>Jerusalem besieged at</td>
<td>Jos. War 5.3.1,</td>
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<tr>
<td>(66-73 CE)</td>
<td>Jewish state – end of the Mosaic dispensalal. Rome also judged in</td>
<td>Passover (70), Rebels at</td>
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<td>69.</td>
<td>Masada Raid En-Gedi on</td>
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<td>Passover 68</td>
<td>Jos. War 7.9.1</td>
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<td>Masada falls day after Passover (73)</td>
<td>Heb. 12.25-29</td>
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What had begun at Passover with the Lamb opening the first seal was now finished 42 years later on the day after Passover. The wave offering (144,000) is about to be presented. The fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE is a recurrent pattern that repeats in the trumpet section (and again in the future) even the five month siege is repeated (cf. Rev. 9.5,10 see trumpets section for exegesis).
Resources

- Mentions of the Passover in Josephus: [HYPERLINK "http://www.josephus.org/Passover.htm" \l "florus"]
- Horrific famine seizes Jerusalem during siege (5.420-445) Mass crucifixions 5.446-451 (500 a day) [HYPERLINK "http://www.josephus.org/FJJosephus2/warChronology7Fall.html"]

Appendix Chronology of the Jewish War, 66-70
The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus offers a consistent chronology of the Jewish War that started in 66 and culminated in the destruction of the temple in 70. However, there is a problem. He uses the Macedonian names for the months, but does not say what he means. There are three possibilities:

- He uses the normal Macedonian calendar, which we can corroborate with the calendar of Tyre or Antioch;
- He uses Macedonian names for the Julian months of the Roman calendar (e.g., Panemus = 1 July);
- He uses the Babylonian-Judaean lunar calendar (e.g., Artemisius = Iyar).

At first sight, it seems that Josephus used all systems but preferred the Roman one (which suggests that he had access to a Roman military source), except for the period before the legions arrived in Judaea and for Jewish liturgical dates. This looks like a plausible solution, but is in fact too simple, because it implies that the killing of the emperor Vitellius (20 December 69) was recorded by the Romans before it actually happened. See the following comparison table from Barbara Levick, *Vespasian* (1999 London), 40-42; with some some modifications made by Jona Lendering (with commentary) online [cited Aug. 2009] {HYPERLINK "http://www.livius.org/jahn/jewish_wars/chrono66.html"} Preferred dates bold - certain dates underlined - religious festivals italics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Tyre</th>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Jewish</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JW', 2.284</td>
<td>Artemisius</td>
<td>19 May -18 Jun</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>15 May-12 Jun</td>
<td>Beginning of rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW', 2.315</td>
<td>16 Artemisius</td>
<td>3 Jun</td>
<td>16 May</td>
<td>31 May</td>
<td>Unrest in Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW', 2.430</td>
<td>15 Lous</td>
<td>3 Sep</td>
<td>15 Aug</td>
<td>27 Aug</td>
<td>Antonia attacked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW', 2.440</td>
<td>6 Gorpaeus</td>
<td>24 Sep</td>
<td>6 Sep</td>
<td>15 Sep</td>
<td>Palace besieged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW', 2.515</td>
<td>15-23 Tishri</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20-28 Sep</td>
<td>Festival of Tabernacles; Cestius in Lydda</td>
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<tr>
<td>JW', 2.528</td>
<td>30 Hyperberetaeus</td>
<td>16 Nov</td>
<td>20 Oct</td>
<td>9 Nov</td>
<td>XII Fulminata attacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW', 2.555</td>
<td>8 Dius</td>
<td>25 Nov</td>
<td>8 Nov</td>
<td>15 Nov</td>
<td>XII Fulminata defeated</td>
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<p>| JW', 3.142 | 17 Artemisius | 4 Jun | 17 May | 21 May | Roman advance-guard at Jotapata |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>id.</td>
<td>v.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>21 Artemisius</td>
<td>8 Jun</td>
<td>21 May</td>
<td>24 May</td>
<td>Josephus at Jotapata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW', 3.145</td>
<td>22 Artemisius</td>
<td>9 Jun</td>
<td>22 May</td>
<td>25 May</td>
<td>Vespasian arrives at Jotapata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW', 3.282</td>
<td>20 Daesius</td>
<td>6 Jul</td>
<td>20 Jun</td>
<td>21 Jun</td>
<td>Roman attack repulsed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW', 3.315</td>
<td>28 Daesius</td>
<td>15 Jul</td>
<td>27 Jun</td>
<td>28 Jun</td>
<td>Fall of Gerizim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW', 3.316</td>
<td>1 Panemus</td>
<td>20 Jul</td>
<td>1 Jul</td>
<td>2 Jul</td>
<td>Fall of Jotapata</td>
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<tr>
<td>JW', 3.409</td>
<td>4 Panemus</td>
<td>23 July</td>
<td>4 July</td>
<td>5 Jul</td>
<td>Vespasian at Ptolemais</td>
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<tr>
<td>JW', 3.542</td>
<td>8 Gorpaceus</td>
<td>26 Sep</td>
<td>8 Sep</td>
<td>6 Sep</td>
<td>Fall of Tarichaeae</td>
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<tr>
<td>JW', 4.69, 83</td>
<td>23 Hyperberetaeus</td>
<td>9 Nov</td>
<td>23 Oct</td>
<td>21 Oct</td>
<td>Fall of Gamala</td>
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<td>68</td>
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<tr>
<td>JW', 4.413</td>
<td>4 Dystrus</td>
<td>21 Mar</td>
<td>4 Mar</td>
<td>26 Feb</td>
<td>Fall of Gadara</td>
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<tr>
<td>JW', 4.449</td>
<td>2 Daesius</td>
<td>20 Jun</td>
<td>2 Jun</td>
<td>24 May</td>
<td>Vespasian at Corea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW', 4.450</td>
<td>3 Daesius</td>
<td>21 Jun</td>
<td>3 Jun</td>
<td>25 May</td>
<td>Vespasian at Jericho</td>
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<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td>JW', 4.550</td>
<td>5 Daesius</td>
<td>23 Jun</td>
<td>5 Jun</td>
<td>13 Jun</td>
<td>Vespasian invades Judaea</td>
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<tr>
<td>JW', 4.577</td>
<td>Xanthicus</td>
<td>18 Apr-18 May</td>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>12 Apr-10 May</td>
<td>Simon in Jerusalem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tac., Hist. 2.79</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 Jul</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Vespasian proclaimed emperor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW', 4.654</td>
<td>3 Apellaeus</td>
<td>20 Dec</td>
<td>3 Dec</td>
<td>8 Dec</td>
<td>Death of Vitellius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>JW', 5.99</td>
<td>14 Xanthicus</td>
<td>1 May</td>
<td>14 Apr</td>
<td>14 Apr</td>
<td>Passover; John enters temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW', 5.133, 567</td>
<td>14 Xanthicus</td>
<td>1 May</td>
<td>14 Apr</td>
<td>14 Apr</td>
<td>Titus encamps against Psephinus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW', 5.302</td>
<td>7 Artemisius</td>
<td>25 May</td>
<td>7 May</td>
<td>7 May</td>
<td>First wall taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW, 5.466</td>
<td>12 Artemisius</td>
<td>30 May</td>
<td><strong>12 May</strong></td>
<td>29 May</td>
<td>Siege works building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>id.</td>
<td>29 Artemisius</td>
<td>15 Jun</td>
<td><strong>29 May</strong></td>
<td>29 May</td>
<td>Works finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW, 6.22</td>
<td>1 Panemus</td>
<td>20 Jul</td>
<td><strong>1 July</strong></td>
<td>28 Jun</td>
<td>Jewish rally</td>
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<tr>
<td>JW, 6.67</td>
<td>3 Panemus</td>
<td>22 Jul</td>
<td><strong>3 July</strong></td>
<td>30 Jun</td>
<td>Antonia attacked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW, 6.68</td>
<td>5 Panemus</td>
<td>24 Jul</td>
<td><strong>5 July</strong></td>
<td>2 Jul</td>
<td>Antonia falls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW, 6.94</td>
<td>17 Panemus</td>
<td>5 Aug</td>
<td>17 Jul</td>
<td><strong>14 Jul</strong></td>
<td>End of daily sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW, 6.166</td>
<td>24 Panemus</td>
<td>12 Aug</td>
<td><strong>24 Jul</strong></td>
<td>21 Jul</td>
<td>Romans fire portico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW, 6.177</td>
<td>27 Panemus</td>
<td>15 Aug</td>
<td><strong>27 Jul</strong></td>
<td>24 Jul</td>
<td>Western portico burns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW, 6.220</td>
<td>8 Lous</td>
<td>27 Aug</td>
<td><strong>8 Aug</strong></td>
<td>4 Aug</td>
<td>Earthworks complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW, 6.236</td>
<td>9 Lous</td>
<td>28 Aug</td>
<td><strong>9 Aug</strong></td>
<td>5 Aug</td>
<td>Roman council of war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW, 6.250</td>
<td>10 Lous</td>
<td>29 Aug</td>
<td><strong>10 Aug</strong></td>
<td>6 Aug</td>
<td>Temple burns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW, 6.374</td>
<td>20 Lous</td>
<td>8 Sep</td>
<td><strong>20 Aug</strong></td>
<td>16 Aug</td>
<td>Siege of upper city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW, 6.392</td>
<td>7 Gorpaeus</td>
<td>25 Sep</td>
<td><strong>7 Sep</strong></td>
<td>1 Sep</td>
<td>Upper city attacked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW, 6.407</td>
<td>8 Gorpaeus</td>
<td>26 Sep</td>
<td><strong>8 Sep</strong></td>
<td>2 Sep</td>
<td>Fall of Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JW, 7.401</td>
<td>15 Xanthicus</td>
<td>3 May</td>
<td>15 Apr</td>
<td><strong>31 Mar</strong></td>
<td>Fall of Masada</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Flavius Josephus does not mention the year in which Masada fell. Most scholars have assumed 73, but archaeologists have discovered coins of that year on top of the rock. Therefore 74 is more plausible, although 73 cannot be ruled out.
1 “The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof” (2 Kgs.2.11-2; 6.17; 13.14; 1 Chron.28.18; Ps.18.10) -- Chariots, are the cherubim and angels are the drivers of the horses. This is symbolic language – the cherubim with four faces represented the glory of God in all aspects of creation (Isa.6.3; Rev.4.11). All creation was made for his pleasure and glory and is ultimately under his control. The cherubim – chariot was seen by Ezekiel (ch.1) at the beginning of the captivity in Babylon, and again by Zechariah at the end of the captivity.

2 was given’ (edothе) is less frequently used in association with God's redemptive grace ‘there was given to each one of them a white robe’ (6.11), ‘there was given to the woman two wings’ (12.4) and it was given unto her…..to be arrayed in fine linen’ (19.8).


4 On this see the digression on Malachi [HYPERLINK “http://www.biblaridion.info/Digressions/malachi.pdf”].


6 It was Doeg the Edomite acting as the henchman of Saul, who slew the priests of Nob. (1 Sam.chpt.22) David, who was fleeing from Saul, sustained himself with holy bread (and wine?) and also took the (great) sword of Goliath (contrast, “there was given him a great sword” Rev.6.4).

7 See chapter 3: ‘Acts and Food Shortages’ (pg.59) - Chapter 3 is devoted to grain shortages; Rome controlled the price and movement of grain, it was a major commodity like oil is today. Times of scarcity allowed speculators to make huge profits and cities inland (away from ports) suffered the worst effects. It is needless to say that Rome never suffered, as the city always secured its own supply first. Bruce W. Winter ‘Acts and Food Shortages’ in; “The Book of Acts in its Graeco—Roman Setting” from the series The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting Vol. 2, (ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf; Grand Rapids and Carlisle: Eerdmans and Paternoster. 1994), chapter 3 esp. 61—9. 2 Cor. 8.1 notes the extreme poverty of the churches of Macedonia which may well be related to a severe grain shortage and made Paul’s Jerusalem collection even more difficult; cf Phil. 4.14. See also Garnsey, Famine and Food, 261, on famines in Greece in the 40s and 50s.

8 Eusebius Pamphilius, (Aeterna Press,2016), Chapter 8

9 Caius ruled from March 16, 37 CE, to Jan. 24, CE. 41, and was succeeded by his uncle Claudius.

10 Several famines occurred during the reign of Claudius (cf. Dion Cassius, L.X. 11, Tacitus, Annal. XII. 13, and Eusebius, Chron., year of Abr. 2070) in different parts of the empire, but no universal famine is recorded such as Eusebius speaks of. According to Josephus (Ant. XX. 2. 5 and 5. 2), a severe famine took place in Judea while Cuspius Fadus and Tiberius Alexander were successively procurators. Fadus was sent into Judea upon the death of Agrippa (44 CE.), and Alexander was succeeded by Cumanus in 48 CE. The exact date of Alexander's accession we do not know, but it took place probably about 45 or 46. This famine is without doubt the one referred to by Agabus in Acts 11.28. The exact meaning of the word oikoumenе, in that passage, is a matter of dispute. Whether it refers simply to Palestine, or is used to indicate a succession of famines in different parts of the world, or is employed only in a rhetorical sense, it is impossible to say. Eusebius understands the word in its widest sense, and therefore assumes a universal famine; but he is mistaken in his assumption.

11 The only non-Christian historians, so far as we know, to record a famine during the reign of Claudius, are Dion Cassius and Tacitus, who mention a famine in Rome, and Josephus, who speaks of the famine in Judea (see the previous note for the references). Eusebius, in his Chron., mentions famines both in Greece and in Rome during this reign, but upon what authority we do not know. As already remarked, we have no extant account of a general famine at this time.

12 Acts 11.28

13 Acts 11.29, 30

14 Margaret Barker, Revelation of Jesus Christ: Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place (Revelation 1.1), (A&C Black, 2000),156

15 Ezek. 5.15-17, 6.11-12, 7.15, Jer.1.21; 21.9, 24.10, 38.2 see especially 2 Sam.24.13

16 The Trumpets are in many aspects similar to the seals leaving the possibility open of a first century realization or if the nation remained disobedient a “repeat pattern”. Variations of the pattern will repeat until the nation repents.

17 Thucydides uses it of the appearance of persons stricken with the plague (ii., 49). In Homer, it is used of the paleness of the face from fear, and so as directly descriptive of fear (“Iliad,” x., 376; xv., 4). M. R. Vincent, Vincent’s Word Studies (Escondido, CA: Ephesians Four Group, 2002), Rev. 6:8

18The same word is used in Lev. 26.16; 2 Chr. 6.28; Amos 4.9; Jer. 37.6

19 Tradition says that Paul was beheaded this would seem to confirm that Paul died as a consequence of a separate judicial action and not during the Nero persecution. Robinson (Redating PDF pg. 128 {HYPERLINK “http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/redating-testament.pdf”}) says; Clement clearly refers to Paul having perished in the same persecution as Peter and a 'great multitude of the elect', [I Clem.5; cf. the similar phrase in Tacitus, Ann. 15.. 44 of the Neronian persecution.] which cannot be other than that under Nero. [So Tertullian,
20 The erstwhile mistress of Nero, Poppaea was, ‘a religious woman’ and probably a proselyte (Jos. Antiq. 20.9.11). Poppaea favoured the Jews and protected them from the accusation of arson which fell so savagely on the Christians – the Christians were a sect, indistinguishable to the Romans from the Jews. It would seem probable that Jews hostile to Christianity suggested this strategy (blaming Christians) to Poppaea, who in due course influenced Nero’s policy. At this time there were some 40,000 Jews and fourteen synagogues in Rome.

21 Margaret Barker, Revelation of Jesus Christ: Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place (Revelation 1.1), (A&C Black, 2000), 156. Barker [p.193-194] suggests that Jesus and James are the two witnesses of Revelation 11, but we could also argue for John the Baptist and Jesus or Stephen and Jesus among other candidates. The witnesses are eschatological and also typological – they are based on OT patterns and first century patterns and find their final outworking at the end (See Rev 11). Barker says; “The Ebionites are said to have used a book called the Ascents of James (Epiphanius, Panarion 1.30.16) of which nothing more is known, but this would account for James’ ascent (11.4). It is likely that the visionary material incorporated into the Ascension of Isaiah originated as the Ascents of James and preserves his teaching and also the account of his ascents. ‘Isaiah’s’ disciples heard a door being opened and the prophet being summoned to ascend (Asc. Isa. 6.6), just as the witnesses ‘heard a loud voice from heaven saying “Come up hither” and in the sight of their foes they went up to heaven in a cloud’ (11.12). The Clementine Recognitions describe James’ debates with the authorities in Jerusalem, in particular about the two comings of Christ (Clem. Rec. 1.66-70) and how he and his 5,000 followers left the city, just as ‘Isaiah’ withdrew from Jerusalem with the faithful prophets (Asc. Isa. 2.7-11). Two of ‘Isaiah’s’ visions do describe the first and second comings of Christ (Asc. Isa. 11.1-33; 4.14-20). It was when James declared: ‘He is sitting in heaven at the right hand of the Great Power’ (Eusebius, History 2.23) that the scribes and Pharisees threw him from the temple parapet, stoned him, and finally clubbed him to death. This is also the climax of ‘Isaiah’s’ vision: ‘I saw that he sat down at the right hand of that Great Glory, whose glory I told you I could not behold, and I saw the angel of the holy spirit sat on the left’ (Asc. Isa. 11.32-33). Hegesippus concluded of James: ‘He has proved a true witness to Jews and Gentiles alike that Jesus is the Christ. Immediately after this, Vespasian began to besiege them’ (quoted by Eusebius, History 2.23). Eusebius records elsewhere that James and Jesus were both regarded as martyrs: ‘James the Righteous suffered martyrdom like the LORD and for the same reason ...’ (History 4.22, another indication that Jesus and James were the two witnesses”.


23 Paul wrote “I am already being poured out as an offering, and the time of my departure is at hand” (2 Tim.4.6; Philp.2.17)


25 For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible and who can abide it? (Joel 2.11)

26 Rome was severely judged in AD 69 (the year of the four Emperors) and Jerusalem in AD 70. The storming and the burning of the Temple by the foreign mercenaries of Vitellius, and the subsequent capture and sacking of Rome by the infuriated Flavian army under Mucianus and Antonius Primus is described by the ancient Roman Historian Tacitus and also by Josephus. Tacitus notes that, “Lamentation was heard from every quarter, and Rome was filled with cries of despair and the horrors of a city taken by storm.” Tacitus, The Histories, 83 and Josephus, Wars 4.11.4


31 Wars 6:9:4

32 Wars 7:1:1.

33 Kenyon, Jerusalem: Excavating, p. 185.

34 Kenyon, Digging Up Jerusalem, p. 256.


37 Ibid, Revelation,76

38 Ibid, Revelation, Preface, xi

39 For a discussion of the Domitian persecution see [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/domper.pdf"]
St. Jerome states that St. James was beheaded on the 15th of Nisan, i.e., on the same day as that of the Crucifixion. Peter was arrested probably at the same time; but the trial and execution were deferred till the seven days of the feast were over.
Chapter 7

The 144,000

The interpretive crux of Rev 7 is the identity of the twelve tribes and the great multitude. Osborne\(^1\) summarises the range of opinions as follows:

Are the [saints sealed on earth in 7:1-8 and the multitudes worshiping in heaven in 7:9-17] two distinct groups (Walvoord, Gundry, Glasson, Kraft, Thomas) or one and the same (Beckwith, Beasley-Murray, Sweet, Metzger, Chilton, Roloff, Lohse, Giesen, Beale, Aune, [LaVerdiere 1999: 546]? \([p.302]\)...A sub-issue of this is whether the multitude of 7:9-17 should be restricted to martyrs (Caird, Harrington, Bauckham), extended to all Christians (R. Charles, Lohmeyer, Prigent, Beasley-Murray, Mounce, Aune), or perhaps be seen as the Gentiles gathered into the church (Farrer, Glasson, Kraft, Chilton, Geyser) \([p.303]\).... Finally, the question must be raised as to whether these constitute believers of all ages (Beale 1999: 416-23; Aune 1998a: 440-45) or just those of this final period of history (so Beasley-Murray 1978: 139-40). This must be answered by identifying the 144,000 in 7:1-8 (all believers or those in this final period) and asking how closely linked verses 1-8 and verses 9-17 are. I would agree with Mounce (1998: 154) that those sealed in verses 1-8 are then part of the multitude in verses 9-17, so that they constitute all believers of every age. \([p.303]\)

The 144,000\(^2\) from the tribes of Israel and the great multitude are distinguished as two separate groups through the literary convention of visions and auditions – John “heard” the number of the 144,000 and “saw” the great multitude. In itself this indicates that the two groups are somehow different. Moreover, the 144,000 are numbered and the great multitude is without number –they cannot be counted.

This suggests that the 144,000 are a subset of the great multitude which is an as yet undisclosed number still to be realized. However, John “sees” and “hears” both groups as if he is dealing with a fait accompli even though certain aspects are still future. Rev 7 seemingly contrasts faithful Jews and faithful gentiles (from many nations) and this is supported by the chiastic structure which has the great multitude as a parenthetical element that anticipates the preaching to the gentiles\(^3\) encountered in Rev 10.7;
A¹ - Hide from Throne; question: who stands? (6.16-17) ... (SIXTH SEAL)

B¹ - Sealing- I saw (7.1-3)

C¹ - Israel (144,000) - I heard (7.5-8)

(*)- Before throne nations- I saw (7.9)

D¹ Praises from multitude-question: who are these? (7.10-14)

A² - Before throne with Lamb-multitude (7.15-17) ... (SEVENTH SEAL = TRUMPETS + Rev 12:13)

B² - Lamb on Mt Zion (144,000)- I saw (14.1)

C² - voices- I heard (14.2)

D² - Praises from (144,000) Israel (14.3)

A³ - Before Throne First fruits-Israel (14.4-5)

(*) NOTE: Preaching to nations finished with seventh trump: Rev 10.7

The chiastic structure commences with the sixth seal in Rev 6, traverses the seventh seal (which includes the trumpets, the Biblaridion interruption and chapters 12-13) and terminates in Rev 14— it is a macro chiasm expanding over several chapters — beginning in the sixth seal with the question “Who can stand?” (Before the throne) and ending with a depiction of the “firstfruits” standing before the throne in Rev 14.4-5. Margaret Barker⁴ observes the following:

Chapter 14 is based on a sequence of temple festivals: the 144,000 who are the ‘firstfruits’, the reaper on the white cloud and then the vintage of the earth. With the ‘firstfruits’ already gathered on Zion, the seer watches as angels emerge from the temple to harvest the earth. These scenes correspond to the annual sequence of temple festivals: the Passover, the Feast of Weeks and then the Offering of the New Wine [p.242]...The sequence of harvests and oracles, read in the light of Josephus, suggests that chapter 14 is an account of the last months in Jerusalem before the temple was burned, from Passover to 10th Ab in 70 CE. [p.243]

The essential Jewish flavour of the context of the 144,000 in Rev 14 effectively rules out that Rev 7.1-8 is referencing Gentiles — especially Gentiles of a later age such as continuous historic interpreters are wont to propose, or to the evangelical end time “rapture” or to the Jehovah’s Witnesses assigning of their church elders to positions within the 144,000.

However, is it correct to make a distinction between Jews and Gentiles? The NT argues for the unity of the church and therefore the “New Israel” consists of Jews and Gentiles without distinction. Osborne (Ad. Loc) comments;
“In 21:12-14 the names of the twelve tribes are on the gates of the New Jerusalem and the names of the twelve apostles are on the foundations. There it signifies the unity of the OT and the NT people of God in the New Jerusalem. Throughout the book, the emphasis is on one group, the faithful overcomers, and they are linked inextricably with the believers in the seven churches of chapters 2-3, composed of Gentile (probably predominant) and Jewish Christians. Moreover, the NT as a whole has a great deal of material on the church as the new or true Israel. Jesus most likely chose twelve disciples to signify the righteous remnant embodying true Israel and promised that they would “sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28). In Gal. 6:16 Paul says, “Peace and mercy to all who Follow this rule, even to the Israel of God” [p.311]……Three other passages demonstrate Paul’s view: Gal. 3:29, “If you belong to Christ, then you Abraham’s seed”; Rom. 2:29; “a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly, and circumcision is circumcision of the heart by the Spirit”; and Phil. 3:3, “it is we who are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God.” Finally, Peter describes the church as “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9) in terms drawn from Isa. 43:20; 61:6; rind Deut. 28:9. It is probable that Rev.7:4-8 falls into this category, describing the church as a whole is the true Israel. The purpose here is to stress the perfect completeness of the whole (note ‘every tribe’) “number” of the persevering faithful in the church [p.312]….Another issue is whether these are the saints of the final period or the saints throughout history (again, see the introduction). Certainly the thrust of chapters 6 and 7 would favour that these are the believers of this final chapter in history, those who have refused to follow the beast”. [p.312]

Osborne and other commentators are certainly correct in pointing out the essential unity of the church (not differentiating between Jew and Gentile) a singular body that becomes the “New Israel” but in so doing they lose sight of the national element. The Olivet prophecy makes it clear that judgement must first begin with the nation of Israel – “your house” (the temple) left desolate (Matt 23.38). The question (even in the seven letters) was; “who were the true Jews?” –were true “Jews” followers of Christ (and this group of Jews also included Gentiles who were “Jews inwardly” cf. Rom 2.29) or were they followers of Moses (if they were followers of Moses they should also have been followers of Christ cf. John 5.46); “Them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan” (Rev 2.9).
Jesus had stood before Caiaphas and intimated that judgement was coming against the nation (and Caiaphas himself thought it expedient that one man should die to prevent the nation from perishing). There is only one mother church and that church was in the first instance the nation of Israel who was the repository of the covenant promises and the ancestral home of the messiah. Within that nation there resided a remnant of faithful Jews - recipients of the, “new covenant.”

Initially, that remnant consisted of only twelve disciples but in John’s vision it has expanded to become a thousandfold the quadratic of twelve; symbolising the perfect Israel of God which is but a subset of an even greater multitude from “all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Rev 7.9). The inclusion into the stock of Israel of Gentiles as an “in-grafted branch” began with Paul as an ongoing process, but first Israel would be judged (and this included the corrupt churches warned in Rev 2-3). The nation would be cast off and trampled by Gentiles (Rev 11.1-2) while the true Israel would be sealed and preserved.

This does not mean that all the sealed would survive the coming purge. Those in Jerusalem who heeded Christ’s warning would have survived; however, many had been previously martyred in the Nero pogrom. Therefore sealing did not always mean exemption from suffering or death but rather the winds of destruction were restrained until the “number” of the faithful was full. The sealing of the 144,000 in their “foreheads” (Rev 7.3) anticipates and contrasts with those who receive the mark of the beast in their foreheads (Rev 13.16). However, at this juncture (Rev 7) the beast worshipers have not yet been introduced.

The judgement of Israel occurred in two stages and is a repeat pattern (as this exposition will demonstrate). The first stage was the removal of the temple in 70 CE and the second stage occurred about 66 years later with Jerusalem becoming a Gentile city (in 135/6 CE). The second stage was the Bar Kochba revolt; he was declared the messiah by the chief rabbi and he attempted to reintroduce temple worship. Jewish-Christians could not “buy or sell” without his coinage and were persecuted because they did not support his messianic claims, or his temple aspirations.
Bar Kochba

The importance of the Kochba revolt will be clarified in the following chapters but the point is that the sealing of the 144,000 also anticipates the second judgement against Israel. This can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seals</td>
<td>(Rev 6)</td>
<td>Trumpets</td>
<td>Rainbow Angel</td>
<td>Witness</td>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>The 144,000 On Mt Zion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Rev 7)</td>
<td>(Rev 8-9)</td>
<td>(Rev 10)</td>
<td>(Rev 11)</td>
<td>(Rev 12)</td>
<td>(Rev 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four horsemen</td>
<td>Four winds restrained</td>
<td>Commission to witness to many people etc</td>
<td>Trampled by Gentiles</td>
<td>Bar Kochba Mark of beast in forehead</td>
<td>Bar Kochba defeated</td>
<td>Great multitude from all Nations (Rev 15:14, Rev 21:24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nero</td>
<td>The number 144,000 heard &amp; Sealing in forehead Great multitude seen</td>
<td>Bar Kochba Revolt</td>
<td>Bar Kochba</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temple falls</td>
<td>(70CE)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jerusalem a Gentile city (136 CE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Masada falls</td>
<td>(73 CE)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The above schema is an over simplification which will become apparent as the exposition progresses. For example, the kingdom does not arrive until the sounding of the seventh trump which obviously did not occur in the period 94-136 CE. Preaching to the Gentiles, witnessing and the persecution of the church occurred in the first century, however, it would be a mistake to understand the trumpets and the Biblaridion interlude as fully realized. Only a partial fulfilment is achieved in the first and second century with the pattern set to repeat at some future stage (including the witnessing). Only at that stage will the number of the faithful (Jews and Gentiles) be realized and the prophetic commission given to John (in Rev 10) be fulfilled. Both Jewish wars are thematically linked by their judgement of temple worship. The temple is destroyed in 70 and the attempt to restore temple worship is thwarted in 132-136.
So, the 144,000 that are sealed during the events leading up to the first Jewish War are seen as standing victorious with the Lamb on Mt Zion when Jerusalem is again judged during the Bar Kochba revolt. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes and this must mean that they represent the saints that are martyred during this period like those during the Nero persecution who are told that “they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (Rev 6.11). There is every indication that the Nero persecution was a result of Jewish manipulation and it is therefore fitting that the number of the sealed faithful is heard before the first judgement against Judaism and is seen as standing victorious during the second judgement against the nation. The Jewish nation is judged and cast off and trampled by the Gentiles but faithful Jews (the firstfruits of the New Israel) are preserved (sealed). However, the 144,000 are but a subset of an even greater multitude from all nations that is yet to be revealed and that multitude only comes into existence because of the casting-away of the nation; but that casting away is not permanent as Paul indicates that their ingathering will mean life from the dead (Rom 11.15) which is the fulfilment of the seventh trumpet (Rev 11.18).

The appearance of the 144,000 on Mount Zion with the Lamb in Rev 14 has militant overtones (more on this anon) and echoes the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem when the Jewish multitude waved palms (Matt 21.9 cf. Rev 7.9) and cried out Hosanna (John 12.13 cf. Rev 7.10; “cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God”). Thus the King enters Jerusalem in triumph because the city has been judged and the saints (many of whom have died) are depicted waving palms and singing Hosanna before the throne. This is obviously symbolic as is the number 144,000 but the intent is clear; the judgement of Jerusalem was a partial realization of the parousia – it vindicated Jewish-Christians and fulfilled the prophecy given by Jesus at his trial (Matt 26.64) and is repeated in Rev 1.7 (which is a conflation of Daniel and Zech). Particularly important is the phrase “and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of him” (Rev 1.7) which is a reference to the tribes of Israel alluding to Zech 12.12-14. As noted by commentators such as Whittaker and Gentry the use of “land” or “earth” in Revelation alludes to the land of Israel. Gentry comments as follows;
The Land (Earth) is Israel

In Revelation 7:1-8 we find an interesting temporary divine protection of “the land” (ἡγῆ) where four angels are seen holding back the winds of destruction:

Then follows the sealing of the 144,000 from the Twelve Tribes of Israel. The language and the manner in which the whole thing is stated could hardly more distinctly imply that the Jewish nation was still existing, and occupying its own land, — a land exposed to some impending desolation, from which the sealed, the one hundred and forty-four thousand, were to be exempt. The twelve tribes are named, not withstanding so many of them had been lost, because the destruction revealed in connection with the sealing was to overtake the whole land of Judaea, once the inheritance of and partitioned among these twelve tribes. It was a destruction that was to overtake Judaea; therefore Jewish Christians are alone selected.

Clearly the reference to the Twelve Tribes is to Christians (as noted previously), for:
(1) God intervenes to protect them, and (2) they are called “bond-servants of our God.” Just as certainly may we understand that these are Christians of Jewish extraction, for: (1) they are in “the land” (v. 1, 2), and (2) they are contrasted with the “great multitude” from “every nation” who praise God (v. 9). The designation “Twelve Tribes” is another common means by which to refer to “the tribes of the land” (cp. Rev. 1:7). Here, however, it is not the entirety of the Twelve Tribes that is protected (the whole race of Israel, as such), but only 144,000 of them, i.e., “the cream of the crop,” a perfect number, those who have converted to Christ. Stuart presents a very logical question; “Why were these 144,000 designated by Jewish tribes?” His answer is most reasonable: it was because the pending destruction was threatened against Judea; “if not, why should Jewish Christians alone be here mentioned and selected?”

The fact that an angel intervenes before they are destroyed in the land surely indicates the era prior to the final and total devastation of the land in A.D.70. Were “the land” already destroyed (as it was in A.D.70), such a protection would have been embarrassingly anachronistic. While speaking in the Olivet Discourse of the destruction of the very Temple to which the disciples could physically point (i.e., “Herod’s Temple,” Matt. 24:1-2), Jesus warned His followers that they should flee Judea (24:16) when it was time for these things to come to pass (which occurred in A.D.70). He added further that they should accept His promise that these horrendous events would be cut short (24:22), and that he who endured to the end would be saved through it all (24:13). He also clearly taught that all of these things would happen to “this generation” (Matt.24:32). Indeed, this coming event was to be “the great tribulation” (Matt.24:21) – the very tribulation in which John finds himself enmeshed even as he writes (Rev. 1:9; 2:22; cp. 7:14).
Citing Desprez's [p.128] Gentry says;

The words \( \nu \gamma \eta \) meaning, making it evident that no particular land is pointed out, but earth generally. . . . But the words in question are sometimes found qualified by governing considerations which define and determine their meaning, and this always the case, when they are found in connection with the governing clauses “they that dwell,” \( \omega \iota \iota \kappa \alpha \tau \iota \iota \kappa \iota \omicron \upsilon \upsilon \nu \tau \epsilon \varsigma \). Then they have, and can have, only one meaning; then they refer only to one land and to one people, and this land and this people must be the land and the people of Judea.\(^{12}\)

The significance of this translation of \( \nu \gamma \eta \) can be discerned from spiritual-cultural situations, such as noted by Edersheim: “For, to the Rabbis the precise limits of Palestine were chiefly interesting so far as they affected the religious obligations or privileges of a district. And in this respect the fact that a city was in heathen possession exercised a decisive influence. Thus the environs of Ascalon, the wall of Caesarea, and that of Acco, were reckoned within the boundaries of Palestine, though the cities themselves were not. Indeed, viewing the question from this point, Palestine was to the Rabbis simply ‘the land,’ all other countries being summed up under the designation of ‘outside the land.’”\(^{13}\)

Osborne notes the retrospective nature of the vision;

The “four winds of heaven” there take their place in front of each of the chariot horses and lead them in the four directions of the compass. For this reason several (e.g., Farrer, Caird, Morris, Beasley-Murray, Johnson, Beale) believe that the four winds are identical with the four horsemen, a very real possibility in light of the retrospective look of this scene. This is further evidence that this scene occurs before the four horsemen of 6:1-8, during the days that they were kept back from their destructive mission until the saints could be sealed by God.\(^{14}\)
The Sealing

KJV Revelation 7:1-3 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

The winds that blow upon the earth are based on the natural phenomenon of the Sirocco – a hot south–easterly wind like a furnace, which withered all vegetation. We have already observed the chariot winds of Zechariah 6:1-5. Nahum speaks of the Lord who has his way in the whirlwind (the Sirocco) and the storm (Nah.1:3) they are his chariots (Jer.4:13; Isa.66:15) and his breath (Job 37:9-10). The mountains are rent by it (1 Kings 19:11) and the grass withered (Isa.40:7, 24). It dries up the stream, the river and the sea (Nah 1:4; Ps 18:15).

God would destroy his enemies as stubble before the wind (Ps 83:13) God’s day would be the day of the whirlwind (Amos 1:14), which in its fury falls on the head of the wicked (Jer. 23:19, 30:23). The Sirocco comes from the wilderness and destroys the fertility of the land (Hos. 13:15) – and finally the mighty wind (Rev 6:14) blows upon the house built on sand, and “great was the fall of it.” (Matt 7:27).

From what danger does the seal protect them, since clearly it does not protect them from a martyr’s death? (This is the implication of the fifth seal, they were told to rest until they were joined by their fellow martyrs). This is one question to which John supplies an unambiguous answer: The angel rising out of the east – where the Sun of Righteousness himself rises – tells the four restraining angels not to unleash the destructive winds until the sealing is affected. The sealing therefore must be protection from the disasters which the winds, who are the same agents as the four horsemen, are permitted to inflict upon the earth. Others may die in these disasters, but not the martyrs; not because their persons are inviolate, but because God has another more significant death in store for them. We are reminded of Jesus, confident in his immunity from any threat of Herod, because Jerusalem has first claim on the blood of God’s prophets (Luke 13:33) including that of the two witnesses, or that of Paul, assured that he cannot be allowed to die in a mere shipwreck, because God has determined that he should stand before Caesar (Acts 27:24). For the man who knows himself to be designated for martyrdom war, famine, pestilence and earthquake have no terrors.18
The Twelve Tribes

KJV Revelation 7:4-8 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

Much has been written about the 144,000 and the order of the tribes, some commentators suggest that displacement has occurred. The order of the tribes, which would seem almost random to some, is determined in the first instance by birthright.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth Order</th>
<th>144,000</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leah</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Reuben</td>
<td>Leah</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Simeon</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Levi</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Judah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rachel (Bilhah)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Dan</td>
<td>Leah</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Naphtali</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Leah (Zilphah)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Gad</td>
<td>Leah</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Asher</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Leah</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Issachar</td>
<td>Leah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Zebulun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rachel</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Joseph</td>
<td>Rachel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11a Manasseh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11b Ephraim</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Benjamin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 4 Judah    |
| 1 Reuben   |
| 7 Gad      |
| 8 Asher    |
| **Rachel (Bilhah)** |
| 6 Naphtali |
| 11a Manasseh (Grandson) |

| **Leah (Zilphah)** |
| 3 Simeon |
| 4 Levi |

| **Leah** |
| 9 Issachar |
| 10 Zebulun |

| **Rachel** |
| 11 Joseph (Ephraim?) |
| 12 Benjamin |
Firstly we notice that Reuben has lost the right of the firstborn because he slept with his father’s concubine (Gen 49.3-4) Bilhah (Gen 35.22), and as a consequence the concubine tribes of Dan and Naphtali were demoted below the concubine tribes of Leah’s maid (with Dan being omitted altogether). Simeon and Levi fell out of favour for killing a man in their anger (Gen 49.5-7) and it was the priests (Levites) and scribes (Simeonites) that conspired to put Jesus to death. Their fall from grace demonstrates the demotion of the Law as a means of salvation. They are grouped with the other sons of Leah, but still have priority over them because of their birth order.

The tribe of Manasseh (Rachel’s firstborn grandchild – Gen 48.14) replaces Dan (the firstborn of Rachel’s maid) but, placed below the tribe of Naphtali, who has birth priority in the original list of children. Judah obtained overall priority of the tribes, not simply by default, but because of the love displayed towards his father in the matter of Benjamin. Having himself experienced the loss of sons (Gen 38.7-10) he demonstrated his love by offering himself as a hostage in Egypt (Gen 44.32-34) It was this change of character that caused Joseph to reveal himself to his brethren.

Similarly, Reuben was not relegated to the same depths as Simeon and Levi, for although he lost the primogeniture he redeemed himself by pleading for Joseph’s life (Gen.37.21-22). In contrast, Simeon and Levi did not change their cruel behaviour, which was subsequently directed at their half–brother Joseph and eventually at Christ. As we have observed, the tribe of Dan is omitted altogether, and replaced with Manasseh another firstborn. Dan means judgment, and is not appropriate to the 144,000 who have been (or will be) redeemed.

Moreover the tribe of Dan failed in two aspects; (1) They were slothful (neglected) to take up their inheritance in the land; (2) They were the first tribe to introduce idolatry. The book of Proverbs says; “The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be put under tribute.” (Prov.12: 24) and also; “The slothful man catcheth not his prey (R.V.mg), but the substance of a diligent man is precious” (Prov. 12.27). The first reference is applicable to the tribe of Dan, and the latter to Esau. The tribe of Dan did not take up their inheritance and were put under tribute by the Amorites (Judges 1.34-35). In Judges 18.1, the Danites had still not taken up their inheritance, note especially verse 9, “Be not slothful to go, and to enter to posses the land.” Esau also despised his inheritance, and because he was faint after his hunting expedition, he sold his birthright for a mess of red pottage (Gen 25.27-34).
The promises, and blessings of the firstborn were, however, precious to Jacob (Jacob was diligent, and the substance of the promise precious to him). Those who despise the covenants and promises of God, embodied in his firstborn, will not obtain the inheritance. Dan was also the first tribe to introduce false religion – a graven image and a rival priesthood (Judges 18.30-31) that endured until the Babylonian captivity and this situation provided fertile ground for the apostasy of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had one of his golden calves installed in the territory of Dan. (1 Kings 12.28-33).

It is instructive to note that the rival priesthood was Levitical – Jonathan the son of Gershom the son of Moses (Judges.18.30). The Jews changed the name of Moses (MSS) to Manasseh (MNSSH) in the Masoretic text. One presumes that this was done in order not to tarnish the memory of Moses. Manasseh means, “Forgetting my father’s house” (Gen.41.51), in a similar vein, the name of Dan is now replaced with that of Manasseh. Revelation makes it abundantly clear, that those Jews who worship the “graven image” (image of the beast. Rev 13.5) will find no place amongst the 144,000.
The Great Multitude

KJV Revelation 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

“In the multitude of the people is the kings’ honour” (Prov. 14.28). God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be innumerable, “as the dust of the earth”, “as the stars of the sky”, or “as the sand of the sea” (Gen. 13.1b; 15.15, 16.10), a promise repeated to Isaac (Gen. 26.4) and to Jacob (Gen. 28.14, 32.12). This promise is frequently repeated in later contexts (Exod. 32.13; Deut. 1.10, 10.22; 28. 62; 2 Sam. 17.11; 1 Kings 3.8, 4.20; Neh. 9.23; Isa. 10.20, 48.19, 51.2, Hos. 1.10). He was also promised that he would be the Father of many nations (Gen. 17.4-6, 11.12) – this was indicated by his change of name from Abram to Abraham. This promise was also repeated to Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 28.14, 32.12, 35.11, 48.19); “In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies (cf. Rev. 1.18); and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen. 22.17-18).

This promise was given to Abraham on Mt. Moriah, after his obedience to the call to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. On this mountain was the site of the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, which David purchased for the erection of the Temple. It has now been appropriated by the Muslims, who have erected their sanctuary, the, “dome of the rock” above this sacred place. Mt. Moriah is then, one of the prominences of Mt. Zion – the etymology suggests the meaning, “the vision of Yah”, and it was this place that Abraham named “Yahweh-Jireh” (22.14).

Once again the name implies that on this mountain, “The Lord will be seen” (R.V.mg. i.e. – his salvation will be seen or provided at this place). Jesus said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.” (John 8.56). Now the apostle John sees the outworking of that day.
Rev 7 and 14

- And I looked, and behold (14.1)
- A Lamb (14.1)
- On Mt. Zion (14.1)
- With him 144,000 (14.1)
- A great multitude which no man could number from all nations (7.4)

Genesis 22

- Yahweh – Jireh = The Lord will be seen (22.14)
- And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram. (22.13)
- Mt. Moriah (22.2)
- I will multiply thy seed (22.17)
- In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed (22.18)

This comparison confirms our belief that the two multitudes are distinct. We see in Rev 7 and 14 the fulfilment of the promises to the patriarchs. This was because; “I know that thou (Abraham) fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only, from me” (Gen 22.12). Similarly these martyrs had not withheld “their only” from him, for their very lives were sacrificed in faith, witnessing to Jesus, the beloved Son. The 144,000 are now joined to the “great multitude” for there is only one body in Christ. Here we have then the beginning of the vision of the future blessedness of the martyrs. They are now one with their “fellow servants and brethren” and have become part of the heavenly Jerusalem, encompassing old and new covenants, past, present and future – they have joined “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12.23), those, who, although they have not received the outworking of the promises, are nevertheless, “written in heaven.” John is setting out how infinitely worthwhile it is in the long run to accept everything in the martyrdom which faith must undergo. The great multitude is also found in Matthew 25: 31-37 – these parallels have been documented by H.A.W. (1989: 100) of his Revelation, and are worthwhile reproducing:
Revelation 7.9,11,16,17  
Matthew 25.31,32,37

- A great multitude out of all nations.
- Before the throne, and before the Lamb.
- All the angels round about the throne.
- They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.
- The Lamb shall be their shepherd

- Before him shall be gathered all nations.
- Then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him...
- All the holy angels with him.
- I was hungered, and ye gave me meat...thirsty, and ye gave me drink.
- As a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.

To these may be added v.10: “Salvation (Hosanna) to our God” and v.9: “palms in their hands” with their echoes of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem – which, as already mentioned, was itself a “dress rehearsal” of the Second Coming (Zech 9.9-11). The palm branches of verse 9 also have associations with the Feast of Tabernacles.
The Doxology

**KJV Revelation 7.10-12**  And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before. Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

The doxology in Jude (written after Revelation) also bears many similarities with Revelation chapter seven --

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Jude</strong></th>
<th><strong>Revelation 7</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Hating the garment spotted with the flesh washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb (v.14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unto him that is able to keep you from falling shall be their shepherd and shall guide them(v.17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present you faultless before the presence of his glory stood before the throne (v.9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>without blemish arrayed in white (v.13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in exceeding joy thanksgiving (v.12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to the only wise God wisdom (v.12)</td>
<td>Salvation (victory) to our God, which sitteth on the throne,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>our Saviour,</td>
<td>and unto the Lamb (v.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through Jesus Christ our Lord, glory (v.12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be glory power and might be unto our God.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and majesty, dominion and power,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both now, And for evermore for ever and ever</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amen Amen (v.12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**The Great Tribulation**

**Revelation 7:13-14** And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jacob’s Wrestling Gen 32</th>
<th>Rev 7 &amp; 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He called the name of the place Mahanaim. (the two hosts or companies) <strong>(32.1)</strong></td>
<td>- the 144,000 <strong>(v.4)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob (deceiver) renamed Israel (God rules)</td>
<td>- the great multitude <strong>(v.9)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whose are these before thee? <strong>(32.17)</strong></td>
<td>No guile (Jacob) in their mouth <strong>(14.5)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then was Jacob greatly afraid and distressed. <strong>(32.7)</strong></td>
<td>These are they which came out of the great tribulation <strong>(v.14)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alas! For the day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacobs trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. <strong>(Jer.30.7)</strong></td>
<td>144,000 sealed of all the tribes of the children of Israel <strong>(v.4)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At that time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. <strong>(Jer.31.1)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They shall come with weeping and supplications <strong>(Jer.31:1)</strong></td>
<td>God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes <strong>(v.17)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob wept and made supplication to the angel <strong>(Hos.12.4)</strong></td>
<td>A great multitude, which no man could number <strong>(v.9)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude <strong>(32.2)</strong></td>
<td>He shall spread his tabernacle over them. <strong>(v.15)</strong> <strong>(Succoth = Feast of Tabernacles or booths)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built them an house, and made booths for his cattle; and therefore the name of the place is called Succoth <strong>(33.17)</strong></td>
<td>The Lamb will be their shepherd <strong>(v.17)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparisons between the wrestling of Jacob and the great tribulation of Rev 7 make it apparent that it concerns the Jews. The time of Jacob’s distress was his looming confrontation with his brother Esau, the father of the Edomites. Herod (the Edomite) and his dynasty persecuted the early church. The prophet Jeremiah describes the looming destruction of Judah by Babylon as the time of Jacob’s trouble. The great tribulation was therefore the period leading up to and including the First Jewish War resulting in the fall of the temple – but the pattern was repeated again in the period leading up and including the Bar Kochba revolt resulting in the casting away of Jerusalem.

*KJV* Matthew 24:21-22 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Jesus is alluding to the “time of trouble” of Dan 12.1; “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation”. The nation in question is obviously the Jewish nation – Jesus alters this to “since the world (kosmos) began”, the reference being the “Jewish world” which began with the founder Abraham who was promised that he would become a great nation. Taken together with the allusions to Jacob’s time of trouble the conclusion is inevitable that the 144,000 refers to faithful Jews (Jewish-Christians).
The service and the bliss of the Blessed

KJV Revelation 7:15-17 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

The description of the state of blessedness is one that actually belongs to a time yet to come. So it is that almost every verb in these verses is in the future tense. We are being given a preview here of a scene which is, in fact, chronologically post resurrection and judgment. Notice these correspondences with the state of affairs that exist in the New Jerusalem of the kingdom age;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KJV</th>
<th>ESV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>they shall serve (latreuo) him (7:15)</td>
<td>his servants shall serve (latreuo) him (22:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in his temple (naos) (7:15)</td>
<td>its temple (naos) is the Lord (21:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will tabernacle (skënoo) over them (7:15)</td>
<td>tabernacle (skënoo) of God is with men (21:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neither thirst (dipso) any more (7:16)</td>
<td>to the thirsty (dipso) I will give …. (21:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the sun shall not fall upon them (7:16)</td>
<td>the city has no need of sun (21:22, 22:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fountains (pege) of living water (7:17)</td>
<td>the fountain (pege) of the water of life (21:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God will wipe (exaleipo) every tear (7:17)</td>
<td>he will wipe away (exaleipo) every tear (21:4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These parallels demonstrate that the multitudes of righteous saints do not receive their reward until after the Lord returns (c.f. Rev 22.12 – “my reward is with me”). Most of the details outlined above are self-explanatory. Some are quite literal — the service of the saints, for instance. The wiping away of tears may not be strictly literal but its meaning is readily grasped. The living water obviously denotes the water of life; i.e., eternal life through the gospel, thus those who thirst after salvation and righteousness will be satisfied. The only detail which might cause some difference of opinion is that of the sun. Is it literal or figurative? It is hard to accept that the literal sun could be such a problem to these people, so a figurative sense is probable. There is an allusion to Ps 121, “The sun will not smite you by day, nor the moon by night” (v.6) This is a reference to the cloud and the pillar of fire, during the wilderness wanderings (Exod 40:34-38) – “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” (Ps 91.1) This is the language of God’s protective care.
The purpose of this passage is obviously to comfort the generation of the last days with the thought that the generation of believers who suffered such severe persecution in the first century were assured of their place in the New Jerusalem. This assumes its relevance when we learn from the Apocalypse that the generation of the last days is to undergo a similar experience of suffering at the hands of the beast.

In contrast to the old covenant, where not even the Levitical High Priest was permitted to see God – the saints are able to approach before the throne. “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Matt 5.8). There are no distinctions of race or status anymore, only one great multitude that encompasses the 144,000 as well. This is a vision of eternal bliss, where God dwells among his people. The Greek for to dwell is skenoo, from skene which means a tent, the same word as is used when John says the word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1.14). The Jews always connected this with a certain Hebrew word which was somewhat similar in sound although quite unrelated in meaning. This was the word shekinah, the visible presence of the glory of God. Usually that presence took the form of a luminous cloud. So when the Ten Commandments were given, “the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days….. And the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain” (Exod 24.16-18). It was the same with the Tabernacle. The cloud covered the tent of congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Moses could not enter into the Tabernacle because of the glory of the Lord. This was the cloud which guided the Israelites by day and the fire that guided them by night. At the dedication of Solomon’s temple the glory of the Lord filled it so that the priest could not enter (2 Chron.7.1-3). Skenoo always turned the thoughts of a Jew to shekinab, and to say that God dwelt in any place was to say that his glory was there. This was always so for a Jew, but as time went on it became more and more so. The Jews came to think of God as increasingly remote from the world. They did not even think it right to speak of him as being in the world; that was to speak in terms which were too human; and so they took to substituting the shekinab, for the name of God. We read Jacob’s words at Bethel: “Surely the Lord is in this place.” (Gen 28.16); the Rabbis changed that to: “The shekinab is in this place”. In Habakkuk we read: “The Lord is in his holy temple” (Hab. 2. 20); but later Jews said: “God was pleased to cause his shekinab to dwell in the temple.”
In Isaiah we read: “My eyes have seen the King the Lord of Hosts.” (Isa.6.5) the later Jews altered it to: “My eyes have seen the shekinah, of the King of the world.” No Jew cold hear the word skenoo (dwell) without thinking of shekin (presence of glory); and the real meaning of the passage is that God’s blessed ones would serve and live in the very sheen of his glory. It can be so on earth. He who faithfully witnesses for God has always the glory of God upon his work.
Conclusion

The sealing by God of the 144,000 is in contrast to sealing with the mark of the beast and this was literally a question of choosing either life or death. The “seal” is based on the shape of a cross such as occurred in Ezekiel’s time. The order of the list is determined by two factors: (1); the natural birth order (2); the order of blessing or cursing by Jacob in Gen 49. It is to be noted that the birth order is still preserved, even when a tribe is omitted or replaced. i.e., Manasseh is placed under Naphtali even though it substitutes Dan. This is because Naphtali has priority over Manasseh in the original birth order of tribes. Even Simeon and Levi retain priority over Leah’s other sons, despite their demotion.

The number 144,000 is not literal, nor is the tribal distribution – the lessons are spiritual. It does not mean, for example that no Jews from the tribe of Dan will be in the kingdom. The lesson to be drawn from the tribes is that it is the Jewish attitude to their father and half-brother, and their eagerness to take up the inheritance that will determine their position in the eschaton.

The blessings of Jacob are a prophecy – “That I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days” (Gen.49.1). The contrast is between the “natural birth order” and the revised order found in Rev 7, which can be termed the “spiritual birth order”. The names can be paraphrased as follows:

**Natural birth order -Genesis**

See a [firstborn] Son (Reuben), who heard (Simeon) Yah, and joined (Levi) himself to Yah. Praise Yah! (Judah) The judgment (Dan) of his flesh and his wrestling (Naphtali) brought to the birth a company (Gad) of blessed (Asher) ones. They are the reward (Issachar) of his travail, and they will dwell (Zebulon) with and increase (Joseph) the Son of the right hand. (Benjamin)

**Spiritual birth order (Rev.chpt.7)**

Praise Yah! (Judah)[Rev 14.3, 7.12, 19.1 etc.] See the Son (Reuben)[ I looked, and, lo, a Lamb – Rev 14.1] and with him a company (Gad)[with him 144,000- Rev 14.1] of blessed (Asher) [Blessed are the dead…Rev.14.13] who having finished the wrestling [these are they which came out of the great tribulation – Rev 7.14] having forgotten their father’s [Adam’s] house (Manasseh) [God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, or sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away – Rev 7.16-17, 21.4].
They heard Yah (Simeon) [I heard the number – Rev 7.4 - I heard a voice from heaven- Rev.14.2] and were joined to him (Levi) [follow the lamb- Rev 14.4] and were rewarded (Issachar) [my reward is with me- Rev 22.12] by dwelling with (Zebulon) [the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them – Rev 21.3] and so increasing (Joseph) [After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number- Rev 7.9] the son of the right hand (Benjamin) [the Lamb in the midst of the throne – Rev 7.17]
The number 144 is important, for it is the square of 12, a number which symbolises perfect government (12 tribes x 12 apostles x 1,000). It is also the twelfth Fibonacci number. Fibonacci numbers occur regularly in many natural patterns – the number of petals on flowers, the way shoots rotate around a central stem, the growth of spiral shells, the determination of genetic characteristics, are all determined by Fibonacci numbers. The number 144 therefore represents the perfection of divine government in the natural creation.

On preaching to the gentiles see Chapter 10 pages 175-180.

On this see Chapter 14 page 294 which has the Maccabean triumph as background. Bauckham (1993b: 215-29) understands the 144,000 as “the messianic army” and the numbering as a form of a census as preparation for battle but Osborne [p.313] believes the primary emphasis of the numbering is protection and the church militant is a secondary aspect.


For the proper understanding of γῆ as a reference to “the land” (i.e., Israel), see earlier discussion by Gentry in Chapter 8 of his book.


The number is the product of quantitative fullness (10) trebled (i.e., 10x 10x 10) from each tribe, and is multiplied by the number of tribes squared (12 x 12). On the number 10 see Steven Barabas, “Numbers,” in Merrill C. Tenney, ed., Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), p. 590.

Moses Stuart, Commentary on the Apocalypse, 2 vols. (Andover: Allen, Merrill, and Wardwell, 1845) 1:274.

It must be remembered, as noted earlier, that the expectation of the book was of the soon occurrence of the events; Rev. 1:1, 3, 19; 3:10; 6:9; 22:7-12.


The tribe of Levi (and Simeon?) were temporarily restored to their rightful place after the golden calf incident (Exod. 32.29) but later the priests were again cursed: “I will curse your blessings” (Mal.2.2).

Ezekiel in the sixth century BCE had known a similar vision of sealing with the Name. The LORD took him on a spirit journey from Babylon to Jerusalem where he saw the angels of destruction summoned to the temple. First, an angel was sent to mark the faithful: ‘Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who groan and sigh over all the abominations that are committed in it (Ezek. 9.4). The LORD then spoke to the other six angels: ‘Pass through the city after him and smite; your eye shall not spare and you shall show no pity... but touch no one upon whom is the mark. Begin at my sanctuary (Ezek. 9.5 - 6). The mark on the forehead was protection against the wrath (see p. 155). ‘Mark’, however, conceals what that mark was. The Hebrew says that the angel marked the foreheads with the letter ταυ, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the ancient Hebrew script that Ezekiel would have used, this letter was a diagonal cross, and the significance of this becomes apparent from a much later tradition about the high priests. The rabbis remembered that the oil for anointing the high priest had been lost when the first temple was destroyed and that the high priests of the second temple were only ‘priests of many garments’, a reference to the eight garments worn on the Day of Atonement (m. Honegath 3.4). The rabbis also remembered that the anointed high priests of the first temple had been anointed on the forehead with the sign of a diagonal cross (b. Honegath 12a). This diagonal cross was the sign of the Name on their foreheads, the mark which Ezekiel described as a letter ταυ. Ibid, Barker, 161-2
Chapter 8
Historical background of the Trumpets

Internal evidence presents a compelling case for dating the Apocalypse before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. From the viewpoint of a first century believer the return of Christ was imminent. The faithful were at the cusp of the Nero persecution and expected Jerusalem to be punished shortly.

Passover is the structuring thematic underlying the seals which commence with a vision of the victorious Lamb who is uniquely qualified to open them. From the perspective of the first century believer the past is being viewed retrospectively (from the point of reception of the Apocalypse), by looking backwards to the foot of the cross. The crucifixion sets all subsequent eschatological events in motion. The seals are a Christo-centric vision that commence with a Lamb “as it had been slain” (Rev 5.6) and conclude with the “wrath of the Lamb” (Rev 6.16). First century believers were able to endure the present crisis and even overcome the revealed persecution and martyrdom that would soon arrive (Nero persecution, fall of Jerusalem and the end of the first Roman war) because they understand that all events from the Passover-crucifixion onwards were being directed by the conquering Lamb, thereby ensuring their own ultimate triumph if they are willing to follow him even into death.

After the end of the sixth seal we have a half hour silence before the trumpets commence.

Atonement is the structuring thematic underlying the trumpets which commence with the Day of Atonement ritual that is associated with trumpet blowing. However, instead of national forgiveness, divine retribution is meted out. Many commentators understand the trumpets as a continuation of the seals, a sort of more detailed recapitulation of previous events. This is unlikely because the last trumpet incorporates the seven vial-plagues and the plague theme is reinforced by also calling the last three trumpet-woes “plagues” delivering a total of ten plagues reminiscent of the ten Exodus plagues, with the first three plagues affecting both the Jews and the Egyptians, but the last seven only affecting the gentiles. Moreover, the trumpet section is interrupted by a witnessing narrative, a birth narrative and a narrative describing the transformations and reincarnations of the beast. This section is introduced by a commission from the covenant angel who instructs the “son of thunder” (John) to seal up the “seven thunders” although they are later revealed in chapter 14.
A struggle with cosmic overtones is depicted in these chapters. An epic contest occurs between the true and the false and the eschatological enemy is depicted as Babylon. Neither Jerusalem, nor Rome is mentioned in the book of Revelation. One might ask why the “enemy” is not better defined. Perhaps it is a deliberate ruse to protect Christian readers from the wrath of Rome or of Jerusalem. That explanation is however unlikely as the narrative makes it clear that persecution and martyrdom are inevitable results of the contest. Although there are episodes where the saints are protected (don’t harm), ultimately the road to victory passes initially through what the world regards as defeat. The witnesses mirror the martyrdom of their Lord and through him they emerge triumphant on the other side of death.

Another explanation must be sought to explain the interpreter’s conundrum of having no clear indication of Rome or Jerusalem as the central protagonist. It might be argued that “seven hills” are a subtle allusion to Rome but even there the woman riding the beast is called Babylon. The beast is being directed and controlled by Babylon. Jerusalem is also subtly alluded to as spiritually Sodom and Egypt were the Lord was crucified. However, the trumpets, in which these references are found, are also replete with allusions to Babylon.

It seems then that both Rome and Jerusalem morph into a supra-historical entity known as Babylon. From a scriptural perspective Babylon is significant as the place of national Jewish exile, a place where the prophets warned of the establishment of wickedness. Rabbinical Judaism was developed in Babylon initially as a competitor with temple worship that finally replaced it altogether. Destruction of the temple was the ultimate victory of the Pharisees over the Sadducees! First century Pharisaism won the day and endured the centuries as it developed into fully fledged Rabbanism. Most importantly, the exile of Israel to a “dry place” (Babylon) alludes to the sending away of the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement, the very ritual that introduces the trumpets.
Already/Not yet: a synchronous approach to partial preterism

This section will develop the already/not yet paradigm as a synchronous approach to partial preterism. By partial preterism is understood that some (though not all) of the realization lies in the past (in the first century). The difficulty for the interpreter is determining the transition from past to future. The already/not yet model is encountered in all prophetic narratives and a synchronous approach relates to contemporaneous or parallel events, actions occurring simultaneously. Time itself is an issue, for example the visionary prolepsis of victory before the actual occurrence of the plagues---salvic events collectively constitute the eschatological “Day of the Lord” as that day repeatedly punctuates secular history over time. Apocalyptic ambiguity and pattern repetition (which is not a flaw but the result of a deliberate divine construct) allow flexibility of meaning, ensuring that revelation is germane to the past and to the future, both to Rome and to Jerusalem, to the first century and to our generation.

The point is emphasised by the reuse of the Old Testament in the woof and weave of the Apocalypse --- the original context of these allusions, echoes and types reach beyond mere language connections, indicating that the whole of scripture is a progressive revelation with patterns reinforcing and complementing each other. This challenges interpreters to reach beyond linear models, approaching the interpretation laterally (rather than literally) in order to achieve new meanings so that the “Day of the Lord” is not categorized as either “past” or “future”, recognizing that it has an enduring relevance without falling into the trap of an “idealized” (abstract spiritual) interpretation, as all scripture is embedded in the concrete history and reality of God’s people. The constant recycling of patterns demands that we open up fresh readings.
The Trumpets and Babylon

Trumpets are associated with the introduction of the New Year and with the Atonement ritual practiced ten days later, but they also function as a warning signal and a call to war. In Joshua’s time the blowing of trumpets was followed by a great earthquake that decimated Jericho. In similar fashion the city of Rev 11 is destroyed by earthquake at the sounding of the last trump and Babylon is also visited by a great quake in Rev 16.

It is fitting that Elijah was snatched to heaven near Jericho and that the Baptist commenced his Elijah mission at the same location (the point where Israel entered the kingdom) --- but the Baptist was not recognized as “second Elijah” (due to the negative response of the nation) and so that honour is still reserved for the Elijah witnessing of Revelation, whose martyrs also ascend to heaven.

The second and third trumpet form a doublet based on Babylon as the burning mountain and the burning star (Lucifer) alluded to in Jer.51: 25, 42 and in Isa.14:4, 12-20. The sixth trumpet is located at the river Euphrates (Rev 9.14) whose waters are later dried up during the plague-vials of Rev 16.12. Babylon will sink into the Euphrates under the weight of the curses spoken against her (Jer.51:63, 64). The fall of Babylon is announced in Rev 14.8 by one of the seven “thunders” (voices) of 14.6-20, the thunders being the vision that was sealed in the interruptum of the trumpet section of Rev 10.3-4 and therefore (at that point in time) left unexplained (write not).

Does this leave the option that a positive response to the witnessing would avoid the seven thunder judgement? This would balance the principle of foreordained destiny with that of freewill. Commentators have noted that the seals are intertextually linked with the prophecies of Jeremiah (concerned with the judgement of Israel by Babylon) but the trumpets are also intertextually correlated with Jeremiah.
At first sight this suggests that the seals and the trumpets are highlighting different aspects of the same events (because they use similar subtexts) but that is not necessarily the case as the patterns are recurring. The identity of Babylon in the trumpets is also a problem, is it literally Babylon or is it Jerusalem or perhaps Rome?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jeremiah 4</th>
<th>Revelation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blow ye the trumpet in the land (v.5)… the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war (v.19)</td>
<td>Seven angels given seven trumpets (8.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The heavens and they had no light (v.23)</td>
<td>Sun smitten heavens darkened (8.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woe unto us for we are spoiled (v.13)</td>
<td>Woe, woe, woe (8.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction upon destruction is cried (v.20)</td>
<td>Abaddon or Apollyon indicating double destruction (9.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gird ye with sackcloth lament and howl (v.8)</td>
<td>Witnesses clothed in sackcloth (11.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life (v.30)</td>
<td>These shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and shall burn her with fire (17.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Patterns and more Patterns

From a first century (pre-70) Christian perspective the kingdom of God and the fulfilment of Daniel’s seventy week prophecy was imminent. This presupposes that the Apocalypse was received before 70 CE (as is amply attested by the internal evidence). The history of this period is easily accessed both from scripture and through the Jewish historian Josephus. The outworking of the early seals is recorded in scripture with the conquering Christ-gospel and conversion of Paul (Acts 9.3-8) followed by the Herodian persecution and death of James (Acts 12.1 cf. Jam 4.2) and the Claudian Famine (Acts 11.28) all documented in the book of Acts. The Nero persecution is not mentioned in Acts although Peter refers to Nero as the “devil” who as a roaring seeks to devour them (1 Pet.5.8). This certainly qualifies as describing the death of Christians thrown to the lions in the coliseum calling out for vengeance in the fifth seal (Rev 6.10). Jerusalem and Rome corroborated in crucifying Jesus and also in persecuting the saints. Nero blamed the fire of Rome on the Christians and it is no coincidence that his favourite mistress was a Jewish proselyte. History informs us of the almost simultaneous judgements of Jerusalem (destroyed in 70) and Rome (civil war in 69). From a pre-70 perspective Nero was the beast, attested by the gematria of his name 666 and even by the alternative reading 616. The fall of Masada the day after Passover ends a period that began forty two years earlier (6 x 7) with the crucifixion of the Passover Lamb.

Rather than understanding the trumpets as a repeat of the seals perhaps they initiate a new series of judgements against Israel? The fact that many of the trumpets resemble the seals allows the divine plan to retain flexibility. In other words interpretation of the Apocalypse is able to respond to repentance and therefore the Apocalypse could have been completely realized in the first century and in that case the trumpets would simply be seen as an elaboration on the seals. However, the desired response was not forthcoming and therefore another series of judgements is activated against the Jews.

The fall of Jerusalem was not the end of Jewish tribulations as the post-70 CE horrors that followed were even worse. Whereas a pre-70 Christian might see Nero as the embodiment of 666, a post-70 Christian would understand the false Messiah Bar Kochba as 666. However, these two protagonists do not exhaust the reading as the last days anti-Christ is yet to be revealed. A composite picture (archetype) is being established using repeat patterns.
For example, the five months of torment mentioned in the fifth trumpet (Rev 9.5, 10) is taken by some commentators as a reference to the last five months of the siege in 70 CE which were particularly gruesome and ended with the fall of Jerusalem on the 9th of Ab. Few realize that the Bar Kochba revolt also ended with horrendous results in 135 CE on the 9th of Ab (after five months of siege). What is the chance of both events ending on the same day after five months of siege?

Moreover, the five month (150 day) period is biblically important because the Pentateuch informs us that “…the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days” (Gen 7.24), after which they abated (Gen 8.1) and God set a rainbow in the cloud as a covenant with the earth (Gen 9.13-17). This is the “rainbow covenant” of mercy that John saw (Rev 10.1) that reassures John (and his readers) that despite the terrible punishments meted out God would remember his mercy towards his people and preserve a remnant (the new Israel a consequence of the witnessing work of Rev 11).

This example suggests the possibility that we are dealing with action-response rhetoric, with different responses producing different outcomes. So the seals together with the trumpets could have been completely realized in the forty-two years between 31-73 CE, or, the seals could be realized in the first century and the trumpets in the second century. However, if the trumpets are second century events then they were obviously not completely realized as the last trumpet introduces the kingdom. A further repeat of the pattern is therefore dictated by negative first and second century action-response outcomes (they repented not cf. Rev 9.20-21).

The pattern is set to repeat once again in the future and this can only occur if certain criteria are met, the most important being the return of Israel to the land, as without a national existence there can be no national reconciliation. We have already seen the return of Israel, setting the stage for another action-response drama.
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Bar Kochba and the Rabbinical Calendar

Bar Kochba was supported by the “chief sage” of his day Rabbi Akiva, who declared him to be the awaited Messiah. The Jewish calendar Seder Olam Rabbah was also compiled around this time. This calendar has already been examined in the Daniel commentary, God is Judge, where it was noted that the Seder Olam is based on a false Jewish Chronology that attempts to “fit” the Maccabee period into a model of the Seventy Week prophecy. It seems then that the rabbi’s had a penchant for manipulating history to make events fit their prophecies.

They also did this with Bar Kochba in order to demonstrate that Daniel (and their calendar) “predicted” that Bar Kochba was the messiah who had come to restore temple worship. The appearance of Bar Kochba was a sort of Maccabees redux, a militant messianic uprising against a foreign power who had desecrated the temple and it is not surprising then that Kochba adopted much of the symbology (the imagery on his coins) from that era. In his classic chronology James Ussher states the following:

“[…]the Seder Olem is held in such veneration and why the Jews still use it for their national dating. Yet the fact remains that it is a dishonest attempt to conceal the truth with regard to the Dan 9:24-27 prophecy by removing the 164 (or 165) years from the duration of the Persian Empire. Rabbi Halafta was able to make the 483 year 9:24-27 prophecy fall reasonably close to the years prior to the 132 AD revolt during which liar Kokhba rose to prominence as Israel's military and economic leader, Then with Akiva proclaiming. ‘This is the King Messiah’ followed by all the contemporary sages regarded him as the King Messiah,” the Jewish populace united around this false hope”.

More recently Clover (et al) states:

“There has been a failure to recognize the motive of the rabbis who originated the chronology system upon which popular rabbinical chronology is built. These rabbis were supporters of Bar Kochba, a man who claimed to be the promised messiah and who had a large following among the masses. Bar Kochba’s supporters read into the Second Revolt a fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel, 9:24–27, which states that the messiah would come after 483 weeks (incorrectly interpreted to mean 483 years), i.e. in the 484th year of the building of the second Temple. In their calculations, the destruction of Jerusalem (70 C.E.) took place in the 421st year of this era.”
Wacholder notes the use of “Sabbatical cycles” in his article on Chronomessianism. In other words, messianic uprisings were deliberately timed to coincide with the Jubilee cycles (year of release) and this spurred on false (and true) messianic movements. This is not surprising, as pointed out in *God is Judge*, the Daniel prophecy is also based on a Jubilee cycle (490 years = 70x7). Wacholder introduces his article as follows:

“The locus classicus of chronomessianic doctrine is found in Daniel 9, particularly in the mysterious verses 24-27. This study will trace the impact of Daniel 9 on the literature of ensuing centuries. A fascinating question arising from this investigation is whether chronomessianic doctrine was a factor in the timing of the launching of certain movements, such as John the Baptist’s ministry or Bar Kochba’s rebellion against the Romans”.

Although there is no complete scholarly consensus on the “sabbatical cycles” all are in agreement on the importance of the great Jubilee (every 49 years) and many of the scholarly observations converge. The reader is recommended to peruse the sources (in the footnotes) for further investigation into this phenomenon and to determine which of the schema’s best fit the available data. Wacholder states, “Bar Kochba’s revolt appears to synchronize with the season of shemittah” (Jubilee). After examining the primary evidence and comparing the various proposed schema’s Clover (et al) puts forward the following chronology for the revolt (p.355):
The question whether or not the revolt lasted 3½ or 2½ years is also discussed as we have contradictory sources on this issue. Obviously it depends when the revolt started and the rabbinical sources had a propagandistic imperative to make the period conform typologically to Daniel’s 3½ year (42 month) period. That said, the presence of coins dated from year one to four suggests a 3½ year period although the above schema opts for a 2½ year interpretation of the coin data. Fitzmyer states the case for 3½ years as follows:

“Rabbinical tradition has preserved the notice that Bar Cochba’s revolt lasted for three and a half years (miqaw bn kwzyb’ ills snym wmbsh). This has often been suspected, because the same tradition ascribes three and a half years to Vespasian’s and Titus’ siege of Jerusalem, and also because it is reminiscent of the apocalyptic passages in Dn 7:25 and 9:27, which are thought to have been operative in the creation of this tradition. However, one of the new texts from Murabba’át is dated in the ‘third year of the freedom of Jerusalem’ (Mur 25 i 1) and two Aramaic contracts from the cave in the Wâdi Seiyâl are reported to be dated in the ‘third year of the liberation of Israel’. Finally, and best of all, there is Mur 30:8, which contains the date the ‘21st of Tišri of the fourth year of the Redemption of Israel’. This puts an end to a puzzling problem about the duration of the revolt as posed by the coins of the period”\(^\text{10}\)
An updated version of the schema presented in *God is Judge* (with the Bar Kochba revolt added, including the traditional Christian interpretation) looks like this:

In the above schema the revolt starts in 133/4, the consensus seems to be 132/3 but Chart K places the beginning of the revolt in Abib of 131 and has the overall conflict lasting 3½ years with the significant Judean portion lasting 2½ years. This may explain discrepancies; however, the fragmentary nature of the historical sources precludes dogmatic interpretation.

This section can be summarised as follows (1) The Jubilee Cycles were important triggers for messianic uprisings (2) The Jews manipulated their calendar to ensure a fulfilment of Dan 9.24-27 in Bar Kochba.

Finally, and most importantly, the seals, trumpets and vials with their seven-fold structuring element are reminiscent of the 49 (7x7) year “super jubilee cycle”. That does not mean that they naturally follow the jubilee cycles calculated by the Seder Olam, or follow historically “knowable” jubilee dates. In fact, the seals are only 6x7 (and not 7x7) because they are interrupted by a half-hour silence (more on this anon) and the “last seven” of the trumpets includes the vial-plagues.
In the last instance Daniel typologically envisaged a comprehensive 490 year cycle that is completed with a **Great Jubilee culminating with a Great Day of Atonement, thus starting the Jubilee year of release and freedom**: “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity” (Dan 9.24). The trumpets are then based on the idea of a cycle of Jubilee Sabbath punishments ending with the Great Jubilee, culminating with a national **Great Day of Atonement**, of Jubilee release and freedom from enemies (the greatest enemy being sin). It is ironic that the Bar Kochba coins are inscribed with the motif of “freedom” and “redemption” and that Rabbi Akiva, the “chief sage” who legitimized Kochba’s messianic pretensions was tortured to death by the Romans on the eve of the **Day of Atonement**. It seems then that just as the seals were bracketed by the Passover, this period is bracketed by the Day of Atonement.

The trumpets were not completely fulfilled in the second century (no arrival of the kingdom) and therefore we are dealing with a delay such as Daniel experienced (21 days) during his prophetic career.¹² The Bar Kochba revolt and punishments did not lead to repentance, just as the destruction of the temple did not lead to repentance. The national response to divine action was negative- the Jews doubled down on their apostasy in Babylon producing the Babylonian Talmud that even superseded the Law of Moses. Such stubborn obstinacy demonstrates that the **already/not yet** model of action-response is not yet complete – there will be further repeat patterns of these apocalyptic memes.
Nero or Bar Kochba as 666?

The apocalypse was received during Nero’s reign (this is attested by Rev 17.10). Nero was an extremely cruel tyrant and persecutor of Christians, towards the end of his reign even the Romans thought him quite mad as he murdered his mother after an incestuous relationship and even killed his favourite mistress (kicking her to death while she was pregnant), replacing her with a castrated male look alike. Nero became a “bogeyman” of the Roman Empire, a zombie that could not be killed and various impersonators emerged from Parthia to take on the role of Nero Redivius (returns).13 The Myth of Nero Redivius is thought to lie behind the wounded and resurrected beast of Rev.13.3. This approach is seemingly confirmed by the gamatria of Nero Caesar (Neron kaisar transliterated into Hebrew) adding up to 666 or in an alternative reading to 616. The imperial cult is thought to lie behind the “worshipping” aspect of these chapters, with believers forced to deny Christ and worship an image of the Emperor. Moreover, some of these “gods” were rigged with devices to shake them, make noise, or belch fire etcetera.

This article proposes that for a first century (pre-70) Christian the beast (as Nero) had only a limited fulfilment. In a very perceptive article (recommended reading) Sigve Tonstad14 makes the case that Nero is too pedestrian a figure to portray the cosmic battle in heaven (Rev 12.7), where it is possible that even the very elect can be deceived by a false messiah (Matt 24.24). It is doubtful that a man of the character of Nero would be able to deceive anyone with his credentials. Nero held sway through tyranny, whereas the beast of the earth mimics Christ with “two horns like a lamb” (Rev 13.11) but speaking with the subtlety and deceit of a dragon (the serpent in Eden). This is a portrait of a false messiah, or false system fronted by two propagandists (contrast the two faithful witness) who disseminate the message of the serpent (ye shall be as gods). Sigve Tonstad notes that, “[…] even more than the wound is a constituent of the identity of the beast, it is the healing of the wound that is the source of the beast’s amazing resurgence. Its mortal wound had been healed (13:3) whose mortal wound had been healed (13:12) that had been wounded by the sword and yet came back to life (13:14). As Minear points out, the emphasis on the impact of the healing of the wound makes the Nero hypothesis particularly vulnerable”.15
If, however, Bar Kochba is examined using the criteria proposed by Tonstad then we have a cosmic battle for the heart and soul of the nation, including the deception of Jewish Christian believers. Bar Kochba was recognised as the messiah (the lamb) by the “chief sage” Akiva. The two horns are therefore the Pharisees (rabbis) and Sadducees (priests) who are the counterpart of the two witnesses. They are propagandists of the false messiah and together with Kochba these “two horns” attempt to re-establish temple worship combined with a form of Rabbinical (pharisaic) Judaism that emerged from the Babylonian abyss (sea). Rabbinical Halakha was the Law on steroids –salvation by works to the nth degree.

The dragon that had been cast out of “heaven” in 70 CE re-emerges from the Persian sea with its wound healed, the statement of Rev 13.4 (No one was able to make war against him) is reminiscent of the wicked priests (sons of Belial) who weaponized the ark, eliciting Philistine terror (1 Sam 4.8): “Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods?” The ark was not intended to be degraded as an instrument to advance an agenda by wicked priests, nor was the temple intended as a rallying cry for a messianic movement that denied the true messiah. In this scenario the temple becomes the “image of the beast” the outward manifestation of a Babylonian kingdom of lies that has corrupted the truth (covenants concerning the messiah cf. Micah 7.20), “that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess 2:12), for God has “sent them a strong delusion” (v.11) when the man of sin “as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (v.4). Bar Kochba had a coin minted with his “star” (Num 24.17) depicted above the temple.

Kochba nearly defeated the might of Rome. Rabbinical legends say that Bar Kochba belched fire from his mouth reminiscent of the true witnesses of Rev 11.5. However, this “messiah” produces “fire from heaven” (Rev 13.13) and establishes his messianic credentials by copying Elijah; “If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee…” (2 Kgs 1:10). Typologically this is probably referring to the reestablishment of temple sacrifice - - “Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices”. (2 Chron 7:1).
The number 666 in scripture is found only in association with the annual revenue of Solomon the apostate temple builder (1 Kgs 10.14). Solomon the “son of God” had corrupted himself with the “daughters of men”. Interestingly, Dio Cassius, a late second-century Roman historian, reports that the tomb of Solomon had collapsed in his period. “It is possible that the Davidic tombs are indeed in the general area excavated by Weill but were destroyed by the extensive quarrying in the Roman period.” Barkay states, “It is possible, though, that the extensive quarrying involved in the levelling of Jerusalem and the construction of Aelia Capitolina could have damaged the burial place of the kings of Judah. This supposes that Hadrians remodelling of the city was a contributing cause to the revolt but evidence suggests that Aelia Capitolina was built after the revolt as punishment. Perhaps, though it was destroyed by an earth tremor as a judgement by God and was perceived by the insurrectionists as divine anger because they had neglected to restore Solomon’s temple? It is impossible to know, but the link between Solomon and the revolt is telling.

Rabbi Akiva called the messianic pretender Bar Kochba. In letters written by him that have been unearthed in archaeological excavations, we find that he signed his name Shimon bar Kusba. Apparently, the other names that he had “played off” of his actual name, known to his supporters as Bar Kochba – “the son of a star” – basing themselves on the passage recited by the prophet, Balaam (Num 24:17), “a Star out of Jacob”. Those who opposed his revolt – especially after it failed – called him Bar Kuziba – “the son of falsehood (deceit).”

A reference to Shimon bar Kusba’s sobriquet “Son of a star” or Bar Kochba when used with the lemma of the word forms בר כוכב שמעון (bar kōk̄b šim’ûn) -- son-of star hear (-you). Bar is the Aramaic of the Hebrew ben, meaning, son-of. The root of Shimon (Simeon) is the verb for “hearing”, as in the Shema (Deut 6.4) “Hear (šĕma’), O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD”, however, the qal imperative form of the verb is used, as in (Isa 1.10) - -Yahweh word-of hear you! (šim’û dbr-yhwh). There are 37 occurrences of “star” in the OT the WTM lists the constructs as follows:
Whereas the WTM regards the word “star” in Num 24.17 and in Amos 5.26 as slightly different constructs the WTT does not distinguish between them.\textsuperscript{19} It is interesting (as we shall shortly see) that the Numbers and Amos passages are thus connected. The Gematria of this phrase, represents the personal “Shema” of the false messiah and is a play on his first name (Shmn-to hear) and his last name (Kusba transformed to Kokba [star in Num24.17] then later to Kuziba [deceiver]) is calculated as \textbf{666}.\textsuperscript{20}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transliterated (SBL)</th>
<th>Occurrences (WTM)</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kōkĕbêhem</td>
<td>1x</td>
<td>nempc+S3mpExHxRx</td>
<td>Ezek 32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kkwkby</td>
<td>14x</td>
<td>nempn+SxxxExHxRx</td>
<td>Gen. 22:17; 26:4; Exod. 32:13; Deut. 1:10; 10:22; 28:62; 1 Chr. 27:23; Neh. 9:23; Job 3:9; 38:7; Ps. 148:3; Isa. 13:10; 14:13; Nah. 3:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hakkōwkābīm</td>
<td>20x</td>
<td>nempn+SxxxExHxRx</td>
<td>Gen. 1:16; 15:5; 37:9; Deut. 4:19; Jdg. 5:20; Neh. 4:15; Job 9:7; 22:12, 25:5; Ps. 8:4; 136:9; 147:4; Eccl. 12:2; Isa. 47:13; Jer. 31:35; Dan. 8:10; 12:3; Joel 2:10; 4:15; Obad. 1:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kōwkāb</td>
<td>1x</td>
<td>nemsn+SxxxExHxRx</td>
<td>Num 24.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kōwkab</td>
<td>1x</td>
<td>nemsn+SxxxExHxRx</td>
<td>Amos 5.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Translit.</th>
<th>Heb./Aramaic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hear</td>
<td>šimʿû</td>
<td>שמעו</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>son</td>
<td>bar (br)</td>
<td>בּ</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>star</td>
<td>kōkb</td>
<td>כוכב</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Total: 666}

šimʿû bar kōkb = hear son-of star (hear the son of a star) Simeon Bar Kochba
Amos and the Temple

The word kokb (star) is found in the same form (WTT) in Amos 5.26 as in Num 24.17 and this is the passage referred to in Stephens’ devastating polemical defence against the temple when he stood before the priests and the Sanhedrin. In Acts 7.43 Stephen purposely changes his citation from Damascus to Babylon the place where rabbinical Judaism was established because he had Zech 5.11 in mind. The Jews had been exiled because of wickedness (star worship) and would shortly worship another star (Bar Kochba). God was perfectly satisfied to dwell in a tent and had never asked David for a house, in fact God promised to build David a house (Jesus).

Stephen says, “Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 7.47-48). Idols are made with hands; “And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands” (Acts 7.41). Solomon’s hands also built a high place for Chemosh (1Kgs 11.7). The house was no longer God’s house, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt 23.38). Babylonian Judaism would once again “take up the tabernacle of their king, the star of their god” but the “son-of-a-star” and his temple would fail.

The connection between Numbers, Amos and Revelation is not coincidental. Revelation names Balaam in the letters to the churches in Rev 2.14. Moreover, Christ, the true messiah has the Christological title, the Morning Star (Rev 2:28; 22:16) --- a likely allusion to Numbers 24:17. It is this very prophecy (Num 24.17) that is usurped by Bar Kochba.

In Numbers chapters 22-24 seven oracles of Balaam are recorded (cf. seven letters in Revelation) and scholars note that the first three lines of the third and fourth oracles (Num 24:3-4; 15-16) are identical, like the identical openings of the seven letters. Smith writes: The prophecy of victory or defeat, found in the Balaam oracles in Numbers 24:15-24 has the most similarities with Amos.... His oracle served as a discouragement to Balak and as a message of assurance to Israel.”
A great earthquake occurred during Uzziah’s reign (Zech 14:5) and this forms the template for the great earthquake of Rev 11.13,19 in the trumpet section and the great earthquake in the vial-plagues of Rev 16.8. Isaiah was commissioned in the year that king Uzziah died ( Isa 6:1). Amos commenced his career two years before the earthquake that occurred in ca 750 BCE. (Amos 1:1)

24 There are many intertextual allusions to Amos throughout Revelation but most relevant is Amos chapter 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amos 5</th>
<th>Revelation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.8 that maketh the seven stars and Orion 25</td>
<td>The seven churches and Christ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth</td>
<td>8.11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.20 Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?</td>
<td>8.12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD!</td>
<td>8.13 Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiter of the earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10 They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.</td>
<td>11.3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. (3½ years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:21-22 I hate, I despise your feast days….neither will I regard the peace offerings….</td>
<td>Bar Kochba introduces temple sacrifices (3½ years)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:26 You have lifted up the shrine of your king, the pedestal of your idols, the star of your god--which you made for yourselves. (NIV)</td>
<td>The shrine (tabernacle lifted up) is the temple? The star-god is Bar Kochba)? Son of a star (Numbers 24.17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A half hour silence in heaven

KJV Revelation 8:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

Commentators struggle with this verse and Aune in his commentary on Revelation lists a number of unconvincing options which he realises are problematic (p.507). The proposal put forward by Whittaker best suits the Day of Atonement context, namely, the people outside the temple are waiting with bated breath as the priests enters the inner sanctum in the expectation that he will announce the priestly blessing on the people when he emerges. However, there was to be no reconciliation and forgiveness on this occasion. Whittaker cites Luke 1:10, “And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense” (this was not on the DOA) and Habakkuk 2:20, “But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him” and references Psalm 65.1 which has an atonement thematic, “Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed”. This is a convincing argument in light of all the other Day of Atonement allusions. Whittaker also has pertinent observations regarding the intra-biblical link between the seals and trumpets and the introduction of the trumpets with the word whenever;

“It is reasonable (though not absolutely necessary) to regard the Seventh Seal as having an application in conformity with the preceding six. If then there is good reason for interpreting the first six seals with regard to the First Century the same key should unlock the meaning of the Seventh, that is, of the Trumpets. And if the first six seals apply to the Last Days, so also the Seventh. Similarly, if ch. 7 with its vision of the Sealed Multitude has a dual application of the kind just mentioned, one would naturally expect the same to be true of chapters 8, 9 because of the close interlocking of phrases: e.g. compare ch. 7:3 with 8:7, 8 and 9:4. There is, perhaps, a hint of more than one fulfilment in the opening phrase of the introductory vision: “And when (literally: whenever) he opened the seventh seal...” as though implying an element of doubt as to when the seventh Seal would be opened, i.e. the fulfilment of this part of Revelation may be looked for immediately (“things which must shortly come to pass”) or at some long deferred crisis”. 
The translation offered in Aune’s Revelation commentary simply begins with the words; “When he opened…”, and the translation is accompanied with the following notes:

1a. The conjunction καί, “and” is left untranslated because it lacks semantic value here and functions as a discourse marker indicating the beginning of a new sentence or clause (Louw-Nida, 1 vi)

1b. Variant: (1) ὅταν | AC fam 1006 1841 fam 1161; Tischendorf, NT Graece; WHort; von Soden, Text; UBSGNT⁴; Nestle Aland ²⁷; TCGNT¹; TCGNT². (2) ὅτε | 025 052 Andreas Byzantine. According to the plausible argument in TCGNT¹, 740, and TCGNT², ὅτε resulted from the assimilation of the frequent occurrence of ὅταν ἔνοιξεν in Rev 6. The term ὅταν, which usually means “whenever” (and implies repetition), here clearly is used to mean “when” (referring to a unique event) and is used as an equivalent for ὅτε , “when,” which occupies a similar position in the six proceeding instances in which John has narrated the opening of a seal by the Lamb (6:1, 5, 7, 9, 12; see Mussies, Morphology, 345; Lohmeyer, 49); see 4:9; 11:7; 12:4.

The seventh seal opens the trumpets. It may seem tedious devoting so much effort on the subordinate conjunction ὅταν(hotan) to determine if it should read “when” or “whenever” but it is important for determining the direction of the exegesis. It is apparent that modern English translators render the Greek as, “when”. However, the notes above make it clear that the majority of reliable Greek manuscripts and critical reconstructions have ὅταν(hotan)-“whenever” with the exception of the Andreas Byzantine manuscript which has ὅτε (ote) in the original but it is argued that this variant resulted from the assimilation of the formula from all the other seals ὅτε ἔνοιξεν (ote Enoixen), literally, when-it (ote) up-opens(Enoixen) [the seal] a formula used in Rev 6 in vv.1, 5, 7, 9 and 12. The translators have therefore made a choice to treat “whenever” in Rev 8.1 the same as “when” because it follows the precedent set in the previous seals, even though the manuscripts indicate “whenever” they essential perceive ὅταν(hotan-whenever) and ὅτε (ote-when) as functionally equivalent. They justify this by (correctly) noting the repetitive nature of “whenever” against the singly unique (one off) status of “when”. If the other seals are “one off” events then surely the last seal (i.e., trumpet section) cannot be repetitive?
The repetitive nature of ὅταν (hotan) can be seen, for example in 1 Cor 14.26; “brethren whenever you come together” [ ἀδελφοί ὅταν συνέρχησθε ] transliterated as: brothers (adelphoi) when-Ever (hotan) YE-MAY-BE-TOGETHER-COMING (sunerchEsthe). This speaks of repetitive action….meeting together happens more than once.

Similarly in Rev 4.9 where ὅταν (hotan) is correctly translated as “whenever” by the NKJ (but as “When” by the KJV): NKJ “Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne…” The context shows that praise giving and worship is a repetitive action throughout Revelation. In light of the approach that we have adopted in recognizing the importance of pattern repetition the correct reading of ὅταν (hotan) must be “whenever” because that is how it is usually translated in other contexts and the ὅταν (hotan) form is found in all the majority Greek texts (with rare exceptions).

Finally we turn to a phrase neglected by the commentators --- “for half an hour” which is based on the Greek ἡμιώριον (hēmiōrion) a combination of hēmisu (semi or half) and hōra (hour). The English word for “hour” derives from the Greek hōra but the Greek term is flexible ---it can for example mean a twelfth part of a day (cf. Acts 10.3, 9; 23.23) but also a “time” or a “season” etc. The phrase in Rev 9.15, “were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year” indicates that the day is partitioned into hours, although it is a paraphrase for “were prepared for that exact (or very) moment”.

Vine’s has the following information on Rev 8.1: hēmiōrion, half an hour (hēmi, half, and hōra (hour), is used with böl, “about,” of a period of silence in Heaven after the opening of the 7th seal, a period corresponding to the time customarily spent in silent worship in the Temple during the burning of incense.26 This explanation supports the earlier observations made by Whittaker concerning the atonement rite but does not shed any light on the relevance of the half-hour within apocalyptic time structuring. Perhaps the duration is irrelevant to the wider context? Closer examination of “hour” (bōra) in the Gospel of John demonstrates that the word is often connected with the time period of tribulation endured by the Lord, “his hour was not yet come” (John 8.20), “the hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified” (John 12.23), “save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour” (John 12.27), “Jesus knew that his hour was come” (John 13.1).
It is also associated with the tribulation of the nation described as giving birth to the new covenant church “A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come” (John 16.21), depicted in Rev 12.2, “she being with child cried, travelling in birth, and pained to be delivered”. Jesus encourages Philadelphia in Rev 3.10 with the words, “I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” presumably this is the same hour as in Rev 14.7, “for the hour of his judgment is come” and coincides with Rev 18.10 “Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come”. Johannine usage indicates that the word “hour” often idiomatically expresses a period of trial or a season of tribulation that falls upon the church and the inhabitants of “the earth”. Revelation is specific in relating that the “silence” lasts “about half” the time of the tribulation. Can we conclude that if the six seals lasted 42 years the “silence” lasted 21 years? If that is the case then we can expect the six trumpets to also last 42 years (because the 7th trump is not fulfilled). This gives us the following duration:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6 Seals (1 hour)</th>
<th>Silence (½ hour)</th>
<th>6 Trumpets (1 hour)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42 years</td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>42 years</td>
<td>105 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 73 CE</td>
<td>73 to 94 CE</td>
<td>94 to 136 CE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If this is correct then the sixth trumpet concludes when the Bar Kochba revolt ended in 135/136 CE. Note that calculations using modern calendar years is not completely transferrable to the lunar calendar with both a civic and religious start to the year (although one supposes a Tishri –Atonement start)27 and that the half-hour period is qualified as “about” so with reasonable accuracy it can be suggested that the six trumpets commenced in ca 94/95 CE and ended in ca 135/136 CE but the seventh (last trump) was not sounded. It seems then that the trumpets are set to repeat (whenever) as the action-response was not met. This does not mean that an exact pattern-match should be expected. However, it does mean that certain archetypes and spiritual pointers have been given to us. God has revealed his purpose as a set of patterns because this is how humans think and pattern recognition forms the basis of what we call intelligence. A great deal of empirical research indicates that human psychology is actually structured to find meaning in patterns. In his latest book, How to Create a Mind: The Secret of Human Thought Revealed, Kurzweil describes how he is teaching artificially intelligent machines to think, based on the stepwise refinement of patterns. According to Kurzweil, all learning results from massive, hierarchical and recursive processes taking place in the brain.28
Appendix on Amos 5.26-27 and Acts 7.43

KJV  
**Amos 5:26-27** But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiu[n your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.

LXX  
**Amos 5:26-27** Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Raephan, the images of them which ye made for yourselves. And I will carry you away beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, the Almighty God is his name.

NIV  
**Amos 5:26** You have lifted up the shrine of your king, the pedestal of your idols, the star of your god—which you made for yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.

**Acts 7:43** Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Molech and the star of your god Remphan (Rephan in NIV/RSV), figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

NIV  
**Acts 7:43** You have lifted up the shrine of Molech and the star of your god Rephan, the idols you made to worship. Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.

Stephen purposely changes the LXX of Amos 5.26 from beyond Damascus to beyond Babylon because he has Zech 5:11 in mind; “And he said unto me, to build it an house in the land of Shinar (LXX land of Babylon): and it shall be established (kwn), and set there upon her own base”.

Moloch derives from the same root as “king” (melech) and Chiu[n is thought to be a proper name (kēwān) for the planet Saturn. However, the NIV renders the word as “pedestal” from the root *kwn*, be firm. Newman remarks, “It is assumed that the peculiar vowels in the Hebrew kiyyn were substituted from šiqquṣ, abomination, one means by which scribes expressed contempt for paganism”. Whereas the Niphal form of the verb word *kwn* means, to be set up, be established, be fixed, the Hiphil can mean make ready, prepare, provide as in, “making preparations (e.g., meals Gen.43:6) comes close to being a technical cultic term for readying sacrifices Num 23:1; Zeph 1:7)”.
In Acts 7.43 Stephen employs Remphan or Rephan from the LXX of Amos 5.26 instead of Chiun (kēwān) found in the Hebrew versions. The origin of Rephan in the LXX is unclear but most likely it is a transliteration of the Hebrew rapha’ or Rephaim referring to “giants”. The word Ραφαϊν (raphain) is found in the LXX of Gen. 15:20; Deut. 2:11, 20; 3:11, 13; Jos. 15:8; Jdt. 8:1 and is very similar to the Ραφαν (Raephan) of Amos 5.26. The Rephaim and Nephilim (Gen. 6:4; Nu. 13:33) of the OT are both used to refer to giants. According to Gesenius, Nephelim in Chaldean refers to the giant in the sky, i.e. the constellation Orion, plural, the greater constellations. In Ugaritic the champion of Baal is called a Rephaite. The LXX translators possibly attempted to play Raephan (Ραφαν) against the rare verb raphumeo (ῥαθυμέω) used in 2 Macc. 6:4 to describe the sexual dalliances in the temple perpetrated by Antiochus “For the temple was filled with debauchery and revelling by the Gentiles, who dallied (ῥαθυμέω) with harlots and had intercourse with women within the sacred precincts, and besides brought in things for sacrifice that were unfit (RSV)”.
Appendix on Star names

Amos 5.8 in the KJV translates the stars as “seven stars and Orion” but the translators are not consistent in naming the stars. Our preferred option here would be Venus known as the morning star, the day star and also as the evening star. The LXX presents a completely different translation here and does not even mention stars or constellations. LXE Amos 5:8 “who makes all things, and changes them, and turns darkness into the morning, and darkens the day into night: who calls for the water of the sea, and pours it out on the face of the earth: the Lord is his name”. The YLT renders literally; YLT Amos 5:8 The maker of Kimah and Kesil, follows the SBL transliteration of the Hebrew, Amos 5:8. ḍēṣē kīmā ēkēsil 3598 Kiymah Meaning: 1) Pleiades, a constellation of seven stars and 3685 Keciyl Meaning: 1) constellation, Orion. However, a short survey demonstrates the difficulty in naming the stars.

First, Christocentric allusions in the Greek NT:

- The day star (φωσφόρος or phosphoros) arise in your hearts” (2 Pet 1.19), Meaning: 1) light bringing, giving light 2) the planet Venus, the morning star, day star.
- The morning star (πρωϊνός ἀστήρ or proinos aster) of Rev 2.28 and 22.16 Meaning: pertaining to the morning / a star (= Venus?)
- A Great Star (μέγας ἀστήρ or megas aster) (Rev 8.10), Meaning: great star (a comet?) the expression “mega star” comes from the Greek!

A short survey of the Old Testament Hebrew and the Greek LXX:

KJV Job 9:9 Arcturus (ארית, Arúth), Orion ( רפואי  Keciyl), and Pleiades (כּוֹכַב Kiymah)
LXE Job 9:9 Pleias (Πλειάδα pleiada), and Hesperus (ἔσφρος esperon), and Arcturus(arktouron)
KJV Job 38:31 Pleiades (Kiymah) Orion (Keciyl)
LXE Job 38:31 Pleias (Πλειάδος) Orion (Ὀρίων)
KJV Amos 5:8 the seven stars (Kiymah) and Orion (Keciyl)
KJV Isaiah 14:12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer (ליילע heylel)
JPS Isaiah 14:12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star (ליילע heylel)
LXE Isaiah 14:12 How has Lucifer, (εὐσφόρος eOsphoros) that rose in the morning…
KJV Isaiah 13:10 For the stars (כֶּבֶק kowkab) of heaven and the constellations (Keciyl)
LXE Isaiah 13:10 For the stars of heaven, and Orion (Ὀρίων OriOn)
There is no consistency of translation across the versions as Keciyl is translated as either Orion, Venus (Hesperus in LXX of Job 9.9), or simply as “constellations” in Isa 13.10. The Greek Hesperus\textsuperscript{35} is the personification of the “evening star”, the planet Venus in the evening. His name is sometimes conflated with the names for his brother, the personification of the planet as the “morning star” Eosphorus (Greek Εὐσφόρος, “bearer of dawn”) or Phosphorus (Ancient Greek: Φωσφόρος, “bearer of light”, often translated as “Lucifer” in Latin), since they are all personifications of the same planet Venus, “Heosphoros” in the Greek Septuagint and “Lucifer” in Jerome’s Latin Vulgate were used to translate the Hebrew “Helel” (Venus as the brilliant, bright or shining one), “son of Shahar (god) (Dawn)” in the Hebrew version of Isaiah 14:12.
1 When Jerusalem is mentioned it is always “New Jerusalem” the heavenly city.
2 For example, the victory song of Moses and the Lamb in Rev 15 before the actual plagues of Rev 16
3 For example, the Exodus, the rescue of Hezekiah, the crucifixion and many other events collectively form the Day of the Lord.
4 Taan., 46. Ab 9 was actually the date that the first Temple was set on fire. Jos., Wars, 6:4:5, and Jer., 52:12f, date the burning of the first Temple to Ab (Lous), i.e. July/Aug., 10. This was the date that the second Temple completely burnt down. 2 Kings, 25:8, gives Ab 7 as the date that Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard of Nebuchadnezzar, entered the city prior to his burning down the first Temple.
5 The Day of Atonement (trumpet) is concerned with national (collective) reconciliation.
8 Ben Zion Wacholder, Chronomessianism, the timing of Messianic Movements and the calendar of Sabbatical Cycles, (Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati), 211-218 [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/chrono.pdf"]
9 Ibid, Wacholder, 217
11 The traditional view states: “Is this the commencement point for computing the prophecy? Probably not, for 486 years after 444 B.C. ends at A.D. 42—a dozen years after the death of Christ. However, in 457 B.C., Ezra took a company from Babylon back to Jerusalem. Does this date work mathematically? Indeed. If one starts at 457 B.C., and goes forward for 486½ years, the resulting date is A.D. 30—the very year of Christ’s crucifixion! This is the common view (Scott 1975, 5, 364).” More accurately, reckoning from 457 takes us to the start of Jesus’ ministry not to his death. God is Judge proposes that the prophecy started around about the year 423 when Nehemiah re-established the Abrahamic covenant with the people. Coincidently (sic), this is also the Seder Olam date for the destruction of the first temple. The Maccabean digression (dated from the fall of the temple in 586/7) proved to be a dead end in BCE 164/5 after 6x70. Notably 164/5 is calculated by some scholars to be a “super shemitta” year. God is Judge proposes that from the renewed Abrahamic covenant in the time of Nehemiah (423) to the birth of Christ (the new temple) is 6 x70 years, with the last “seventy” seeing the destruction of the old temple and the 3½ years of the first Jewish War against Rome. The Seder Olam is obviously a second century construct produced to support the messiastic credentials of Bar Kochba by using Daniel’s seventy week prophecy to “predict” his coming.
12 On this see "The Great Delay" in Chapter 19 (pp. 360-366) in the commentary - [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/daniel/danhtml/Dan_TOC.html"]
13 As early as the year 69 CE, a pseudo—Nero imposter had raised commotions in Asia Minor and Greece (Tac. Hist. 28f, Hist. 28f; Dio Cassius, 64g; Zonaras, 11:13). During the reign of Titus a second pseudo Nero showed himself on the Euphrates (Zonaras 11:18) and was acknowledged by the Parthian king Artabanus (Mommesen, 55:21). About 88 CE a third pseudo —Nero again made his appearance, also amongst the Parthians, and threatened the Roman Empire (Seut. Nero; Tac. Hist. 12).
14 Among the substantive concerns that Tonstad investigates that call the viability of the Nero hypothesis into question are (1) the absence of Nero in the earliest known interpretations of Revelation; (2) textual evaluations that are prejudicial to the theme of cosmic conflict; (3) the impact of the symbolic world of the first half of Revelation on the second half of the book; (4) the priority and ramifications of Revelation’s own terms; (5) the relationship of Rev 13 to the Synoptic Apocalypse; and (6) the slaughtered Lamb as the revealer of the divine character and government. Sigve Tonstad, Appraising the Myth of Nero Redivius in the Interpretation of Revelation, (Andrews University Seminary Studies (AUSS) Volume 46 | Number 2 Article 2, 2008), 177 [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/nero_revidius.pdf"]
15 Ibid, Tonstad, p. 188
16 According to a Rabbinic midrash, in addition to Bar Kokhba himself, the Romans executed eight leading members of the Sanhedrin (The list of Ten Martyrs include two earlier Rabbis): R. Akiva; R. Hanania ben Teradion; the interpreter of the Sanhedrin, R. Hushpith; R. Eliyzer ben Shamua (priestly descent); R. Hanina ben Hakina; R. Jeshbab the Scribe; R. Yehuda ben Dama; and R. Yehuda ben Baba.
17 “Thus nearly the whole of Judea was made desolate, a result that the people had had forewarning before the war. For the tomb of Solomon, which the Jews regard as an object of veneration, fell to pieces itself and collapsed, and many wolves and hyenas rushed howling into their cities”” (Annals, Book 5, 69:14).
18 This is the opinion of leading archaeologist Dr. Barkay (lecture in Jerusalem, November 27, 2006).
19 The WTM is the BibleWorks 5 Westminster Hebrew OT Morphology and the WTT is BHS Hebrew Old Testament (4th ed)
20 Using the calculator @ [HYPERLINK "http://www.ridingthebeast.com/gematria-calculator/"
21 Compare, smrō -- the Hebrew letter י (yāin) represents or used to represent a voiced pharyngeal fricative or a similarly articulated consonant, of which there is not even an approximate substitute sound in English. There are many possible transliterations, sometimes signified with superscript ('). The word phonetically approximates Shmo compare the pointed form of Simeon שִׁמְעוֹן (Shim’own) and the pointed form of hear שָׁמַע (shama) used in Deut 6.4.

22 See the Appendix on Amos 5.26–27 and Acts 7.43 at the end of this chapter

23 Smith, G. V., Amos, Library of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1989), 30

24 See also Isa 2:10–22 and Amos 9:1 for earthquake language

25 See the Appendix on star names at the end of this chapter

26 Vine’s : An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, (Published as One Volume in 1952, Marshall Pickering Communications), 236-7

27 This is the seventh month—the start of the religious year: Atonement is on the 10th day of the New Year.


29 The Hebrew for abomination (ššiqqûṣ) is probably a play on tabernacles (compare booth: sukkōt) --- the JPS reading of Amos 5.26 as, “…shall ye take up Siccuth your king”.


31 Could kwn also be related to the cultic cakes (kawwānim) baked to the “queen of heaven” Ishtar (or Venus) in Jer.7.18? The image of Ishtar, is depicted in Amos 5.26 as having been carried under a canopy in a procession, a procedure attested in the Assyrian documents (cf. L Waterman, Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire. 1(1930), no., 1212, rev. 1-10= SAA XIII: 192; for corrected reading see A.L Oppenheim, in: BASOR. 107 (1947), 8, n. 4). Note that the Akkadian cognate for Saturn is kaiwānu (Ibid, NIDOTTE, Newman, p., 611).


33 Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldean Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures. (Wilhelm Gesenius and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles) entry under giants

34 Article “2198 עַיִן” (William White) in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, (Eds., by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke).

Chapter 9
The Trumpets

First Trumpet (Rev 8.7): date range 94/95 to 101/2 CE

“The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up”.

The trumpets are more difficult to analyse historically than the seals because unlike the seals we have fragmentary and sometimes contradictory sources. The seals could draw on the book of Acts and Josephus but the apostles were dead by the time this period commenced and Josephus published his works during the reign of Domitian in ca. 94 CE (the beginning of our time period). Therefore, commentators are forced to reconstruct the history from disparate sources but as historical interest in this time period has recently increased it is to be hoped that more evidence will become available. A tentative analysis follows with the right reserved to correct, revise and update as more information becomes accessible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joel</th>
<th>Revelation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locusts.</td>
<td>1:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic of a nation</td>
<td>1:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teeth like lions.</td>
<td>1:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees and pasture withered and burnt up</td>
<td>1:12,18-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction from the Almighty.</td>
<td>1:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire.</td>
<td>1:19; 2:3,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivers of waters dried up.</td>
<td>1:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blowing of trumpets.</td>
<td>2:1,11,15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darkness.</td>
<td>2:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses.</td>
<td>2:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chariots.</td>
<td>2:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torment.</td>
<td>2:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthquake.</td>
<td>2:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun, moon, and stars darkened.</td>
<td>2:10,31; 3:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Turn ye to me&quot;</td>
<td>2:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The locust army goes back into the abyss.</td>
<td>2:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliverance for the faithful remnant.</td>
<td>2:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darkness.</td>
<td>2:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day of Atonement.</td>
<td>2:15-17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Joel demonstrates multiple connections with the trumpets. This trumpet is inter-textually linked with Joel 1.19:

“O LORD, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field”.

The context of Joel 1.14, *Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly*, and of Joel 2.15-17, *Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly*, clearly associate the burning of the grass and trees in Joel with the Day of Atonement. Their “hallelujah” praise has been turned into “howling” and destruction (שׁוֹד, shod) has come from the Almighty (שַׁד ַׁי, shadday). It is surely not coincidental that the Almighty title is used at the commencement of the very Balaam oracle (Num 24.16) that predicts the “star out of Jacob” (Num 24.17). In Joel’s day the prophecy described the burning of food crops and fodder (1.16) by the advancing Assyrian armies.

However, here the first trump may be describing a natural disaster; even so; a completely literal interpretation is excluded because only a third is damaged demonstrating that it is a judgement against Jewry (cf. Ezek 5.12). Interestingly, one of the main protagonists of this era (Rabbi Akiva) who is still today venerated as the “chief sage”, and is considered foundational in the history of rabbinical Judaism, attracted a curse from his own teacher Rabbi Eliezer. The anecdote relates how R. Eliezer was humiliated in a dispute with his pupil R. Akiva concerning what is permitted and prohibited in the preparation for a Sabbath circumcision. The outcome of the argument was that although R. Eliezer was technically correct concerning the halakah he was excommunicated and his former pupil R. Akiva volunteered to inform him of his banning as an act of kindness (sic), in order to stop R. Eliezer from destroying the earth with a curse. In response to R. Akiva’s kindness (sic) the consequences were mitigated as only a third of the olives, wheat and barley where blighted by R. Eliezer’s curse. This story, although obviously legendary and anecdotal informs us about a power struggle over the interpretation of the law; principles were established that would guide Judaism over the following millennia.

A consequence of R. Akiva’s influence was exclusivity (Torah was not for Gentiles) and that rabbinical authority overrules and supersedes Torah (making the Law of no effect) and even overrules the divine voice (Bat Kol). There is no reason why the outworking of the first trump was not based on a description of natural phenomenon that occurred at the time of this debate and that the destruction was incorrectly attributed by the rabbi’s to a rabbinical “curse” rather than to their own obdurate refusal to accept the messiah and repent from their “works of the law”, performed as acts of meretricious salvation.
This time period also saw the stringent enforcement of the “atonement tax” by Domitian (81-96 CE). Of course, it was not called the “atonement tax” as it was more or less a Roman “poll tax” replacing payment of atonement monies after the fall of the temple. It was called the fiscus Judaicus. Bruce sums up as follows: “First, then, it may be convenient to recall briefly the history of the Jewish tax. It was instituted, shortly after the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem in A.D. 70, by an edict of Vespasian requiring the existing tax of half a shekel, or Attic drachmae, levied on the Jews for the upkeep of their Temple to be paid in future towards the maintenance of the temple of Jupiter Capitoline in Rome. The Temple-tax dated, perhaps, from the rebuilding of the Temple after the Exile, and appears to have been at first an annual levy of one-third of a shekel, but later of half a shekel”. It was rigorously enforced by the Emperor Domitian, who was strapped for cash and he added extra stipulations so that Jews everywhere in the empire (whether practicing Jews or not) would not be exempted (due to age or sex etc) and it is believed that circumcision (or lack thereof) was demanded (and publicly inspected) as proof. Needless to say this humiliating, discriminating and extortionate usurping of what was previously “atonement money” caused much anger amongst the Jews and Domitian’s successor Nerva rescinded many of the regulations (but did not abolish the tax altogether) and commemorated the event with a coin.

The coin above is dated 96-98 CE and was issued by Nerva. It reads fisci Judaici calumnia sublata, “abolition of malicious prosecution in connection with the Jewish tax”. (Image credit: © Classical Numismatic Group, source: wikimedia commons)

A summary of the first trumpet: It is connected inter-textually with the Day of Atonement in Joel. Natural phenomena are possibly reflected in the rabbinical arguments of this period. It was the period when the Fiscal Judaicus (the atonement tax replacement) was particularly harsh.
The second and third trumpet form doublets as they share common themes:

- burning mountain
- cast into the sea
- sea turned into blood
- burning star
- fell on the water sources
- rivers become bitter

They are thematically similar because they both deal with the fall of Babylon (Jer 51.25, Isa14.12) and we shall see that the second trumpet overlaps thematically with the third trumpet. The fall of Babylon has a literal and metaphoric application – a spiritual dimension. Babylon was the place where Nebuchadnezzar boasted, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” (Dan 4.30) Babylon was the place where the king was transformed into a beast and where enforced worship of an image (of the beast) occurred. Babylon was also the place of exile, where the Jews had been sent away (like the scapegoat) from before Yahweh’s face (more on this anon). The prophets warned that wickedness would be established in Babylon and she became the persecutor of the saints. The pride and insanity of Nebuchadnezzar is a midrash on Jewish behaviour, as they established their own religion (house) in Babylon. The importance of Babylon to the Jews should not be underestimated. David E. Lipman summarized the history of this period as follows:

“There was a group of Jews who never left Babylonia after the Babylonian Exile in the 6th century BCE. This community more or less thrived. Living since 129 BCE under Parthian rule, a loosely knit semi-feudal state, it was able to develop its autonomous institutions with little interference from the royal government. The Parthians who always feared Roman intervention welcomed Jewish opposition to Rome, at least until the time of Hadrian. The Parthians established a Jewish liaison between the government and the Jewish community, the exilarch, who thus became the head of Babylonian Jewry. Descended allegedly from the House of David, proud of their genealogical purity, the exilarchs wore the kamara, the sash of office of the Parthian court, and disputed precedence with high Parthian officials. The community which they headed was both numerous (estimates of its number vary from 800,000 to 1,200,000) and well-based economically, comprising a fair number of farmers and many traders who grew rich as intermediaries in the profitable silk trade between China and the Roman Empire passing through Babylonia. The Jews enjoyed not only freedom of worship, autonomous jurisdiction, but even the right to have their own markets and appoint market supervisors (agoranomoi).
Apart from their political and economic status, the main interest of Babylonian Jewry was its relations with the rabbinic centers in Judea and its religious/political development, leading up to the creation of the Babylonian Gemara. (Talmud) So long as there was a Temple, Jerusalem was the religious center for the Jewish people. With the Temple's destruction in 70 CE, the relations of the Babylonian Diaspora with Israel were characterized by ambivalence. There were attempts to make Babylonian rabbinic courts independent of Israel's as early as 100 CE. These attempts failed. The people and therefore the Babylonian Jewish leadership acknowledged the authority of the Israel Jewish courts. During the Hadrianic persecution several scholars of standing, R. Yochanan Ha-Sandlar, R. Eleazar b. Shamua and other pupils of R. Akiva settled temporarily in Babylonia and thus enhanced its prestige. However, the masterful personality of the patriarch R. Judah I still dominated from Israel. There were at least five Babylonians at his court, and he claimed and was accorded the right to ordain judges for Babylonia also. R. Judah did indeed admit the genealogical superiority of the exilarch, R. Huna, but only at a safe distance”.

Adiabenian rulers converted to Judaism from paganism in the 1st century. Robert Drews notes, “This was Adiabene, the small kingdom just east of the Tigris, where the ruling family and apparently many of the subjects had converted to Judaism in the 40s CE”. In fact, as early as 9 BCE a colony of Babylonian Jews was established in Batanaea by Herod the Great. We known then that by 101/2 CE (the start of the second trump), the Jews had nearly a 700 year history of living, studying and trading in Babylon.

The Jews of Israel (and the Diaspora) could live with one foot as it were in Palestine and the other foot in Parthia. Babylonia represented a “safe-haven” outside of Roman control and Jewish Rabbi’s frequently travelled between Israel and Babylonia. The second trumpet indicates naval battles or naval destruction with the mention of the “third part of ships destroyed”; however, this need not be the case. Babylonian Jewish merchants were heavily invested in the extremely lucrative silk and spice trades. Solomon was the first to navigate sea routes to India (and beyond) earning him a revenue of 666 talents of gold annually. When Jehoshaphat attempted the same venture his ships were broken (2 Chron 20.35). In Revelation 18 the merchants weep because their lucrative trade with Babylon is destroyed. The Romans desired to control these trade routes. Jacob Neusner notes that,

“Earlier, in 97 [CE] a Chinese ambassador to Rome was warned by Parthian sailors that the sea was vast, and the voyage long and dangerous. The Parthians (Hirth, p.42) prevented direct communication between China and Rome so far as they were able. See also N. C. Debevoise, op.cit., pp. 203-13; M. P. Charles-worth, Trade Routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire (Cambridge, 1924), pp. 35-113. E. H. Warmington, op. cit., p. 131, holds that the decline of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in the second century accelerated the tendency of Jews to settle in India. Silk, he points out, also reached Palestine via the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf via Petra or Palmyra, as well as through the northern route”.

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While Palmyra, Dura, and Petra flourished, the Romans already had an alternate route for obtaining silk and other luxuries from the East: sea routes that connected Egypt’s Red Sea coast with the Persian Gulf and the western coast of the Indian subcontinent. Indeed, there is some evidence that from the first to fourth centuries BCE, sailors from Ptolemaic Egypt, prior to the Roman takeover of Egypt, used such routes. Xinru Liu notes that,

“Eventually, the Han Chinese became aware of these markets. The History of the Later Han, which covers the history of the dynasty during the first two centuries CE, mentions that both Parthia and India traded with the Romans “at sea,” and that the trade was very lucrative. The Parthians may have traded with the Romans—or, most likely, with their Palmyraean or Duran agents—at Persian Gulf ports, whence goods were brought up the Euphrates River. The Roman-Indian sea trade probably originated in the western ports of the subcontinent and extended from there to Red Sea ports in Roman-controlled Egypt”.

Cities of interest in Parthia and surrounding regions ca. 100 CE.
It was during this period that Trajan annexed Nabataea, Millar says,

“If neither the decision-making process which lay behind it nor the campaign itself (if there was any real campaign) can be understood, by contrast the multiple effects of the annexation are very clearly reflected in our evidence. In strategic terms we know that, as Dio records, the operation was conducted from Syria, not from Judaea, and by the legatus of circa 104/105-107/108, A. Cornelius Palma, who duly earned triumphal ornamenta, a statue in the Forum of Augustus in Rome and a second consulate in 109. What forces he took from Syria we do not know. All that is clear is that as early as 107 a governor of Arabia, Claudius Severus, was already in office. The same structure had been created as in Judaea, whereby a senatorial governor of ex-praetor rank was simultaneously the legatus of the province and of the one legion which was stationed there. The legion was the III Cyrenaica, which had been brought from Egypt, reducing its legionary garrison to one.”

Bloom describes the damage to commercial activities as follows:

“Here we should also consider the economic stake of the Nabataeans who also shared this perilous neighborhood with the Jews. The Nabataean Arabs had built up a trading network that extended from the Sinai and the Negev far down into the deserts of the Hijaz, in what is today Saudi Arabia. Centered on their well-protected capital at Petra, in what is now Jordan, the Nabataeans traded in the frankincense (an aromatic resin) and myrrh (used in perfumes and incense) from what is now Oman and the spices of India. Every year a fleet of 120 ships sailed down the Red Sea to India, borne on the cyclical winds of the monsoon. The Nabataeans maintained an emporium at “LeucL KomL” (“The White Village”) 240 miles down the Red Sea coast of the Hijaz (modern El Haura). A Roman centurion there levied a 25 percent duty on all goods coming in. In other words, the Nabataeans and the Romans had what we would today call a customs union. The King’s Highway ran from what is now Aqaba on the Red Sea, via Petra, to Bostra and Tiberias and thence to Ptolemais (modern Acre, Israel) on the Mediterranean coast, with branch routes going off to Gaza and Egypt. It was a very profitable operation, and the Nabataeans grew quite comfortable on their earnings. This activity dovetailed neatly into the Jews’ own commercial network and gave the Nabataeans and Jews “common cause” in resisting the disastrous effect that Trajan’s Mesopotamian venture would have on this mercantile lifeline.”

A summary of the second trumpet: The second trumpet forms a doublet with the first trumpet. It describes the demise of Babylon a seat of lucrative trading and independent Jewish learning. This important centre where the Jews established “wickedness” in Shinar (“To build it an house in the land of Shinar” Zech 5.11) came under increasing Roman pressure. Judgement of Babylon was indirectly a Judgement against Jewry.
Third Trumpet (Rev 8.10-11): date range 108/109 to 115/116 CE

And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

The Babylon theme is continued with the third trumpet and this is the point where Trajan steps up his campaign and conquers Parthia and Babylon's replacement capitol Ctesiphon. Babylon has literally fallen. Millar says—

“The Roman Empire in the Near East had by that time [114/116] entered a quite new phase, with the end both of the extensive kingdom of Agrippa II and of Nabataea. … Roman forces also, as we have seen, advanced down the middle Euphrates, in the campaign of 116. They certainly remained at Dura-Europos long enough for the legion III Cyrenaica to erect an arch in honour of the Emperor to the north of the town…. Yet the sea-route to northern Syria, though it certainly never carried troops en masse, nor could have, remained significant. Trajan himself had travelled through the province of Asia and then Lycia, arriving by sea at Seleucia. It was in the second century, if not for certain before, that we can see Seleucia emerging as an established naval base. The Latin epitaphs of officers and sailors, from both the 'Syrian fleet' (now named as such for the first time) and those of Misenum and Ravenna, inscribed at Seleucia, reflect its importance in communications and represent a small island of Romanisation, and the use of the Latin language. So we find at Seleucia Pieria in 166 an optio of the Misenum fleet making a contract, in Latin and Greek, for the purchase from a sailor of the same fleet of a slave-boy 'from across the river [transfluminianum]', called Abba or also Eutyches. Then, as in 114-116, Roman armies were operating beyond the river Euphrates, captives will have been available in larger than normal numbers, and ships from other fleets will have come to Seleucia. D. van Berchem may well be right to suggest that we need to envisage a network of communications and supplies stretching from the Mediterranean through Seleucia to northern Syria and the Euphrates. That would explain why one of the very rare Latin honorific inscriptions from Syria was erected to a prefect of the Misenum fleet, Marcius Turbo, in about 114, precisely at Cyrrhus, on one of the two main routes from Antioch to Zeugma. Whether we would think of supplies, rather than forces, travelling over such distances is uncertain; but in later campaigns we do know that supplies were shipped from southern Asia Minor to Syria for the armies; and, while we must resist too confident a reconstruction of a supply network, an inscription from Caria does record an equestrian officer who had been ‘in charge of supplies in the Parthian war on the bank of the Euphrates’.”
The extent of the eastern Roman Empire under Trajan (grey area is territory gained after 106/7 by Trajan with the red squares denoting garrisoned Roman cities).\textsuperscript{20}

The period is bracketed by a great earthquake at Antioch that nearly killed the Emperor Trajan at the start of his Parthian campaign and was interpreted as a bad omen. After Trajan created new provinces - Armenia, Mesopotamia and Assyria - and believed he had been victorious, several Messianic revolts broke out simultaneously. The reasons are unclear to scholars, but the appearance of a comet, a Messianic symbol, may be the explanation; it is referred to in Chinese sources (and perhaps Juvenal, Satires, 6.407).\textsuperscript{21} The star “Wormwood” is associated through the name with false prophets and false messiahs (cf. Deut 29.8, Amos 5.7), the false message of salvation (encouraged by Babylonian Jewry) would have bitter results (as would the bitter outworking of the prophetic campaign, see, Rev 10.9-10). The fall of Parthia and Babylon came as a shock to the Jews. Their safe-haven and lucrative trade was (temporarily) interrupted. What follows in the next trumpets is an eruption of revolts, and false messianic movements culminating in the Bar Kochba revolt.

**A summary of the second and third trumpets:** A judgement of the Jews in Babylonia and on their lucrative trade. Babylon falls. This spurs on revolts throughout the Diaspora.
Fourth Trumpet (Rev 8.12): date range 115/116 to 122/123 CE

And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

In 116 Emperor Trajan completed his invasion of Parthia by capturing the cities of Seleucia, Babylon, Ctesiphon and Susa, marking the high-water mark of the Roman Empire’s eastern expansion. At about the same time (115-117) the Kitos War erupted²² with Jews in Egypt and Cyrene ignite a revolt against the rule of the Roman Empire, which spread to Cyprus, Judea, and the Roman province of Mesopotamia. This was a time of terrible slaughter and genocide with “people²³ rising against people” (Matt.24.7). The Jews rose up against their neighbours and wholesale slaughter occurred with atrocities being committed on both sides. Whole areas of the Roman Empire were depopulated and in the aftermath, Rome had to establish new colonies in some parts – with Jews banned from living in many places. Where Jews had previously lived prosperously for many centuries, they were now considered untrustworthy, hated and excluded.

Diaspora Revolts (map by Éric Grenier)²⁴
Jesus employs similar words to the fourth trumpet in Matt 24.29, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken”. The sun moon and stars are used in Rev 12.1 as a symbol for the Jewish nation. The “sun, moon and stars” are darkened in Joel representing the Assyrian invasion (in the land of Israel) and we noted that “Joel symbology” is used throughout the trumpets. However, here Jews outside the land are recipients of punishments (largely of their own making). There is no safe space or refuge outside God and his messiah. One cannot “hide in Babylon” or make money in Cyprus, Egypt etc…

**A summary of the fourth trumpet**: The Kitos war. Jewish uprisings everywhere; “ethnos rising against ethnos” (Matt 24.7)
Fifth and Sixth Trumpets (Rev 9.1-21): date range 122/123 to 136/137 CE

\(^1\)And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

\(^{14}\) Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

The second and third trumpets (doublets) have overlapping themes, similarly with the fifth and sixth trumpets. Although the sixth trumpet describes the Bar Kochba revolt ca 132-135 CE (with the death of Rabbi Akiva on the eve of the Day of Atonement in 136) the fifth trumpet is a prolepsis, anticipating the carnage and describing the invasion from the abyss (Euphrates) that is the result of the Bar Kochba rebellion --- the demonic locusts of the fifth and the demonic cavalry of the sixth trumpets are essentially the same enemy and not separate invasions.

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<td>(a) Lethal nature of their tails (v.10)</td>
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The plagues are a hyperbolic fusion of Joel and other Old Testament prophecies with Babylonian creation myths. This was a fitting response to Babylonian Jewry who was, no doubt, aware of these myths. Creation is now depicted as being undone, undone by demonic chimera emerging from the primordial abyss, unleashing doom in the form of the images found on the walls of the temple of Belus on the Euphrates. In his work, the historian Berosus\(^{26}\) reproduced all the known historical facts and traditions derived from native sources which were current in his day. It is therefore not surprising to find that his account of the Babylonian beliefs about the origin of things corresponds very closely with that given in the cuneiform texts, and that it is of the greatest use in explaining and partly in expanding these texts. His account of the primeval abyss, out of which everything came, and of its inhabitants reads:--
“There was a time in which there existed nothing but darkness and an abyss of waters, wherein resided most hideous beings, which were produced on a two-fold principle. There appeared men, some of whom were furnished with two wings, others with four, and with two faces. They had one body but two heads; the one that of a man, the other of a woman; and likewise in their several organs both male and female. Other human figures were to be seen with the legs and horns of goats; some had horses’ feet; while others united the hind-quarters of a horse with the body of a man, resembling in shape the hippo-centaurs. Bulls likewise were bred there with the heads of men, and dogs with four told bodies, terminated in their extremities with the tails of fishes; horses also with the heads of dogs; men too and other animals, with the heads and bodies of horses and the tails of fishes. In short, there were creatures in which were combined the limbs of every species of animals. In addition to these, fishes, reptiles, serpents, with other monstrous animals, which assumed each other’s shape and countenance. Of all which were preserved delineations in the temple of Belus at Babylon.”  

These enemies can torment with their heads and tails! They have scorpion tails and serpent heads. In other words you can’t touch them or pick them up, whatever you do you will end up being hurt. We can of course attempt to find some literality in these descriptions. For example the Romans had mechanical crossbows known as the scorpio or scorpion with torsion springs (which the Romans referred to as tormenta) – tormented by scorpions? They had also in the past used beardless-long haired (hair like women) Celtic mercenaries who either bleached their hair with lime stiffened into a crown of spikes, or wore horned crowns. It is quite possible that Celtic mercenaries from Britain were involved in the guerrilla warfare. The war became so serious that in the summer of 134 Hadrian himself came from Rome to visit the battlefield and summoned the governor of Britain (where Hadrian’s Wall was built to keep out the ferocious Celts), Gaius Julius Severus, to his aid with 35,000 men of the Legion X. There is however, no need to attempt to literalise every single detail as it is quite clear that the description depicts the unleashing of the armies of the underworld. Interestingly, the demonic tormentors mimic the torments called down by the witnesses. There are parallels linking the invasion and the witnessing:

**Revelation 9**
- Locusts – horses
- Tormented
- Unto them was given power
- By these three plagues
- Fire out of their mouths
- Power to hurt men

**Revelation 11**
- Witnesses
- Tormented them
- I will give power
- To smite the earth with all plagues
- Fire out of their mouth
- Power to shut heaven – power over the waters
This may well explain why the locusts have anthropomorphic features (faces like men and long hair like women 9.7-8) for they are the outworking of the prophetic programme dictated by the witnesses. It seems then that the witnessing programme runs (at least partially) parallel with the invasion.

According to Bloom, the beginning of this period (the 120’s) saw a decade of preparation by the Jews with the digging of (Viet-Cong style) tunnels and the purloining of arms from the Romans; “This preparation would have taken the good part of a decade, and it is likely that it began in the 120s, heralding the period when Rome reinforced their Judaean garrison”39......and......There had apparently been endemic unrest in Palestine, which would explain why the Romans felt it necessary to post a second legion in the territory some time before 120, which would likewise explain the intense spurt of road-building in the decade 120–130 to support the movements of the legions”.30 Some scholars even suppose that a small insurrection was put down during this period. According to rabbinic writings, Rabbi Akiva journeyed from Israel to Nehardea and Gazaka31 to meet with the Exilarch and others to make preparations for another revolt.32 Adiabene quietly began sending arms and supplies to Israel. In Sefer Yuhasin it is maintained that Bar Kokba waged war with the Romans in Mesopotamia,33 but this is probably a reminiscence of the struggles under Trajan. It is known that Jews from Babylonia enrolled themselves under Bar Kokba 34 and the crushing of Bar Kokba revolt in 135 CE no doubt added to the number of Jewish refugees in Babylon and Arabia. In 129 AD Emperor Hadrian inspected Caria, Cappadocia and Syria. In 129/130 CE, Hadrian visited Jerusalem, which was still in ruins from the revolt in 70. It is at this time the first (?) “Ploughing” of Jerusalem occurred --- although this may have been misinterpreted by the Jews --- with another “Ploughing” occurring after the Kochba revolt as punishment.35

The army released from the Euphrates-abyss is an impossibly huge two hundred million – the Greek literally has, “twenty thousand of ten thousands.” This is clearly hyperbole as both Persia and Rome had approximately 500,000 troops. China currently has about 2.3 million active military and the USA 1.4 million. No military, either present or past has a force of 200 million. Perhaps all military that ever existed would equal that number. From 66 CE on, the fourth legion (IVth Scythica) was stationed in Zeugma, an important crossing place on the river Euphrates, facing the Parthian frontier. It was still there in the third century. Between 132 CE and 136 CE, subunits of this legion fought against the Jews when they revolted under Simon bar Kochba. Bloom lists the legions involved as follows:
“Three entire legions were deployed: VIth Ferrata, Xth Fretensis—hastily strengthened with marines from Italy—and XXIIInd Deiotariana. No less than seventeen auxiliary units are known to have fought in Palestine. The XXIIInd Legion was probably annihilated by the Jews, since there are no indications of its existence after this war. In addition to the three legions sent in connection with Severus’s expedition, new reinforcements had to be sent, consisting of the IInd Legion Traiana Fortis. There are indications that units borrowed from other legions were involved in the struggle, possibly IIInd Cyrenaica, IIIrd Gallica and IVth Scythica. For the first time in more than a century, the Romans suffered from manpower shortage; two senators even started to conscript Italian boys. By that time, there were the equivalent of 12 army legions from Egypt, Britain, Syria and other areas in Palestine, taking into account both the complete legions noted and the vexillationes, alae and auxiliaries borrowed from additional legions.”

This was a huge army (for its time) and much of it was pulled back from the Parthian frontier with which Hadrian had made peace after the death of Trajan in 117 CE.

A Summary of the fifth and sixth trumpets: Jerusalem is “ploughed” and Jewry makes secret preparations to foment revolt. A messianic rebellion supported by Babylonian and Palestinian rabbis is launched. The revolt is crushed with devastating consequences—Rome hurls all her might at the rebels including Legion’s stationed at the Euphrates. This period also overlaps with the witnessing. The period closes with the death of Akiva on the eve of Atonement.

Completing the Picture

The picture is not completed yet as a number of themes dovetail in the following chapters to support the exegesis proposed here. Firstly, Revelation 14 (the seven thunders) has a number of elements that connect with the Bar Kochba revolt. Secondly, the consequences of the revolt (for Jews and Christians) require examination and thirdly, the theme of the Day of Atonement continues into Revelation 11, as does the “land covenant” made with Abraham. Finally, we need to examine why the seventh trump was not sounded and discuss how to identify a “repeat pattern” of similar (not exactly) the same archetypes.
1 Lighting storms often cause both fire and hail and the rare phenomenon known as St Elmo's fire is a violet–red plasma created by lightning and thunderstorms. Heidorn, K., Ph.D. Weather Elements notes that, “The Fire of St. Elmo. When the storm is particularly heavily charged, leaves, blades of grass and even the horns of cattle may glow at their tips. In fact, the glow of St. Elmo's Fire has often been observed on sharp objects in the vicinity of tornadoes”. [accessed May 2017] {HYPERLINK "http://www.islandnet.com/~see/weather/elements/stelmo.htm"

2 See, b. B. Metz. 59b

3 This is related to the dilemma that Jesus highlighted in John 7.22-23

4 Bernard M. Zlotowitz says, “Taken as a whole from the incidents cited Rabbi Akiva seems to have had a perverse joy (perhaps a sadomasochistic personality) in discrediting his teacher. Rabbi Eliezer, - even offering to be the bearer of bad tidings- notwithstanding his own statement that if an unsuitable person went to inform him the world would be destroyed”. Rabbinic-Lay Relations in Jewish Law, (eds., Walter Jacob, moshe Zemer, Rodef Shalom Press Pittsburgh PA 1993),17-18

5 See, M. Avot 3.12 later this resulted in the legal consequence of a death sentence – “a Gentile who studies Torah is liable to death” (BT Sanh. 59a).

6 Told in the form of a threefold joke; Akiva was made to wait outside the classroom because he was late in arriving and Eliezer’s students answered a difficult Torah question with a threefold reply, “The Law is outside”, “the Torah is outside” then “Akiva is outside”. In other words Akiva is the “Law and the Torah, why don’t you ask him instead of leaving him outside? See, Barry W. Holtz, Rabbi Akiva: Sage of the Talmud,(Yale University Press,2017),94

7 Matthew 15:6 - “Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition”.

8 Bat Kol, literally, “daughter of a voice” – a voice from Heaven i.e., sounds like “thunder” (cf. John 12.27-30). Talmudic tale (Bava Metzia 59b) where a Bat Kol decides that the ruling is in accordance with the view of Rabbi “Eliezer against that of the sages, Rabbi Joshua protests that the Torah is not in heaven (Deut3.12), and so a heavenly voice must not be allowed to overturn the clear ruling of the Torah that the majority opinion of the sages is to be adopted.

9 When Jewish pilgrims came to Jerusalem, they did not come empty handed (Deut. 16:16), and vast sums of money flowed into the temple. (Feldman 1992:5) Many of the pagan temples of the Greco-Roman world functioned as banks. Similarly, the temple in Jerusalem was not only a centre of religion, it was also a centre of finance. The temple was a treasury, or depository, where money was invested and where revenue was stored. The Jewish pilgrims supported, and contributed to, a large commercial enterprise that included the raising of animals for temple sacrifices, a banking system where foreign currency could be exchanged, and a hospitality industry for the accommodation of pilgrims. This enterprise employed thousands of people. The Diaspora Jews who did not travel to Jerusalem collected their tithes, taxes, and gifts, and these were then sent to Jerusalem. Tithes were a “mandatory contribution from agriculture and animals, or the equivalent payment in precious metals . . . [which] amounted to one-tenth of the yearly production or income.” (Stevens 2006: Kindle Location 282) Diaspora Jews living in urban centres did not make agricultural offerings; they mostly sent money, precious metals, and clothing. Another mandatory contribution was the temple tax. [accessed May 2017] {HYPERLINK "http://newlife.id.au/early-jewish-history/sending-sacred-money-to- jerusalem/"/}

10 The main source for the fiscus Judaicus is Josephus (War 7.218). The main and most explicit mentioning of the fiscus Judaicus in rabbinic literature is found in Mekhilta, Ba-Hodesh 1 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 203) in the well-known report on R. Johanan b. Zakka‘i’s homily on Song of Songs I :25 The salient passage the main source for the fiscus Judaicus is found in Mekhilta, Ba Hodesh 1 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 203) in the well-known report on R. Johanan b. Zakka‘i’s homily on Song of Songs I :25 The salient passage the main source for the fiscus Judaicus is found in Mekhilta, Ba Hodesh 1 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 203) in the well-known report on R. Johanan b. Zakka‘i’s homily on Song of Songs I :25 The salient passage the main source for the fiscus Judaicus is found in Mekhilta, Ba Hodesh 1 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 203) in the well-known report on R. Johanan b. Zakka‘i’s homily on Song of Songs I :25 The salient passage the main source for the fiscus Judaicus is found in Mekhilta, Ba Hodesh 1 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 203) in the well-known report on R. Johanan b. Zakka‘i’s homily on Song of Songs I :25 The salient passage the main source for the fiscus Judaicus is found in Mekhilta, Ba Hodesh 1 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 203) in the well-known report on R. Johanan b. Zakka‘i’s homily on Song of Songs I :25 The salient passage the main source for the fiscus Judaicus is found in Mekhilta, Ba Hodesh 1 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 203) in the well-known report on R. Johanan b. Zakka‘i’s homily on Song of Songs I :25 The salient passage the main source for the fiscus Judaicus is found in Mekhilta, Ba Hodesh 1 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 203) in the well-known report on R. Johanan b. Zakka‘i’s homily on Song of Songs I :25 The salient passage the main source for the fiscus Judaicus is found in Mekhilta, Ba Hodesh 1 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 203) in the well-known report on R. Johanan b. Zakka‘i’s homily on Song of Songs I :25 The salient passage the main source for the fiscus Judaicus is found in Mekhilta, Ba Hodesh 1 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 203) in the well-known report on R. Johanan b. Zakka‘i’s homily on Song of Songs I :25 The salient passage the main source for the fiscus Judaicus is found in Mekhilta, Ba Hodesh 1 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 203) in the well-known report on R. Johanan b. Zakka‘i’s homily on Song of Songs I :25 The salient passage the main source for the fiscus Judaicus is found in Mekhilta, Ba Hodesh 1 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 203) in the well-known report on R. Johanan b. Zakka‘i’s homily on Song of Songs I :25 The salient passage the main source for the fiscus Judaicus is found in Mekhilta, Ba Hodesh 1 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 203) in the well-known report on R. Johanan b. Zakka‘i’s homily on Song of Songs I :25 The salient passage

11 F. F. Bruce, Palestine Exploration Quarterly, Quarterly, 34

12 David E Lipman {HYPERLINK "http://www.moellerhaus.com/Misc/babjeews2to5cent.htm"} [accessed May 2017]

13 Robert Drews, COURSEBOOK: JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM, TO THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN CIVILIZATION Chapter Fourteen, Rabbinic and Other Judaisms, from 70 to ca. 250 (Vanderbilt University) {HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/rabbinicpdf.pdf"} [Accessed May 2017]


16 Xinru Liu, The Silk Road in World History, (Oxford University Press, 2010),33

17 Original obtained (and supplemented) from {HYPERLINK "http://www.worldhistorymaps.info/"} [accessed May 2017]

The 66 CE apparition of Halley's Comet would have appeared around the time of the Jewish Rebellion and just four years before the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE.

Called *Tumultu Iudaico* (The Tumult of the Jews)

Note, *ethnos* should be translated here as people or race, rather than nation

Although some authorities argue for a short rebellion in Israel at the same time (see Bloom, p.198). On the likelihood that the simultaneous external uprisings were planned or coordinated from Babylon see Bloom, 188-190.

Berosus was a Chaldean priest of Bel at Babylon who was acquainted with both astronomy and the history of the ancient world. He left Babylon when it was conquered by Alexander the Great and established himself in Asia Minor, on the island of Cos near Rhodes, where he set up an observatory and a school of astronomy. He also spent some time in Athens where he was held in such high esteem that they erected a copper statue in his honour. As the Greek language spread through Asia, during the Macedonian conquests, there was public interest in the histories that had been preserved by the Babylonians. Berosus, as a Babylonian priest who could speak Greek, was surrounded by an enquiring public who no doubt encouraged him to write his histories. He wrote his three books, about 290 BC, and although they are lost, their contents are known, from the authentic fragments. [HYPERLINK "http://www.annomundi.com/history/berosus.htm"](http://www.annomundi.com/history/berosus.htm) [accessed May 2017]


Celtic mercenaries from Turkey helped establish Ptolemy in ca 250 BC and some settled permanently in Roman Egypt.

Ibid, Bloom, p.,205

Ibid, Bloom, p., 204

Yeh., end and Gen. R. xxxiii. 5

Rapoport, in "Bikkure ha-Iritim," 1823, p. 70

ed. London, 245b

"Gola," in Saadia ibn Danan, in "Pe'er ha-Dor," No. 225

See: Ploughing the city in the section: [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/Digressions/Post70.pdf"](http://www.biblaridion.info/Digressions/Post70.pdf)

Ibid, Bloom, p., 206-207
Chapter 10
The Rainbow Angel

Revelation 10 is only eleven verses and yet it contains many mysteries and OT allusions and provokes many questions. The questions that the commentators concern themselves with are predominately (1) Is the little book/scroll in this chapter the same as the scroll that Christ unsealed in Rev 5? (2) Is the rainbow angel Christ? (3) Why was John told not to write down the seven thunders? An attempt will be made to answer these concerns but first a macro-chiasm is offered so that an overview can be obtained. None of the commentaries produce (in my view) a satisfactory analysis of the structure, therefore the following macro-chiasm is proposed:

A - Mercy covenant, Rainbow angel: (v.1)

B - Hand rainbow angel - a little open book βιβλαρίδιον [sea/earth] (v.2)
   a Voice Rainbow angel roars [seven thunders]= Judgement (v.3)
   b Voice from heaven (instruction) [Seal up write them not] (v.4)

C - Hand rainbow angel-lifted in Covenant Oath [sea/earth] (v.5)
   a' Voice Seventh angel - in days of (explanation) [no more delay (v.6) mystery finished (v.7)]
   b' Voice from heaven spake again (instruction) take the little book βιβλίον which is open [sea/earth] (v.8)

C' - Give me the little book βιβλαρίδιον (request by John) [response: take it eat it] (v.9)

B' - Hand rainbow angel- John took the little book βιβλαρίδιον [action John: ate it] (v.10)

A' - Mercy covenant (Rainbow angel): You must prophesy again [instruction to John] (v.11)

Important themes can be immediately identified, namely, the centre of the spiral C-C' is concerned with the angelic oath and the request by John to be given the “little book”. In the Song of Witness (Deut 32.40-41) the lifting of the hand signifies judgement and in Daniel 12.7 it specifies a 3½ year period of “scattering” for the holy people. Whereas the focal point of the chiasm concentrates on judgement the outer bounds speak of mercy as the rainbow covenant of mercy finds its outworking in the instruction for John to prophecy again A-A'. The inner metric B-B' compliments each other with the βιβλαρίδιον in the hand of the angel now taken out of the hand of the angel by John, who consequently eats the book. There is however, a micro-chiasm alternating in the form a-b-a'-b' with the theme of a “voice”. First the seven thunder voice of the rainbow angel, followed by a voice from heaven with instructions (about sealing) then a timeframe is given in the “days of the voice of the seventh angel” (which is the angel of Rev 11.15) then a heavenly voice instructs John to take the open book out of the angel’s hand. There is also a contrast between b (seal) and b' (open) and the formula that describes the angel as “standing upon the sea and upon the earth” is repeated thrice in B-C- b' thus creating another mini chiasm bracketing the swearing of the oath in v.5 which lies in the centre.
The perspective of John

The reassurance over divine delay (v.6) is in answer to the cry of the martyrs (how long?) coming from under the altar in Rev 6.9 or perhaps it should be read as “that time shall not be yet” (YLT). If referring to “delay” the question regarding duration is valid (how long?), especially if we accept that John wrote at the cusp of the Nero persecution and the commencement of the Jewish war. John understood from the sixth seal and the shaking of the fig tree that it would not end well for Jerusalem. If understood as “that time shall not be yet” it indicates that there is more to happen and this reading is supported by v.7 which states that the end is in “the days of the voice of the seventh angel” (which is the last trump). So John is told that either; (1) When the last trump sounds there will be no more delay, or; (2) The time is no yet, but when the last trump sounds, etc. Both readings give a similar sense. A first century believer might expect the return of Christ to occur soon after such a cataclysmic event as the fall of the city and the temple but instead John was shown a further repeat pattern beginning with a number of trumpet judgements. However, these trumpet judgements are specifically interrupted at the point where we are told:

Revelation 9:20-21 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

It is at this very point (at the end of Rev 9.20-21) that the trumpets are interrupted by the vision of the Rainbow angel. The rainbow was a covenant sign given after the deluge that promised that God would never again utterly destroy the earth. It was therefore a sign of mercy, similarly, the passage that speaks of divine judgement in the Song of Witness is offset with mercy; “and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people” (Deut.32.43). Therefore, judgement is counterbalanced with mercy. The great roar of the seven thunders utter judgement –an obvious allusion to the seven voices of the Lord in Psalm 29 where, “The LORD sits upon the flood; yea, the LORD sits as King forever” (Ps 29.10).
However, surprisingly (perhaps shockingly) John is told to “seal up…and not write” down the thunders. Does that mean that they are unrecorded? (Why seal what is unwritten?). That is not the case (more on this anon) --what it means is that the looming judgement of Jerusalem in 70 CE (still in John’s future) would not be the final judgement, neither would the trumpets (that he was currently describing) herald the final judgement. Just as the Seals found a fulfilment in 70 CE, so also the trumpets found a fulfilment in 135 CE. The final judgement against Jewry was still reserved for the distant future when there would be no more delay because the mystery of God would be completed. The mystery of God encompasses among other things the inclusion of the Gentiles which coincided with Jewry being cast off (trampling of the Gentile court, Rev 11.2) until the time of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Lk 21.24) because (as Paul says), the reconciling of Israel is life from the dead (Rom 11.15, cf. Rev 11.18). John is being informed of the recurrent, repetitive nature of the judgements but also of the witnessing (Rev 10.11) --- prophecy again (πάλιν, palin) or, prophecy anew as in renewal or repetition of the action (so Strong’s). Nothing is pre-ordained, as the possibility always exists for mercy if repentance is forthcoming.

God has more than one way to realize his plans and remain true to his word. However, stubborn refusal and disobedience resulted in a final five month (Rev 9.5, 10) siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE and a five month siege of Betar in 135 CE. In both cases they fell on the same day (9th Ab) after 3½ years of war. The waters of the flood remained on the earth for five months until they abated (Gen 8.3).

Despite the flood of destruction predicted by Daniel (referred to by Josephus as a flood) and despite Jewry being cast off, in judgement God would still remember his mercy (rainbow). Obdurate refusal to listen in the first and second centuries would not prevent the accomplishment of the (mercy) “glad tidings/gospel” εὐγγέλισεν (euEggelisen) which he declared to his prophets (Rev 10.7) and that would occur without further delay “in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound” (Rev 10.7 cf. 11.15).
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Seal up…..write not (Rev 10.4)

NKJ Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them."

YLT And when the seven thunders spake their voices, I was about to write, and I heard a voice out of the heaven saying to me, 'Seal the things that the seven thunders spake,' and, 'Thou mayest not write these things.'

Before progressing it is useful to review how other commentaries interpret the “sealing” and two different interpretations are offered below. The first is from Grant R. Osborne:

“There have been many different interpretations of these seven thunders, especially since John is not allowed to write down their message. Least likely is the view that God has cancelled judgments so more could be converted, that is, shortened the days for the sake of the elect (Farrer, Caird, Sweet); this is impossible to explain in light of the judgments that predominate throughout chapters 6-18. Another view (Moffatt 1983:411-12) asserts that John uses the seven thunders rhetorically to explain why he is omitting details from his material in order to move to other matters; but if that were the case, John could simply omit them without comment. Still others (R. Charles, Morris) appeal to 2 Cor. 12:4 and state that the revelations were too sacred to be revealed at this time; however, it is hard to know why these were too sacred while the others in the book were not so. Or perhaps John is using this to oppose certain apocalyptic prophets who used these thunders to predict apocalyptic timetables regarding the exact time of the eschaton (Krodel 1989: 213-14); but this would certainly be a strange way to do so, since timetables are not part of the context. Closer to the context are those who say this represents a further series of plagues or judgments that have been either cancelled (Mounce 1998: 203-4) or not revealed (Beale 1999: 534—35). However, it is difficult to see why God would reveal three sets of judgments but not a fourth set. Hoiwerda (1999: 1 50) believes that the seven thunders may have called for an additional sevenfold judgment and are silenced because there is no place for another judgment since the other judgments had not led to repentance (9:20-21). But this fails to explain why there are further judgments in ensuing chapters. Two factors lead to at least a possible solution to this enigmatic passage. First, the seven thunders do not refer to a specific number of judgments but stem from the Ps. 29 allusion. Thus their message refers to general judgment rather than specific judgments. Second, the key term, σφράγισον, might well contain a double meaning. On the surface, there is an echo of Dan. 12:4, where Daniel is told to “close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end.” In this sense, God has determined the time when the church will know the contents, and they must await his will. Yet the connection of this passage with chapter 5 points to another aspect of the term, indicating sovereign ownership by God. In this context God commands John to “seal up” the message of the seven thunders and then tells him not to “write them down.” Thus John is being told to affirm God’s sovereign control over the judgments proclaimed in the thunders and then is prohibited from revealing the contents to his readers. The major message is one of sovereignty. God is in control, and the saints do not need to know all the details”.7
Note also the comments from James L. Ressegule:

“The thunders may be another series of seven judgments like the seals and trumpets, although John does not clarify. With a two-step progression a heavenly voice commands that the thunders be sealed up and not written down (10:4). To seal something is to make it unavailable, similar to the shutting of a door. When the door in heaven is opened the mysteries of heaven are accessible to those on earth (4:1), and when the seals of the scroll are opened the contents of the scroll are made known. The thunders, however, are sealed up made inaccessible to the peoples of the earth which the second step up, made inaccessible to the peoples of the earth, which the second step of the progression reinforces: “do not write it down” (10:4). The double command assures that whatever the thunders had to say will never be known. John gives no reason for their sealing, but Richard Bauckham may be correct that divine judgments are ineffectual in convincing the earth’s inhabitants to repent (cf. 9:20-21). Another course of action is needed. John’s prophecy and the testimony of the church becomes “God’s hitherto unrevealed purpose for achieving what judgments alone have failed to achieve: the repentance of the world. Whereas the trumpet plagues hardened the hearts of “the rest of humankind” (9:20), the testimony of the faithful church leads to their repentance (11:13).”
The seven voices (thunders) of Revelation 14

To my knowledge H.A. Whittaker is the only commentator that has suggested that the seven thunders are recorded in Rev 14 which repeatedly mentions the voice of God. Therefore the thunders equate with angelic pronouncements sometimes (but not always) accompanied by descriptors such as sounding like “many waters” or a “loud voice” etc. The thunders that have been identified (below) vary slightly from those suggested by Whittaker but both schemas end with the seventh thunder commencing the vial judgements of Rev 16.1:

- 1st thunder - - Voice from heaven [many waters] (14.2)
- 2nd thunder - - Another angel saying [everlasting gospel] (14.6-7)
- 3rd thunder - - And there followed another angel, saying, [Babylon fallen] (14.8)
- 4th thunder - - Third angel…saying with a loud voice [mark of Beast].(14.9)
- 5th thunder - - And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write (14.13)
- 6th thunder - - Crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud (14.15)
- 7th thunder - - And I heard a great voice out of the temple. (16.1)

Commenting on Rev 10 (Op., cit.) Whittaker says; “The most likely understanding of the Seven Thunders harmonizes with this conclusion. It is commonly overlooked that there is a seeming contradiction about the instructions given to John concerning the Thunders: “Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.” But how can that which has not been written down be “sealed up”? Clearly “seal up” implies that what the Thunders uttered had been already written down. If this be so, “write them not” must be read as: “write not their meanings.” Revelation 14 has further connections with Rev 10:

**Revelation 10**

- Seven thunders uttered their voices (v.3)
- I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me….write them not (v.4)
- That there should be time no longer (v.6)
- Created heaven…and earth…and sea (v.6)
- As he hath declared (euaggelizo) to his servants the prophets. (v.7)
- Mystery finished (v.7)

---as the voice of a great thunder (v.2)
---I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, write…(v.13)
---for the time is come for thee to reap (v.15)
---that made heaven, earth and the sea (v.7)
---having the everlasting gospel(euaggelizo) to preach unto them that dwell on the earth (v.6)
---(Mystery) Babylon falls (v.8)
The themes of Revelation 10 are expanded in Revelation 14 and it is there that the Greek equivalent of evangelize is used for preaching the good tidings/gospel. It only occurs twice in Revelation (Rev 10.7, 14.6). Moreover, the instruction not to write is countermanded with exactly the same words in Rev 14.13, “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them”.

Perhaps the “sealing” includes the writing or “sealing” of the faithful in the book of life? If writing and sealing only pertains to future prophecy that is for some mysterious reason withheld then it contradicts the intent of Rev 22.10; “And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand”. The time of the end was when the words would be “unsealed” —“And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (Dan 12.9). However, in Daniel the “sealing” included more than sealing mere words of prophecy, “and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Dan 12.1)…. “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book” (Dan 12.4).

So, both prophetic words can be written as well as the names of those who are to be saved and prophetic words can be sealed and the book of life can also be sealed. These “names” may be martyred but ultimately they will be saved –compare Rev 11.13 (YLT): “and killed in the earthquake were names of men” (faithful?) and Rev 13.8; “whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb”. One of the major themes of Revelation is the “sealing” of the faithful and writing of their names in the book of life (and exclusion of the beast worshipers). The Greek σφράγισον in Rev 10.4 is an imperative verb from the noun sphragis (σφραγίς) which according to definition (a) in Vine’s denotes “a seal or signet, Rev 7:2, “the seal of the living God,” an emblem of ownership and security, here combined with that of destination (as in Ezek.9:4), the person to be sealed being secured from destruction and marked for reward” and used as a verb sphragizo (σφραγίζω), Vine’s says, to seal (similar to the noun), is used to indicate (a) security and permanency…”

Therefore, while “sealing” can mean “making inaccessible” it also carries the meaning of securing (making safe) as a sign of ownership etc. In light of the fact that Amos 3.7 states that, “the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” it seems unlikely that John would hear utterances that he was subsequently told not to write down.
In this we can state with some confidence that Whittaker is correct in identifying the thunders with the voices of Rev 14. Moreover, we add our own observations that the “sealing” and “writing” probably relates to the saints who are to wait patiently for “that time shall not be yet” (Rev 10:6 YLT) many more saints will perish (during the thunder judgements) and thereafter the **Gentiles will be evangelized**. However, a final repeat of the pattern will occur right at the end –apostasy and preaching (**again**) but when it reaches that point, “in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished”. There will be “time no longer”.
The mighty angel (Rev 10.1)

And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

Allusions to the book of Daniel are obvious, not only in Rev 10 but as an inter-text that continues throughout the vision section (here limited only to Rev 10-12):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revelation</th>
<th>Daniel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10: 2. Right foot on the sea, left foot on the land.</td>
<td>12: 7. Standing on the waters of the river.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: 1. Feet as pillars of fire.</td>
<td>10: 6. Feet like polished brass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: 2. Open book in his hand.</td>
<td>10: 21. “I will show thee that which is noted in the Scripture of truth (the heavenly prototype).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: 5. Lifts right hand to heaven. (the left hand holds the book)</td>
<td>12: 7. Lifts both hands to heaven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: 7. Mystery of God to be finished as declared to the prophet.</td>
<td>12: 7. “All these things shall be finished.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11: 2. 42 months.</td>
<td>12: 7. Time, times and a half.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11: 18. The time of the dead that they should be judged.</td>
<td>12: 2. Many that sleep awake, to everlasting life or to contempt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is obvious that the Apocalypse is understood as a realization of Daniel’s prophecies and readers are referred to the Daniel commentary “God is Judge” as the same thematic (temple restoration and atonement) underlies both visions. The restored “temple” of these visions is the Lord Jesus Christ (and his saints).
The “mighty angel” appears in Rev 10.1 and also Rev 18.21. Here, the mighty angel has an open book (little book) and takes an oath and in Rev 18 the mighty angel announces the final violent fall of Babylon and this indicates that the two events are linked (although separated by historical time). The characteristics of the “mighty angel” are also similar to the description of Christ:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Angel of Revelation 10</th>
<th>Christ in Revelation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Clothed with a cloud</td>
<td>• Behold he cometh with clouds (1.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• His face as the sun</td>
<td>• as the sun shines in his strength (1.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• His feet as pillars of fire</td>
<td>• His feet like unto fine brass (1.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• as when a lion roars</td>
<td>• The Lion of the tribe of Judah (5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A rainbow was upon his head</td>
<td>• rainbow throne…Lamb in midst (4.3, 5.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The correspondence between the “mighty angel” and Christ has many commentators suggesting that the “mighty angel” is actually Christ. This is unnecessary and is a result of the failure to recognize the phenomenon of agency. In the past, the Law was administered by the Yahweh angel who bore the divine name and had the characteristics of God (Exod 23.21).

In this new dispensation the “mighty angel” bears the characteristics of Christ (that were revealed in Rev 1) and now the “mighty angel” bearing the same attributes by association, acts as Christ’s agent. The description “mighty” or “strong” is a play on the name of Gabriel; “mighty/strong/ man/warrior of God” and it is this angel that spoke with Daniel (8.16, 9.21) and announced the birth of Christ (Luke 1.19 note the word used in Luke: “glad tidings”) and the birth of the prophetic forerunner second Elijah (Luke 1.36).

In Rev 10 another prophetic commission is announced (prophesy again) and the word “evangelize” (good tidings) is encountered. Thus, we have the first set of attributes linked with Christ himself giving the message of the Apocalypse and the second description of the attributes linked with the “mighty angel” who gives the message that will further the gospel contained in the little book. Therefore, the “mighty angel” appears at critical junctures of divine history, to announce dramatic interventions in human affairs for the furtherance of the divine plan and it is fitting that this same “mighty angel” appears for the last time to announce (with satisfaction) the violent overthrow of Babylon as this is the outcome of his previous proclamations.
It is also fitting that this angel is a “warrior” because the gospel message is at war with the world and in this he anticipates and represents the one who-- “judges in righteousness and makes war” (Rev 19.11). However, let us be clear, Christ is “above the angels” (cf. Heb 2.5) and the angels themselves have become “fellow servants” (Rev 22.9) with the saints in this war against Babylon.

It was not possible for the angels to “open the scroll” (Rev 5.3) but it is fitting that Jesus as “commander in chief” delegates to the “mighty angel” (that announced his birth!) to give a message to his servant John which will also result in an Elijah mission and a birth! And this is the beginning of the answer to that other question – the “little book” is not the same as the scroll of Rev 5 ---it is another phase of the divine plan (more on this anon) and that is why it is announced by the “mighty angel”.

As already noted, the rainbow is the covenant of mercy demonstrating that wrath is offset with mercy. The goal of this next phase is to induce repentance so that the consummation of all things can occur.
Revelation 10:2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

This is the first mention of the “little book” and the first mention of the formulaic “upon the sea and the earth” although here we are told that the left foot is on the earth and the right foot is on the sea. Note that on the other two occasions the sea is mentioned first (vv.5, 8). Clearly, the sea has preference over the earth and this is indicated by the right foot being placed on the sea (as in put you best foot forward) with the biblical predilection of associating the right (hand etc) with blessing. The sea (the Gentiles) is about to receive a blessing and the blessing (the gospel message) is to the disadvantage of the earth (Israel), who will be temporarily (rainbow) cast off because of their refusal to repent. Notably, in 135 CE as punishment for the Bar Kochba rebellion, Jerusalem officially became a Gentile city (without a temple to Yahweh but instead a temple to Jupiter—it became Jupiter’s city).

The description of the colossal angel that bridges the land and the sea with his feet adds local colour to the vision as readers would immediately think of the one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the “Colossus of Rhodes” a giant statute in the harbour of Rhodes (it probably inspired the statue of liberty in New York harbour).

It was built in 280 BCE and fell over in an earthquake in 224 BCE but the ruins (the legs standing and body on the ground) were still a tourist attraction in John’s day and the island of Rhodes is less than 300 km sailing from the isle of Patmos. Apparently, the inner core of the statue was stone blocks and it was clad with bronze plating on the outside – making the 33m (108 feet) statue glow in the sun as mariners approached the island from a distance. This was fitting as the statute was dedicated to the sun god (Helios).
One cannot help but note that the “mighty angel” has a face like the sun and legs like pillars of fire. It is quite possible that this statute had one arm raised to the heavens (or held a torch). A popular myth held that the legs stood on two huge piers guarding the harbor, and ships would pass between the legs (but this is structurally impossible for the building techniques of the day). As Aune (1998a: 556) points out, however, it was actually on a promontory overlooking the harbor, and the ruins of the magnificent statue were still visible on the ground in John’s day.

Preserved in Greek anthologies of poetry is what is believed to be the genuine dedication text for the Colossus; “To you, O Sun, the people of Dorian Rhodes set up this bronze statue reaching to Olympus, when they had pacified the waves of war and crowned their city with the spoils taken from the enemy. Not only over the seas but also on land did they kindle the lovely torch of freedom and independence. For to the descendants of Herakles belongs dominion over sea and land.”

One thing is certain, John is not describing the “colossus” but the “mighty angel” who is a repudiation of what the “colossus” stood for. Namely, it is the God of Israel who is sovereign and has dominion over heaven, earth (Israel) and sea (Gentiles). The divine plan for redemption would not fall foul of an earthquake (like the colossus did), in fact it would cause an earthquake that would shake the very foundations of the world and man’s dominions; “And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath” (Rev 16.18-19).

Now we turn to the “little book”, interestingly, the “mighty angel” was clothed with a cloud in 10.1; περιβεβλημένον (peri-beblemenon), literally, “having-been-about-cast” (i.e., clothed or surrounded) which is no doubt a play on 10.2; βιβλαρίδιον (biblaridion) as if the “mighty angel” is “clothed” with the “little book” i.e., his message forms a cloud around him, the word cloud is associated with witnesses/witnessing i.e., “coming with the clouds” (witnesses) as in Heb 12.1 “compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses”. The message is therefore ultimately one of mercy (rainbow) but the outworking will herald grievous punishments for unrepentant Jewry. At this point it is instructive to see how some of the commentaries regard the “little book” –
“The mighty angel in 10:2 holds ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ βιβλαριδίων ἠνεῴγμενον (en tē cheirī autou biblaridion ēneōgmenon, a little scroll opened in his hand). There is a great deal of debate as to whether this is the same scroll as the great scroll of chapter 5. Many (e.g., R. Charles, Lohmeyer, Lohse, Kiddle, Court, Roloff, Mounce) believe that these are two different scrolls. The term for the scroll in 5:1 is βιβλίον (biblion, scroll), while here it is βιβλαριδίων (biblaridion, little scroll). That scroll was articular, in the right hand of God, closed and sealed with seven seals, while this is anarthrous and open in the hand of the mighty angel. Therefore, the content of the first scroll is seen to be the visions of 6:1-8:5, while the content of this “little scroll” is restricted to 11:1-13. However, there are several problems with this view, leading others (Beasley-Murray; Sweet; Boring; Wall; Bauckham 1993b: 243-49 Holwerda 1999: 151) to argue for identity between the scrolls of chapters 5 and 10. To restrict the scroll of chapter 5 is to do an injustice to its contents. As argued in 5:1-2, the first scroll contains the divine plan for the ending of this age, not just the seals and the angel with the censer. Also, βιβλίον is already a diminutive in form, though not in function, and John calls this “little scroll” βιβλίον in 10:8. Thus these two terms are probably synonyms. Bauckham (1993b: 244-45, following Mazzaferri) argues that diminutives in Revelation do not carry diminutive force, and βιβλαριδίων could have been used in the early church for Christian prophetic revelation (as exemplified in Herm. V/ii. 2.1.3; 2.4.1-3). Moreover, both Rev. 5:2 and 10:1 begin with “And I saw a(nder) mighty angel,” and while the content of Rev. 5:1 stems from Ezek. 2:9-10, the content of Rev. 10:2-3 stems from Ezek. 3:1-3 (both part of Ezekiel’s call). Therefore, the scroll was sealed in the right hand of God in chapter 5, progressively opened as the Lamb “opened” the seals in chapter 6, and now lies open in the hand of the mighty angel in chapter 10. It too tells the divine plan for the end of the age, and now John is to be shown how that plan relates to the saints that are still on earth. By using the imagery of the scroll closed in the hand of God, opened by the Lamb, and now open in the hand of the mighty angel, John is expanding the vision of Ezekiel’s call to relate his own prophetic call. Nevertheless, the choice of βιβλαριδίων here was probably quite deliberate, and thus it does carry some diminutive force (Aune 1998a: 558 calls it “a true diminutive” because it is the diminutive of βιβλίον, already a diminutive in form). There is identity between the two scrolls but not absolute unity (so also Michaels 1997: 133-34; Beale 1999: 530-32). The scroll here is a “small” portion of the whole scroll containing the plan of God for ending this present evil world and introducing the “new heavens and new earth,” and depicting the place of the church in these events.”
Unlike other languages, English does not have many diminutives but it does for “book” a small book becomes a booklet – and this is the essence of the argument above – is the book (scroll) of 10.2 the same as the book of 5.1 or is it a booklet? The technical explanation is not clear cut but according to Aune they are all diminutives of “Bible” or, “book” (βιβλος); the subsequent terms seem to denote decreasing magnitude i.e., shrinking in size, so if the Bible (βιβλος) is a book, then a Biblion (βιβλιον) would be a mini-book and a Bibliotion (βιβλιδιον) a minute-book with a Biblarition (βιβλαιδιον) being the smallest i.e., a booklet. However, as pointed out above, John calls the scroll both a Biblarition (βιβλαιδιον) in 10.2 and a Biblion (βιβλιον) in 10.8 (the same term as in 5.1).

However, stepping back from technical explanations of the Greek to gain an overview we can determine that the structure of the Apocalypse is hierarchical as the seventh seal contains the trumpets and the seventh trumpet contains the seven plague-vials. Therefore, the scroll that Christ unseals contains all subsequent revelations including Rev 10. They are all part of the Biblion (βιβλιον) opened by Christ in Rev 5. The fact that John uses two different (but similar) words to describe the book (scroll) can be explained by the need to both identify it with and at the same time distinguishing it from the scroll of Rev 5. The Biblarition (βιβλαιδιον) is therefore a smaller part of the larger plan Biblion (βιβλιον) and as such the Biblarition can be called a “booklet” but it is still a leaf out of the larger book Biblion (βιβλιον) that Christ opened, which itself is a book in an even larger “Bible” (βιβλος) that God revealed to his prophets over the ages.

Rev 10 is then an interrumpo interruptum of the prophetic flow, a crisis brought on by obdurate Jewry who refused to repent --- the strategy changes and a new phase in the grand plan for redemption is initiated. The Jews had shown almost superhuman fortitude in resisting the divine will. Like their forefather Jacob they wrestled God (his angel) to a draw ---they would not--- could not overcome their old nature yet they still desired the blessing. It was only by employing reserves of supernatural power that the angel was able to disable Jacob—such was Jacob’s strength.
Seven Thunders (Rev 10.3-4)

And cried with a loud voice, as \textit{when} a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

It is significant that the “seven thunders” are heard by the apostle John, who together with his brother James was “surnamed Boanerges which is, \textbf{the sons of thunder}” (Mk.3.17). The two apostles form types of the two witnesses, for it is John himself that receives the commission to witness at the end of Rev 10. This is obviously not literal, for John was already an old man, and James had died some time back, before this latest commission was given. Never the less, although not present in body, the sons of thunder are present in spirit when the two future witnesses speak.

Why were the brothers given the epithet Boanerges? Several suggestions have been made, amongst them, the suggestion that the name belonged to the two Sanhedrin assistants, who counted the votes for “Yea” or “Nay”, and who were seated at the \textbf{right and left} of the High priest. With this may be compared the request by James that they sit on the Lord’s right and left hand in his kingdom. (Mk. 10.36)

This is an attractive suggestion, for in essence this is what the two witnesses are instructed to do, “to measure the temple” (count the votes for and against), furthermore the Lord asked, whether they could, “drink of the cup that I drink of and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?” (Mk.10.38-39). When they replied in the affirmative Jesus said they would indeed experience the same baptism as himself – that is, suffering and martyrdom due to their witnessing. The witnesses of Rev 11 also share in the suffering of their Lord.
Rabbinic tradition comments as follows: “When thunder goes forth in his full force, no creature can understand it. It is not written none understands, but who can understand? The intelligent ones they know his hints and thoughts”.\textsuperscript{18} Here thunder is regarded as a divine means of communication, that only the wise will understand.

Whittaker makes a similar point, “[...] write them not” must read as “write not their meanings” otherwise it seems totally inappropriate to instruct John to, “seal them up.”\textsuperscript{19} However, as we previously noted the thunders that bring judgements also seal the fate of the faithful whose names are written in the book of life --- and at the point of reception (in Rev 10) John is being informed not to write or seal because their number is not yet full. There is more witnessing (martyrdom) to come and they must prophesy (again παλιν, palin) as the pattern repeats and culminates in the days of the seventh trumpet when there will be time no longer as the book of life is opened and the dead are raised.
The Oath (Rev 10.5-6)

And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.

In this passage God is the witness not the subject of the oath. Dan.12. 7 is clearly the source of the gesture, even though in that passage the angel lifts both hands. In LXX Deut 32.40 and Rev 10.5 alone, however, is the right hand raised as a gesture accompanying an oath. In the important passage in Deut 32.40, the first line of verse 40 can be constructed as the second part of v.39, i.e., “and no one can deliver from my hand, for I lift up my hand to heaven. I swear: as I live forever…” Apart from “lifting the hand to heaven and swearing” which is an allusion to the Song of Witness (Deut 31-32), there are also many other intertextual echoes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revelation</th>
<th>Song of Witness (Deut 31-32)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the wrath of the Lamb (6.16)</td>
<td>I will render vengeance (v.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wormwood (8.11) destroyer (9.11)</td>
<td>Bitter destruction (v.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scorpions, serpents (9.3,5,19)</td>
<td>Venom (v.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship devils (9.20)</td>
<td>Sacrificed to devils (v.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow (10.1)</td>
<td>Will be merciful (v.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left foot on Israel (10.2)</td>
<td>Hide my face from them (v.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right foot on Gentiles (10.2)</td>
<td>Provoked by a foolish nation (v.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seal up (10.4)</td>
<td>sealed up among my treasures (v.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lifted up his hand to heaven (10.5)</td>
<td>I lift up my hand to heaven (v.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sware by him that lives forever (10.6)</td>
<td>And say, I live forever (v.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two witnesses (11.3)</td>
<td>This Song a Witness (31.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem spiritually Sodom (11.8)</td>
<td>Vine of Sodom (v.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast: earth dwellers rejoicing (11.10)</td>
<td>Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people (v.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman in wilderness (12.14, 17.3)</td>
<td>Found in wilderness (v.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eagle wings (12.14)</td>
<td>Protected like eagle (v.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beast image (13.4) abomination (17.5)</td>
<td>Strange gods, abominations (v.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea-beast (13.1)</td>
<td>Send beasts with teeth (v.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deadly wound healed (13.3)</td>
<td>I kill, I wound and heal (v.39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Normally heaven and earth are called upon as witnesses to an oath, not because they serve as guardians or protectors of the covenant but because they are stable and permanent aspects of reality. That is not done here because the heaven, the earth, and the sea will all pass away. (Rev.21.1) The only true stable reality is God himself.

Both Daniel and Deuteronomy form the source for the lifting of the hand(s) to heaven, and Daniel, like John, is also instructed to, “shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” (Dan.12.4) Running to and fro is not a reference to air travel, (sic) and the increase of knowledge is not a reference to computers (sic). “Running to and fro” is biblical idiom for prophesying --- understanding of the prophetic word will flourish (the Apocalypse will not to be fully understood until the very last i.e., by the generation that will be alive when the Lord returns).

- And the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak (and it hasteth toward the end. R.V.) and not lie: though it tarry wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. (Hab.2. 2-3)

- None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. (Dan.12.10)

The question ---“How long?” is implicit in this section of the text. This was the question on the lips of the prophet Daniel; “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” (Dan 12.6) however, the question was not asked by Daniel, but, “one said to the man clothed in linen.” This question was asked on behalf of the saints of all ages (Rev 6.10), and although the question was probably asked by another angel, the possibility must be considered that perhaps Daniel actually saw John ask Gabriel the question.

The answer given was that, “there should be time no longer” (Rev10.6). The time period in Dan.12.7 is for a, “time, times and a half (3½ years); and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people all these things shall be finished.” This is alluded to in Rev.10.7, “the mystery of God should be finished.” Revelation also speaks of 3½ years in Rev 11.3. The question “how long?” was also on the lips of first century Christians (Rev 6.9).
Peter Watkins has also recognised that this question is implicit in the text, moreover the quote that we have already considered from Hab. 2.2-3, “it will surely come it will not tarry” carries the same overtones. Habakkuk contains many allusions to Revelation, furthermore Habakkuk twice poses the question (1.2; 2.6) corresponding with the two times the question is asked in Revelation.

- In the midst of the years, in the midst of the years (half way the seven – Dan.9.27) make it known; in wrath remember mercy. (= rainbow covenant) (Hab.3.2)

- Before his face shall go a report. (= the witnesses?) (Hab.3.5)

- Thy bow (rainbow?) was made quite bare surely thou didst bend thy bow at seven thunders.\(^20\) (Hab.3.9)

Habakkuk resided in the southern kingdom of Judah, and unlike the other prophets who preceded him, Habakkuk addressed his words not to his compatriots but to God. His principle question is: when will God fulfil his purpose and bring his reign of justice, righteousness, and peace on earth? When is the kingdom of God going to arrive?
The mystery of God finished (Rev 10.7)

But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

*It is finished* is a formula that occurs at critical moments in God’s purpose and it describes creative acts:

- Thus the heaven and earth *were finished*, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day (Gen.2.1, 2).

- Jesus cried with a loud voice, *it is finished* (John 19. 30; Mtt.27.50; Lk.23.46; Mk.15.37).

- The mystery of God *should be finished* (Rev 10.7), a great voice…*it is done*. (Rev 16.17). God has finished creating the ‘host of heaven’ and rests on the seventh day.

John is told twice to *take the “little book”*. It is not handed to him; even when he asks the angel to give it to him, the answer is *that he must take it*. This was also the experience of Ezekiel who was told to eat the roll and to fill his belly with it (Ezek.3.1, 3). On both occasions the idea is the same. The messenger of God has to take God’s message into his very life and being. The sweetness of the roll is a recurring theme; the judgments of God are sweeter than honey and the honey comb (Ps.19.10) “How sweet are thy words to my taste! Sweeter than honey to my mouth” (Ps.119.103) Apparently, when a Jewish boy was learning the alphabet it was written on a slate in a mixture of flour and honey, which he was allowed to lick off if he remembered the pronunciation. But for John the roll was both sweet and bitter at the same time. It is a sweet thing to be chosen as God’s witness, but the message he proclaimed was bitter. The sons of thunder have the privilege to be admitted to the secrets of heaven (seven thunders) but at the same time it was bitter to have to predict a time of terror, and martyrdom even if the result was ultimate triumph at the end.
The commission to witness (Rev 10.8-11)

And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it; and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

H.A.W. proposes that the mystery of God is the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, this is only partially correct. The mystery of God is the kingdom. This great mystery has various components.

(1) Bride (a great mystery cf. Eph.5.31-33)
(2) Christ who is the mystery of godliness (1 Tim.3.16; Col.2.2, 3)
(3) The casting away of Israel is a mystery (Rom.11.25)
(4) The inclusion of the Gentiles is a mystery (Eph.3.3; Rom.11.25)
(5) Eternal life is a mystery (1 Cor.15.51; Col.1.5, 27; Col.2. 2, 3 cf. 3. 3)

The counterpart to these Godly mysteries is the mystery of iniquity (2 Thess.2.7), Mystery Babylon (Rev 17.5) and the harlot-bride (Rev 17.7). The mystery of God encompasses many things but essentially it is the kingdom in all its aspects including the rejection of Israel and salvation preached to the Gentiles. The reconciliation of Israel at the end of this period is equated by Paul with the resurrection (Divine acceptance of Israel is quite literally life from the dead cf. Rev 11.18).
In the Apocalypse the “good tidings” or “eternal gospel” that is declared (evangelized) is not only the message of salvation but also the **hour of judgment** that falls on Babylon. This is indeed “good tidings” for the faithful and the theme is found in the seven thunders of Rev 14. Historically, Rev 14 finds a **literal realization** in the fall of Babylon (by Trajan, which shocked the Jews of Parthia) and subsequent fall of Jerusalem (extinguishing the Bar Kochba rebellion) in the **second century**. Although separated by some sixteen years the fall of Babylon and subsequently of Jerusalem are linked in a political and spiritual sense.

However, the second century fall of Babylon/Jerusalem was only a **partial realization** forming parts of a much larger pattern that will be **repeated at the end**. The mystery of God is then the final fall of Babylon and the consummation of the kingdom. **It is finished** does not mean that the kingdom is over, but that it has come to fruition, it is fulfilled. Amos 3.6-8 is almost a miniature paraphrase of the “little book” ---


The last trump sees the introduction of the kingdom and the judgment of the world (Rev 11.18).
1 On this Whittaker comments (footnote 47 point 2): “The R.V. margin translation: “that there shall be delay no longer,” is also unsatisfactory, for the simple reason that the Greek word chronos means “time” and does not mean “delay.”” H. A. Whittaker, Revelation - A Biblical Approach: Chapter 24 - The Angel with the Open Book (ch. 10) [accessed May 2017] @ {HYPERLINK "http://christadelphianbooks.org/haw/rev/rev24.html"} Contra Whittaker, the added description, “no longer” as in “time no longer” can mean “no more delay” Most translation render the Greek as “there will be no more delay” (NKJ/ASV/NIV/NIV/RSV) but YLT has “that time shall not be yet” and the CLV has “there will be no longer a time of delay”.

2 Note: Habakkuk 3:2 O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy. Note also Hab 3.10, “the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high”. Compare, “the midst of the years” with “and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the obligation to cease” in Dan 9.27.

3 Daniel 9.26b And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

4 The last 5 months of the siege of Jerusalem were particularly nasty and are recorded as lasting from April 14th to September 8th (5 lunar months). Josephus comments: “…the city would either be swallowed up by the ground opening upon them, or been overflowed by water, or else been destroyed by such thunder as the country of Sodom perished by…for by their madness it was that all the people came to be destroyed” (Wars book 5.13.7).

5 The angel has his left foot on the land (Israel) and his right foot on the sea (Gentiles)

6 Revelation 10:7 in the ASV: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets. In the CLV: But in the days of the seventh messenger's voice, whenever he may be about to be trumpeting, the secret of God is consummated also, as He evangelizes to His own slaves and the prophets.

7 Op., cit., for references and Bibliography; Grant R. Osborne, Revelation, (Baker Publishing Group, 2002), 397-398

8 Bauckham, Theology of the Book of Revelation, 83; cf. also Farmer, Revelation,87

9 James L. Ressegule, The Revelation of John: Narrative Commentary, (Baker Academic, 2009),154

10 [1] “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven... saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him...” (v 6, 7) [2] “And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen” (v. 8). This is repeated and expanded in 18:2, where the angel “cried with a strong voice.”[3] “And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image...” (v 9). As in the other heptads, there is a break in the sequence here, and then the Thunders are resumed at v. 15:

[4] “And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice... Thrust in thy sickle, and reap...”[5] “And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle” (v. 17). The words and action of this angel are not described here, but that lack is more than made good in the detail of 19:17: “an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice... Come, gather yourselves together unto the supper of the Lamb on Mount Zion (...2).

[7] “And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth” (16:1). Thus, in harmony with the earlier structure of Seals, Trumpets and Dramatis Personae, the seven Vials evolve from the Seventh Thunder. H. A. Whittaker, Revelation - A Biblical Approach: Chapter 29 - The Lamb on Mount Zion (14:1-5) [accessed May 2017] @ {HYPERLINK "http://christadelphianbooks.org/haw/rev/rev29.html"}


13 However, when referencing the oath the order becomes heaven then earth and then sea (10.6). Each of these locations is followed by the formula “and the things that therein are”. The reference here is to divine sovereignty, (i.e., God as creator) and that influences the order of the domains as first the heavens (angelic realm), then Israel (earth) then the Gentiles (sea) are created. God’s power is universal and he is Lord over all the things in these different realms. The order is reversed in the other instances to denote divine preference (or lack thereof).

14 The new city was to be named Colonia Aelia Capitolina. Aelia is derived from the emperor’s family name (Aelius, from the gens Aelia), and Capitolina refers to the cult of the Capitoline Triad (Jupiter, Juno and Minerva). The land was renamed Palestine in honour of the Philistines – it seems Hadrian was quite annoyed (sic) with the Jews.


16βιβλιάριον is two steps removed from βιβλίον. It is the diminutive of βιβλιάριον, which is the diminutive of βιβλίον (so Aune; BDAG 176 says βιβλιάριον and βιβλιάριον are both diminutives of βιβλίον and that βιβλιάριον is the diminutive of βιβλίον).

17 Ibid., Osborne,194-195

18 Gen. Rab. 12:1 – trans., Epstein, Babylonian Talmud
19 Whittaker, Revelation, 145

20 This is a reconstruction of the LXX text by J. Ziegler, where the M.T. has probably been corrupted. The LXX has seven sceptres i.e., seven thunders. (Day, *Veitn Testamentum* 29 [1977] 146-7)
Temple theology

Is the temple in Revelation chapter 11vv. 1-2 literal or figurative? Does a literal (or figurative) reference to the temple have implications for the dating of Revelation? A literal reference may indicate that Revelation was written before the destruction of Herod’s temple in AD 70. Does the prophecy indicate (as some Evangelical Christians believe) that a Jewish temple (not Ezekiel’s temple) will be rebuilt before the Lord returns? These are complex and interconnected themes and we need to examine the text carefully before reaching tentative conclusions.

Temple thematic is important and ubiquitous throughout the Old and New Testaments. It is a theme that has been examined in some depth by scholars. We know, for example, that Jesus likened his body to a temple and that believers constitute the building blocks of that temple. It is therefore useful at this juncture (before we examine Rev 11 vv.1-2) to summarize a theology of the temple.

The most important aspect of the temple is that it has always existed in heaven. Any terrestrial temples are merely copies (patterns if you will) of the heavenly temple. We need to clarify this as even the heavenly temple is in essence merely a metaphor as Solomon acknowledges that even the “heaven of heavens” cannot contain God. Therefore, we should not imagine the divine presence as literally seated on a throne in a heavenly temple (“holly of holies”) as the creator is greater than his creation. Temple imagery is based on cosmology, for example the seven branched menorah is derived from the cluster of seven stars know from ancient times as the “seven sisters” and when Jesus mentions that in his Father’s house are “many mansions” he is not only referencing the “priestly rooms” in Herod’s temple but also obliquely inferring the zodiac through which the planets travel.

The division into “houses” seems to have first occurred in ancient Babylon and been absorbed by the Greeks. The sky and the planets were thought of as “gods” by the ancient Babylonians and “signs and wonders” were examined for prognostication (much as astrology is nowadays) and thought to announce historical events of import (a star to announce Jesus’ birth). The Lord is effectively telling his twelve disciples that he is leaving in advance to prepare a place for them in the “heavenly temple” (with its twelve mansions) -- similarly, the priests had designated “priestly rooms” in the earthly temple.
Effectively, the “heavens” become the divine temple and the “temple furniture” is the stars, planets, constellations etc; “Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?” (Isa 66.1). However, even here we must be careful for the **“heavens” are also a symbol.** God cannot be contained by his own creation, even by the mysterious heavens, for everything “lives and moves and has its being in him”. Human minds need symbols and imagery – we all live somewhere -- as humans our existence is inextricably linked with the earth. Most of us have a street and a home address, a place of residence --- God does not. He does not need a temple (even the heavens) but has chosen to build a temple out of people who are transformed into his image.

In Acts Stephen brought the devastating argument that God did not need a temple, did not want a temple and never asked for a temple. It was presumptive of David to build a temple as God only ever asked for a tabernacle. The difference between the tabernacle and the temple was that the tabernacle **was temporary and moveable.** It was a “tent” that had to be erected and dismantled --- the sort of home a nomad might choose (not the creator of the universe). It spoke of a transitory impermanent residence (as opposed to the permanence of a building). It directed the way in advance of the Israelites and prepared a place for the Israelites during their wanderings. **Immeasurable power and glory in the form of the shekinah chose to dwell in a tent** (a bit like housing a fusion reactor in a shoe box).

The Ark (not present in Herod’s temple) represented a “resurrection box” as it contained within the symbols of new life. The tabernacle itself, through its very impermanence represented the principle that God’s strength is made perfect in weakness, namely the mortality of Christ that was dismantled and then erected (resurrected) to prepare the way for the new Israel in their wanderings.
Temple imagery

A progression of temple imagery in Scripture can be represented as follows:

1. Heavenly Temple – symbology – stars, constellations, zodiac etc
2. Eden – a garden sanctuary based on the heavenly temple
3. Tabernacle – a temporary tent sanctuary based on the pattern of the heavenly temple
4. Temple - - a building based on the heavenly sanctuary
5. Jesus and his ecclesia – the true dwelling place of God

There are numerous connections between Eden and the Tabernacle. The use of certain words such as “lamps” for the luminaries and mention of seasons (i.e. feasts) anticipate the tabernacle. This is confirmed by the giving of a law (don’t eat) and the layout of Eden (as a sanctuary with cherubim and East entrance and the tree of life as the menorah). Moreover, this is clearly a priestly account with emphasis on activity that separates and divides elements in accordance with the holiness code. Furthermore, the slaughter of Abel (at the entrance to Eden) and the sending away of Cain mirrors the Day of Atonement ritual. The Bible concludes with paradise restored - a “new heavens and earth”, using imagery and metaphor that links the end in Revelation (eschaton) with the beginning (creation) in Eden. It is a picture of paradise restored – intimate communion with God.

Moreover, Eden, the tabernacle and all the subsequent temples are all copies of the “heavenly sanctuary” – “Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount” (Heb 8.5).

In Revelation we see an integration of symbology combining celestial and terrestrial temple imagery: “The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches” (Rev.1.20). The “seven stars” in heaven (the ‘seven sisters’ constellation) represent the angels of the seven churches (earthly menorah). So, the seven heavenly lights have a counterpart in the earthly seven branched light-stand. However, both the celestial and the terrestrial imagery are metaphysical –the seven stars are not actually a lamp-stand in a heavenly temple nor are the seven churches a literal menorah.
Revelation makes extensive use of Jewish temple imagery and liturgy and care must be taken to differentiate between actions located in the “heavenly temple” or on earth. The conclusion of Revelation depicts a temple built out of people. Note that is called the “tabernacle” – “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them” (Rev.21.3). It is not called the temple because “I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Rev 21.22). The city itself is built on the foundation of the apostles (21.14) the tribes of Israel on the gates (21.12). “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11.16).

The builder of this city is God himself and the temple is formed by Jesus and his saints. There is no mention of the Jews building a temple and the imagery of Ezekiel’s temple has been transformed into a metaphysical dwelling place rather than a temple drenched in the blood sacrifices of the Old Covenant. There is no longer a need for a “memorial” or “typical” sacrifice because “the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there (Yahweh Shammah)” (Ezek.48.35). If they require a memorial, the Lord only needs to show them his wounds “and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him” (Zech 12.10).

The reinstitution of animal sacrifice by the Jews of the kingdom age (or before the kingdom arrives) would be an abomination to God. “He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations” (Isa.66.3). God has removed the Old Covenant permanently for we have “a better covenant with better promises….Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Heb.8.6, 13). To revive the “Old” in whatever form, for whatever reason would be Anathema Maranatha.
Eden, the tabernacle and the temple portrayed a microcosm of the universe. God is effectively bringing heaven on earth as in the “New Jerusalem” which descends from heaven. There is no more separation between the holy and the profane as the whole earth is filled with His glory (His will be done on earth as in heaven). It becomes a place of perfect communion between God and man because man is transformed into his image.

Terrestrial sanctuaries represented this principle as God dwelt between the “living creatures” (cherubim) atop the “mercy seat” on a box that contained within the symbols of new life (resurrection) because God is a God of the living not of the dead. The sanctuary is a place of perfect communion between God and man and this can be none other than Christ and his saints (the new temple). All the sanctuaries speak of hope (we are not abandoned) and purpose (life has a goal) restoration (atonement for the fallen) and intimacy (Yahweh is not distant but involved with his creation) pointing to the time when He will be “all in all”.

The Temple in Revelation 11v.1-2

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.  

2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two month.

During the first century king Herod had enclosed the temple perimeter with colonnades and it was referred to as the Outer Court because the “gentiles” were not permitted to enter beyond the outer perimeter. It is in this portico that commercial activity occurred (money changing and the purchasing of animals). Animals were killed in the slaughter house (Shambles) by the priests. Warning signs around the outer court stated that Gentiles who entered beyond this point incurred the death penalty. This outer forecourt or temple esplanade eventually came to be called the Gentile court.
Trampling the Temple

The first thing to note is that the Greek in Rev 11.1 employs ναός (naos) for the temple of God referring to the Holy place and particularly to the inner sanctum (Most Holy) rather than the complete temple complex. The altar is also mentioned and refers most probably the altar of burnt sacrifice (rather than the incense altar) and so the area is unquestionably the priestly court which contained both the altar and the sanctuary.

The second important factor of note is mention of the holy city in 11.2 which refers to the city of Jerusalem (on earth). This is distinguished from the “heavenly city” and the “heavenly temple” by the word heaven, as in Rev 11.19--“there was opened the temple” (the naos) “of God that is in heaven, and there was seen in His temple” (His naos) “the ark of His covenant.” The text in verse 19 clearly states that we are dealing with the heavenly temple and this is confirmed by the fact that the Ark of the Covenant was not present in Herod’s temple. Similarly, when New Jerusalem is revealed in chapter 21 it is clearly distinguished from its earthly counterpart—“I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven” (21.2). Therefore, the “holy city” in Rev 11.2 refers to the earthly city of Jerusalem and this is confirmed by Rev 11.8 where it is called the great city, “where also our Lord was crucified”.

The OT often refers to Jerusalem as the holy city (holy mountain etc),9 the first time the term is used is in Isa.48.2, a chapter of judgement against Israel that describes divine foreknowledge and ends with the words, “There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked”. However, the text most likely being referenced in Rev 11.2 is that of Daniel 9.26 which mentions the holy city in connection with ending iniquity: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy”.

The prophecy in Dan 9.24-27 specifically denotes a time period that is half of “a seven” (3½ years, or 42 months cf. Dan 12.7). Moreover, the words gentiles and trampled in Rev 11.2 are intertextually linked with the Lord’s prophecy:

“And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21.24).

The Greek verbs πατέω (pateo) and καταπατέω (katapateo) to trample, crush, stamp on are frequently used in Jewish sources for the conquest of Jerusalem and profanation of the temple. The Septuagint (Greek) version of Zechariah 12.3 (LXE) has -- “I will make Jerusalem a stone trodden by all” (or a trampled stone) and particularly the intertestamental literature connected to the profanation of the sanctuary by Antiochus Eiphanes. RSV 3 Maccabees 2:18 “We have trampled down the house of the sanctuary as offensive houses are trampled down.” And in the LXE Psalms of Solomon 17:22 “Undergird him with the strength to destroy the unrighteous rulers, to cleanse Jerusalem from gentiles who trample her to destruction”.

The book of Maccabees and Revelation 11

The books of the Maccabees, although non-canonical relate the important inter-testament history of the revolt by the priestly Maccabean clan against the Seleucid Greek Empire and particularly the enforced religious changes and profanation of the Sanctuary by Antiochus. It also describes the cleansing and rededication of the temple celebrated in the Feast of Lights (Hanukkah) otherwise known as the Feast of Dedication.

Siew observes parallels between Maccabees and Revelation as follows; “The armies of nations trample upon the temple and the holy city in Rev. 11.1-2 while in I Maccabees, Antiochus Epiphanes’ armies waged war against Mount Zion and the sanctuary. In 2 Maccabees, Judas successfully defeated the Antiochus’ armies and restored the temple (2 Macc. 10.1-8). In Rev 14.1, the Lamb stands on Mount Zion and appears victorious over the nations that wage war against Jerusalem (cf. 11.1-2). Siew also notes that the word-pair. ‘temple-Mount Zion’ is used constantly in I Maccabeess….. the mention of ‘Mount Zion’ together with the ‘temple’ or ‘sanctuary’ appears in I Macc. 4.36-40” and…the significance of sackcloth as a sign of mourning is also prominent in the book of I Maccabees and the Psalms of Solomon. Mattathias and his sons also were said to put on sackcloth to mourn greatly at the desolation of the Jerusalem Temple (I Macc. 2.6-8, 12–14 and I Macc.3.45-47)”

2 Maccabees, when exhorting the readers to celebrate Hanukkah (2:16), recounts how the ark was hidden by Jeremiah only to be revealed in an eschatological vision: “Then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord will be seen in the cloud, just as it appeared in the time of Moses and when Solomon prayed that the Place might be gloriously sanctified. It is also related how Solomon in his wisdom offered a sacrifice at the dedication and the completion of the temple” (2 Macc.2:8-9). Revelation 11 concludes with a vision of the ark: “Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail” (Rev 11.19)
It may seem strange that Revelation alludes to the non-canonical writings of the Maccabees but the fourth Gospel does the same when Jesus is accused of seeking equality with God (John 5.18 cf. 2 Macc 9.12)\textsuperscript{12} which is perceived as blasphemy, notably, one third of all the occurrences of blasphemy in Jewish writings are found in the book of Maccabees.

Furthermore in Acts, Stephen, like Jesus is accused of speaking “blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law. For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us” (Acts 6.13-14). The accusation of the Jews was that Jesus and his disciples, were acting like Antiochus Epiphanes (God manifest) who thought of himself as an equal of the gods and profaned Yahweh’s temple and attempted to abolish Judaism (including the rite of circumcision).\textsuperscript{13}

Rabbinical sources refer to Antiochus as harasha (“the wicked”). Jewish antagonism towards Antiochus draws not only on the book of Maccabees but also from the book of Daniel. Basing his account on 1 Maccabees, the first century CE Jewish historian, Josephus describing the origin of Hanukkah references the prophecy of Daniel:

“As it happened, these things took place on the very same day on which, three years before, the divine worship had been reduced to an impure and profane form of worship; for the Temple had remained desolate for three years after being made so by Antiochus...And the desolation of the Temple came about in accordance with the prophecy of Daniel, which had been made four hundred and eight years before; for he had revealed that the Macedonians would destroy it”.\textsuperscript{14}

For Jesus and for early Jewish interpreters like Josephus the Daniel prophecy found a historical application in the time of Antiochus, but it also found a fulfilment in the destruction of the temple by the Romans and the 3½ year Jewish war, however, for political reasons Josephus was careful to disguise his critique of the Romans.\textsuperscript{15}
It is interesting then that Bauckham links the profanation of the temple under Antiochus with Revelation 11.1-2:

“This curious use of ἐκβάλε has never been explained, because its source in Daniel has not been recognised. The whole phrase is John’s translation of the last three words of Daniel 8.11: מַכִּינָא הָרוּמָא מְכֹון מִקְדָּשׁוֹ (literally: ‘and the place of his sanctuary was cast down/out’).

John has taken the unique phrase מְכֹון מֵקִינָא, which uses the rare (מְכֹון), to mean the court belonging to (i.e. outside) the temple building. מַכִּינָא would mean ‘to cast down, to overthrow’ if it referred to the temple itself, but can hardly mean this if, as John supposes, it refers to the court of the temple. However, ‘to cast out’ (ἐκβάλλω) is an appropriate translation, because John assumes that the reason it has been ‘cast out’ is that the pagan nations have defiled it. They have removed the burnt offering (Daniel 8.11; 11.31; 12.11) and erected the idolatrous ‘transgression that makes desolate’ (11.31; 12.11), presumably in place of the altar of burnt-offering”.

Daniel 8:11 Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.

Aune objects that whereas Rev 11.2 employs ἐκβάλλω (ekballō) the Greek LXX of Dan 8.11 translates the Hebrew שלח (šālak) with the Greek ἐρράχθη. This was obviously a choice made by the Greek Septuagint translators who used a more violent and forceful word (meaning to dash or strike down) in their Daniel translation.

However, Rev 11.2 carries the sense of ex-communication (leave out or expel) and aspects of the verb ekballō are first encountered in the LXX of Gen 3.24 and 4.14 to describe Adam and Cain being driven out (expelled from) the divine presence. In Rev 12.9 the devil is “cast out” (thrown out) of heaven using the verb βάλλω (ballo), whose compound form (ekballō) was employed in Rev 11.2. The margin of Rev 11.2 implies “cast without” although most translators opt for “leave out” as John is instructed not to measure the outer court. Whatever the merit (or otherwise) of the translations we are obviously meant to see some connection with the Daniel prophecies and the profanation committed by Antiochus. But note that whereas Antiochus profaned the altar and the priestly court, in Revelation only the outer court is cast down (left out)—this indicates some sort of protection for the measured ones (more on this anon).
Furthermore, the two witnesses are depicted as “lampstands” an obvious connection with the miracle of Hanukkah (Feast of Lights or Feast of Dedication) celebrated on the twenty fifth day of the ninth month (Kislev) supposedly introduced by the Maccabees at the rededication (cleansing) of the temple.

The Maccabees introduced the feast for reasons of political expedience and based the feast on the vision of the “sons of oil” (Joshua and Zerubbabel) in Zechariah 4 and derived the date for the feast from Haggai who anticipated it in Hag.2.18-19:

“Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD’S temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.” It must have seemed propitious to the Maccabees to choose the 25th of Kislev as the date for rededicating the temple because Yahweh had previously told Haggai that the rebuilding under Joshua and Zerubbabel (the lampstands) would be blessed from that day onwards! A Hanukkah lampstand is a seven branched Menorah with two extra branches added - nine candles in total - the seven churches and the two witnesses! Moreover, Revelation 11 is interwoven with allusions to Psalm 30 which has the superscription; “A Song at the dedication (chanukkah) of the house of David” the Psalm is read at Hanukkah:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm 30</th>
<th>Revelation 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1a) A Song at the dedication of the house</td>
<td>(1b) Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11b) You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness</td>
<td>(3b) They will prophesy....... clothed in sackcloth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3a) O LORD, You brought my soul up from the grave</td>
<td>(12) And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1b) And have not let my foes rejoice over me</td>
<td>(10) And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12b) O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever</td>
<td>(17) We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The measuring and trampling are synchronous events as indicated by multiple allusions to Psalm 79:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm 79</th>
<th>Revelation 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  The heathen (Gentiles) are come into thine inheritance... they have defiled</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  The dead bodies of thy servants</td>
<td>8,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  The flesh of thy saints... the beasts of the earth</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  None to bury them</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  A reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision...</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  How long, Lord?</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen</td>
<td>18 (&amp; 16:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Let the sighing of thy prisoners come before thee</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Render sevenfold... into their bosom</td>
<td>(the 7 vials of ch. 16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 We will give thee thanks for ever</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Measuring the worshipers (Rev 11.1b)

“Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein”

No distinction seems to be made between measuring the temple, the altar or the worshippers, moreover, the worshippers are situated “in” (therein) the altar. The NIB reads as follows; “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshippers there”. This translation understands the word measure (which can sometimes mean count) as a zeugma (one verb that is used with two objects that suits only one) but this is a contrived reading as John is given a measuring rod….so he is measuring not counting.

The NKJ produces a sensible translation: “Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there”. J.A.T. Robinson makes an insightful comment when he says;

“The symbols of the measuring line and plummet are not just the symbols for the persecution of a faithful remnant, but also of judgement and destruction. But the background here is clearly Ezek.40-45, where the point of the action laid upon the prophet is purification – ‘to teach my people to distinguish the sacred from the profane’ (44.23): ‘so tell the Israelites, man, about this temple, it’s appearance and it’s proportions, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities’, iniquities which include, above all, the failure to remove the corpses of their kings (43.7-10). But the testimony of the two witnesses of Revelation ends in failure: their corpses are left unburied in the streets; and it is only by God’s resurrection of them to heaven that their enemies are scared into homage (11.7-10)”.

19
Both Ezekiel and John are instructed to eat the prophetic scroll (Ezek.3.1/Rev 10.9) and prophesy over… peoples (ASV Rev 10.11) // bones (ASV Ezek.37.4). However, although John is instructed to measure the actual task is performed symbolically by the preaching of the witnesses (fire proceedeth out of their mouth, Rev 11.5//I will make my words in thy mouth fire, Jer. 5.14).

Critical scholars suspect that the trampling by the nations in Rev. 11:1-2 and the witnessing in Rev. 11:3-14 are derived from different sources and therefore regard the two episodes as unrelated. However, Antoninus Siew notes that John employs a paratactic construction that results in a parallelism between vv.2 and 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse 2</th>
<th>Verse 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong> – Given (ἐδόθη) the outer court</td>
<td><strong>A’</strong> – I will give (δώσω)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong> - To the nations (τοῖς ἔθνεσιν)</td>
<td><strong>B’</strong> To my two witnesses (τοῖς δύσιν μάρτυριν μου)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong> – They will trample the holy city</td>
<td><strong>C’</strong> – They will prophesy [to and in Jerusalem]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν πατήσουσιν)</td>
<td>(προφητεύσουσιν)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong> – 42 months</td>
<td><strong>D’</strong> – 1,260 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Structurally, this parallelism in the form of ABCD A’B’C’D’ is impressive.20 The analysis that Siew proposes supports our exegesis – namely, that the witnessing and measuring are simultaneous events that occur during gentile occupation of the land.
Implications of Rev 11.1-2 for the dating of Revelation

The destruction of the temple in AD 70 was a cataclysmic event for Judaism and vindicated early Christians. Many commentators have remarked upon the silence in the N.T. and the absence of any description of the destruction of the temple as a past event. Surely this is a glaring omission?

When the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem it was accurately recorded by the prophets because the destruction vindicated divine judgement and emphasised the veracity of the prophecies. Yet none of the apostles write about the fall of Jerusalem as a past event. In Rev 11.1-2 the temple is depicted as still standing, awaiting God’s judgements – this cannot be doubted as there is a direct link with the words of Jesus in Luke 21.24. Therefore, at the time of writing, the destruction of the temple was still unfulfilled prophecy.

The only way of circumventing this conundrum is either to understand the “temple” in Rev.1-2 as figurative, or, (as many scholars) to insist that these sections are Jewish fragments written prior to the destruction of the temple that were later editorially incorporated. So, earlier Jewish fragments were employed in this (and other sections) in the predominately Christian Revelation (sic).

However, such a “cut and paste” approach to composition belies the textual integrity of the book. Anthony Siew noted that Rev 11.1 to 14.5 is a literary unit in the form of a chiasm delineated by an inclusio. It commences with the measuring of a temple (worshipers) in Rev 11.1 and is bracketed by the revelation of a symbolic temple (saints) on Mt Zion in Rev 14.5.
Challenging the unity and composition history of the Apocalypse neglects to explain the complex spiral chiastic structure, which makes editorial insertions of earlier “Jewish fragments” unlikely if not impossible. Torrey’s assessment is as follows:

“There are indeed very obvious reasons why the Apocalypse should now seem to call for drastic alteration, for it cannot be made to fit the present scheme of New Testament dogma. If the Church in its beginnings was mainly Gentile and opposed to Judaism, this Book of Revelation can be hardly understood. It is very plainly a mixture of Jewish and Christian elements, and the hope of effecting a separation between the two naturally suggests itself. It is, however, a perfectly futile dream, as the many attempts have abundantly shown. Every chapter in the book is both Jewish and Christian, and only by very arbitrary proceedings can signs of literary composition be formed. The trouble is not with the book, but with the prevailing theory of Christian origins”.

Torrey’s judgement is that “the book is a unity, in no sense composite. Detailed proof, quite unanswerable, will be found in H. B. Swete’s Apocalypse of St. John (1906)”.

Torrey finds himself in agreement with Stuart, Terry, Charles and Robinson in believing that Rev.11.1-2 shows that Herod’s temple was still standing when Revelation was written.
There are many other indicators in the Apocalypse (and the New Testament epistles) that Revelation was written before AD 70 and this has obvious implications for how it is interpreted. Although the temple in Rev.11.1-2 is Herod's temple (not the temple in heaven), certain elements are obviously symbolic, namely, the measured worshipers. It is the testimony of the witnesses that measures the worshipers and this occurs during the gentile trampling. It implies that although they will be spiritually preserved they may not be spared martyrdom and suffering.

The conclusion is inescapable that the two witnesses are testifying to the Jewish nation before the fall of the temple. The apostle Paul alludes to Revelation chapters 10 and 11 when he asks – “Hath God cast away his people?” (Rom 11.1), Paul continues by employing the example of the 7,000 faithful in the time of Elijah (Rom 11.2-4), recognizing the Elijah reference in Rev 11.6 (power to shut heaven) and contrasting the remnant in Romans with the 7,000 slain in Rev 11.13. Moreover, Paul admonishes, “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom 11.25). The apostle understands the mystery of Rev 10.7 as gentile inclusion. John is informed that when the seventh trumpet begins to sound “the mystery of God should be finished”. The apostles’ remarks in Romans 11.15 {“For if the casting away of them [Israel] be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?”} read as a paraphrase of Revelation 11 – “…is given unto the Gentiles (Rev 11.2)…and the time of the dead, that they should be judged” (Rev 11.18).

The apostle Paul had access to the apocalypse before the fall of Jerusalem and this helps explain why the early church expected an imminent advent. From a first century perspective the warning in Revelation and the looming Jewish war and fall of Jerusalem heralded the seventh trumpet and the fulfilment of Daniel’s prophecy. When Paul wrote Romans 11 he had Revelation 11 at his elbow. He expected Israel to be cast off but it is doubtful that he expected the times of the Gentiles to last so long.
How does this influence our interpretation of the Apocalypse?

A simplistic (preterist) approach results in understanding the Apocalypse as completely realized in the past. This is obviously wrong as the kingdom has not visibly arrived and it does no justice to the three-pronged question posed to Jesus in Matthew 24:3; “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”

Determining which apocalyptic passages are past and which are still future is the most difficult conundrum facing the interpreter and this is because some sections refer simultaneously to the past and the future. This is because past and future archetypes merge into a supra-historical pattern that transcends time and space to form the day of the Lord.

The past acts as a viewing prism through which interrelated patterns and allusions of past and future, old and new testaments are seen, thus producing a timeless message that had a past fulfilment and still awaits a final consummation. This is achieved by utilizing imagery, symbol and metaphor from the Old Testament which is employed in the woof and weave of the Apocalypse. We are being instructed to recognize patterns.

Instead we condition ourselves to read repeating patterns, overlapping patterns and spiral chiasms, in a consecutive, diachronic, linear fashion rather than synchronously or laterally. Revelation is deliberately flexible. It could have all been realized in the first century but was not because the nation became intransigent and the early church was becoming corrupted by the influence of Judaists. The only solution was to sweep the entire Jewish system away and instigate the “times of the gentiles”.
Rebuilding the temple

Many evangelical interpreters believe that the Jews will rebuild a temple next to the Dome of the Rock before the Lord returns. It is a fact that fundamentalist religious Jews have already prepared temple instruments, elected priests and appointed a Sanhedrin. They have also been busy lobbying both Putin and Trump and garnering support from certain Christian Zionist groups. Is it within the realms of possibility that such an extraordinary deal could be reached in some sort of trade off for a comprehensive peace settlement?

It is uncertain whether the Apocalypse envisages such a development but it would fit the established patterns, namely, complete restoration of the Jewish temple system before the commencement of witnessing. It would be a first-century *redux* and therefore such an extraordinary development cannot be completely ruled out. Jerusalem would once again become the “holy city” (sic) this time with two temple shrines on Mount Zion (a lamb with two horns that speaks like a dragon?).

As the day fast approaches we must make a renewed effort to understand and interpret Revelation. The first century generation saw those events begin to unfold and our generation will see the culmination of those events. Dogma and uncritical thinking must be pushed aside as a new, fresh, biblically based approach to Revelation is needed.
Who are the two witnesses?

In the previous chapter the case was presented that the temple was still standing when Rev.11.1-2 was written. Song summarises as follows: “Concerning the contemporary integrity of the temple in Rev. 11, it can be deduced that the most natural interpretation of Rev. 11 would suggest that the references to the cultic structures have behind them the literal temple complex, for only Revelation clearly refers to Jerusalem (see Wilson, 1993:604).

The episode of the two witnesses in Rev. 11 was used by nineteenth-century scholars to assert that the earthly temple must be standing at the time of the command (Rev. 11:1-2; Marshall, 2001:96). Why would there be no reference to its being already destroyed in such a work as this, a work that deals with judgment upon Jerusalem?

“It is inconceivable that a book of the nature of Revelation could fail to mention its already having been destroyed, if Revelation were written after AD 70 (cf. Ellis, 2001:33). Most commentators who favour the Domitian date, from Charles (1920:274) to Aune (1997:cxxii), claim that Rev. 11:1-2 was written before AD 70 by a different author (contra Friesen, 2001:143)”.

32
History of Interpretation

It is difficult to summarise nearly two thousand years of the history of interpretation of Rev 11.1-13. Turner, however, provides a good overview and at the danger of doing his work an injustice a brief summary follows. Essentially, the survey is split into four periods (1) prior to 1000 CE - Elijah/Moses/Enoch withstanding the antichrist interpreted as the church with the ascension being the general resurrection. (2) 1000-1516 - mystical interpretation symbolic of part of the church, Moses and Elijah denote different orders (Franciscans and Dominicans) in their active and spiritual status but the older interpretations still persisted forming an ecclesiological and eschatological exegesis. By the sixth century the linear continuous approach emerges with the witnesses identified with two Popes. (3) 1517-1700 the Reformation identified the Papacy as the antichrist and the two witnesses are proto-protestant groups. (4) 1701-2004 bible criticism together with the Millerite crisis (the “Great Disappointment of 1844”) when Christ failed to return discredited the “day for a year” interpretation. The witnessing applies to the church (ecclesiological-spiritual) or preterist (complete first century fulfilment) or eschatological (end time futurist), splitting into two camps (a) John made a mistake in predicting witnessing shortly after his time (b) it is all still future (eschatological).

Ian Brown analyses ten works that have Rev 11.1-13 as a major concern and investigates both their strengths and weaknesses. Brown explains in his conclusion, “To paint the picture, the present endeavour has first presented overviews of classes of identifications through time. The literature can be divided into interpretations that understand the two witnesses literally and those that see the witnesses as a symbol. Since 1700, futuristic, literal interpretations of the witnesses appear to have been more popular than the views that understand the witnesses to be two of John’s contemporaries. The futuristic group is dominated by two views, the Moses-Elijah view and the unknown-prophets view. For the contemporaries group, the Peter-Paul view has come to dominate over the last hundred years or so. Since 1700, symbolic interpretations that associate the witnesses with the people of God appear to have been more popular than the views that understand the witnesses to represent sacred writings. For the group oriented toward God’s people, seeing the whole church as being symbolized by the witnesses has come to dominate. For the group oriented toward the sacred writings, the main view is the two witnesses symbolizing the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments. All this information has influenced the choice of the nine expositions featured in the body of the present work”. 34
A brief perusal of Brown’s exhaustive dissertation demonstrates that virtually everybody (anybody) has been proposed as a witness. Those who see the witnesses as a contemporary of John have even suggested the Jewish high priests Ananus and Jesus, others, suggest the ridiculous notion that the false messiah Bar Kokhba himself with the priest Eleazar are the witnesses (See Brown's Appendices). Harry Whittaker suggests that the Jewish nation (in a passive sense) are the witnesses while most commentators suggest the church (or their part of the church), others, the Old and New Testament writings acting as the “witnesses”.35

The abysmal state of confusion surrounding the interpretation of Rev 11.1-13 throughout history is due to a failure to recognise the recursive nature of the allusions, a failure to correctly contextualise those allusions, echoes and types and (often) a desire to dogmatically apply the prophecy to a particular segment of the church in order to justify a particular agenda. The following exegesis will attempt to avoid these pitfalls and will only refer to scholarship in order to elucidate particular points.
Witnessing proto-types

This section of scripture almost drowns in allusions to witnesses and witnessing passages and to many other types and echoes that most commentators are not even aware of. We can find intertextual links to Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, Joshua, Zerubbabel and others. However, the most prominent are Moses and Elijah. Why is this so? This is the case because Scripture promised that they would appear before the Day of the Lord:

Malachi 4:4-5 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

And here is the clincher………they did appear before the Day of the Lord:

Matthew 17:3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

Luke (9.31) informs us that they, “appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem”. But why Moses and Elijah? ---obviously because they represented the Law and the Prophets but more so because they were both involved in a cosmic contest against false gods (Pharaoh/Baal), both received theophanies in Horeb and both were buried outside the land. Their lives follow the same patterns and both men demonstrated that neither the Law, nor the Prophets could inherit the kingdom. It was only Jesus who could accomplish that through his decease.

Therefore, the only witness (singular) is the faithful witness Jesus Christ and he is called that in Rev 1.5. All other witness, Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist…prophets, saints, the Old Testament, New Testament, etc, etc, etc all point to him and are all derivative. In other words “witnessing” is corporately expressed in and through Christ and he is the pattern on which all other witnesses are modelled. Jesus bears faithful witnesses to the Father, all others bare faithful witness to the Father through Jesus.

However, the Elijah witnessing has a dimension beyond the transfiguration as Jesus markedly pointed out John the Baptist as his witness:
John 5:31-40  
31 "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.  
32 "There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true.  
33 "You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.  
34 "Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved.  
35 "He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light.  
36 "But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish -- the very works that I do -- bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.  
37 "And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.  
38 "But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.  
39 "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.  
40 "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

Here then is a threefold, 
unbreakable witness; (1) John the Baptist, (2) the Father's works and 
(3) the Scriptures, none of which they were willing to accept. The first century human 
wor lds par excellence was John the Baptist. We know this because Jesus tells us that there is none 
greater born of women (Matt 11.11) and Jesus explicitly says:

Matthew 11:14 And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to 
come.

Now this is a “difficult saying” that requires analysis. John the Baptist was Elijah, and as his 
father Zacharias prophetically predicted (Luke 1.17), he came in the “Spirit and Power of Elijah”. 
There is no doubt then that John was Elijah but only if they were willing to receive it. They 
did not receive it because they rejected the Baptists testimony regarding the Lamb of God and 
ironically, in so doing actually fulfilled the prophecies! This is indeed strange…God has more 
th an one way of fulfilling his prophecies. Let us imagine that the Jews had accepted the need for 
a suffering messiah, and that Jesus was still crucified (but only by the Romans with the priests 
repenting for example) then John would have been second Elijah and the Kingdom could 
have been inaugurated upon Jesus’ resurrection in the first century! Our interpretations are too 
narrow-minded; although everything is foreordained there must be allowance for freewill, a 
mystery indeed.
The qualifications of John the Baptist

What qualifications made John the Baptist the forerunner *par excellence* and how does his ministry and scripture itself demonstrate this? Firstly, his lineage was not only Levitical but Aaronic on both sides of his family. It is more than likely that John was the *legitimate High Priest* unable to serve as the position was corrupted and monopolised by a powerful and rich elite, wearing “soft clothes in palaces” (Matt 11.8) as opposed to John’s “hairy garment” and hermit lifestyle. Was John raised under a Nazirite vow (Num 6) in imitation of the High Priest who was not allowed to drink while in service and wore a crown (compare long hair)? This signifies that the Baptist was preparing to transfer the Levitical/Aaronic priesthood to a “better priest” (Melchizideic) who was consecrated by an oath not by lineage.

John’s parents were *barren* (Luke 1.6//Gen 11.40), signifying the bareness of the Law, and yet, like Abraham they were *blameless* (Luke 1.7//Gen 17.1) because they waited in faith for the messiah, the *oath sworn* to Abraham (Lk 1.73//Gen 22.16-18). So barren Elisabeth and deaf and dumb Zacharias gave birth to the forerunner of the messiah. The Law and the Prophets could point the way to the kingdom but were not a suitable vehicle for entry. Luke 9.35-36; “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone” (Moses and Elijah had vanished).

John is called “a burning and shining lamp” a reference to the “Feast of Lights”, otherwise known as “Hanukkah” or “Feast of Dedication” as it commemorated the dedication and cleansing of the temple. **John the Baptist was born during the Feast of Lights** (roughly our Christmas) but he was not “that light” (John 1.7). This is reflected in the two lampstands of Rev 11.4 which are actually one (more on this anon).

The arrival of John the Baptist was predicted in the book of Malachi, which describes the priestly corruption and turmoil at the end of Hasmonean era and prophetically anticipates the Herodians (on this see the Digression on the book of Malachi on pages….). The table on the following page demonstrates intertextual links between Malachi and the New Testament.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malachi</th>
<th>New Testament</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.7  he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts</td>
<td>Lk 7.27 This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger</td>
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<td>3.1  he shall prepare the way before me</td>
<td>Lk 3.5 the rough ways shall be made smooth</td>
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<td>4.5  Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD</td>
<td>Matt 11.13-14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elijah which was for to come</td>
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<td>3.1  he shall prepare the way before me</td>
<td>Lk 1.17 He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah</td>
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<td>4.6  And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children</td>
<td>Lk 1.17 to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2  But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise</td>
<td>Lk 1.78 By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us</td>
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<td>2.7-8 For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord</td>
<td>Lk 1.77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins (the Baptist was a Levitical priest)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5  My covenant was with him of life and peace</td>
<td>Lk 1.79 to guide our feet into the way of peace</td>
</tr>
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<td>4.6  and the heart of the children to their fathers</td>
<td>Matt 3.9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father</td>
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<td>4.1  shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up</td>
<td>Matt 3.12 but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire</td>
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<td>4.1  that it shall leave them neither root nor branch</td>
<td>Matt 3.10 axe is laid unto the root of the trees</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.6  If I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name.</td>
<td>Matt 3.7 many of the Pharisees and Sadducees (priests) come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.16  for one covereth violence with his garment</td>
<td>Matt 11.12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3  And I hated Esau</td>
<td>Herod the Edomite</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4  Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places</td>
<td>John 2.20 Herod rebuilds the temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1  the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple</td>
<td>John 2.13-21 Jesus cleanses the temple</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.8  Will a man rob God?</td>
<td>John 2.16 My Father's house an house of merchandise</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.16  ...the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away. 3.5  a swift witness… against the adulterers</td>
<td>Mk 6.18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.10  …. why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother</td>
<td>Herod executed his wife the beautiful Hasmonean princess Mariamme (died 29 BCE) and her family</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.14  the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously</td>
<td>Matt 24.2 Herod's temple destroyed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4  They (Edom) shall build, but I will throw down</td>
<td>Rev 6.17 ...for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Malachi 3:1 "Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant. In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts.

My messenger is John the Baptist and the messenger of the (new) covenant (the Lord whom ye seek) is Jesus Christ. They are both messengers and both witnesses.

Herod employed violence to safeguard his throne, the priests employed violence to save their nation and the rabbis of that era perpetrated violence on Scripture (through their calendar, Seder Olam Rabbah) to predict the kingdom (and support the false messiah Bar Kochba). At this point it is perhaps pertinent to reproduce a paragraph from God is Judge, “Progress toward redemption is not without interruptions or delays – men often attempt to force God’s hand; “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matt 11:12). However, God has his own time table (as Daniel will soon learn) and there were many more years of desolations (besides the seventy) to come before redemption was at hand. There would also be many more delays and distractions (like the Maccabean revolt) where men attempt to force their own interpretation on how events should progress. Finally, the promised anointed appeared on the scene, but even then disobedience and unfaithfulness caused the prophetic programme to be interrupted”.

Deuteronomy instructs Israelites not to despise Edomites because they were brethren (Deut 23:7); however, later prophetic oracles are hostile towards Edom (Esau) because of their violent attitude towards Jacob (Obad. 1.10). There is no doubt that Herod the Great was regarded as a foreign king despite the sycophantic assessment of the Talmud and the spin provided on the reign of Herod Agrippa: The Mishnah explained how the Jews of the Second Temple era interpreted the requirement of Deut 31:10–13 that the king read the Torah to the people. Agrippa did this, and when he reached the commandment of Deuteronomy 17:15 that “you may not put a foreigner over you” as king, his eyes ran with tears, but they said to him, “Don’t fear, Agrippa, you are our brother, you are our brother!”
The Edomites were forcefully converted and circumcised by the Hasmonlean priest John Hyrcranus. Jesus says, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves” (NKJ Matthew 23:15). The biblical term “proselyte” is an Anglicization of the Koine Greek term προσήλυτος (proselytos), as used in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) for “stranger”, i.e. a “newcomer to Israel” Twice the child of Hell is an apt description of the Edomite king Herod the Great.

The Edomites had ceased to be a nation by the first century. They had been pushed out of their native territory by the Arabs (Nabateans) and settled in the vicinity of Hebron and the Negev. During the First Roman War an insurgent called Simon Bar Giora (whose name means proselyte) arose and gathered an Edomite army from Hebron which eventually entered Jerusalem and partook in a terrible internecine, factional war with zealots and priests within the city walls. He also had messianic pretensions, Livius comments; “Bar Giora coins bore the legend “Redemption of Zion”, indicating that there was a religious aspect to Simon's bid for power.

This does not prove that he was considered the Messiah, but it is likely. The fact that he wore a royal robe in the Temple is another indication”. Therefore, Edomites (Idumeans) played a large role in the first century persecution of the church and the downfall of Jerusalem after which they lost their identity altogether.
The unity of the Two Witnesses

Müller observes the following four points, “Whatever they do and whatever happens to them, they are inseparable. But in addition to their common action and destiny, the text furnishes another interesting and important detail. Nouns that are employed in connection with the two witnesses oftentimes come in the singular instead of the plural. This change from plural to singular emphasizes that the two witnesses always go together.

(1) Whereas in 9:18, 20 fire comes out of the mouths—plural—of the strange horses, in 11:5 fire comes out of the mouth—singular—of the two witnesses. Although there are two witnesses, they have only one mouth.
(2) Although they are two, they have one prophecy (11:6) and one testimony/witness (11:7).
(3) The word “corpse/body” is found three times in 11:3–13. Their body—singular—lies in the street of the Great City (11:8). People see their body—singular—three and a half days (11:9), and their bodies—plural—are not buried (11:9).
(4) A tomb—singular—is not accessible to them (11:9). It seems that the change to the singular was done intentionally in order to stress the unity of the two witnesses. The usage of both singular and plural within the very same verse may point to “unity in duality”.

Müller argues for unity of witness between the Old and New Testament (which is true) but Scripture is only one strand of witnessing—for (as we have seen) Jesus referred to the Baptist, the Spirit (works of the Father) and Scripture. Even that list is not complete as Jesus (as we noted) was himself the faithful witness. So, those three (Baptist, Spirit, Scriptures) witness of Jesus, who in turn bears witness of the Father, in fact the “witnessing” is mutually reciprocal, “I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me” (John 8.18). Jesus came “into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth” (John 18.37). Truth is a technical term for the covenants of promise recorded in Scripture (Micah 7.20). All these relationships point to a reciprocal unity of witness --- Jesus bears witness to the truth, the truth bears witness of Jesus, Jesus bears witness of the Father who in turn bears witness of him and so forth; “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19.10)

The witnessing in Rev 11 also encompasses the spirit and the scriptures but the witnesses themselves (plural) are murdered. This indicates literal witnessing by people who employ both the spirit and the scripture as witnessing tools during their ministry. Spirit and Scripture do not function autonomously. The Greek noun πτῶμα body (πτῶμα) in Rev 11.8 is used in its nominative neuter singular form to describe the death of a group of people (their body).
The Greek *ptōma* is more accurately translated as corpse rather than the more neutral noun for body (*σῶμα*, *sōma*). Metaphorically, the Greek *ptōma* depicts absolute ruin and is used by Isaiah to describe the impending ruin of Jerusalem by the Assyrians because of the Jews refusal to listen to their prophets (witnesses).\(^{46}\) Besides Rev 11, the noun for corpse is only used on two other occasions in the NT — *both times for the corpse of John the Baptist.* (Matt 14:12; Mark 6:29) This signifies that John the Baptist becomes a proto-type of Old Testament prophetic witnessing —–his witnessing is based on the pattern of the prophets, which in turn is based on the pattern of Christ, which in turn forms the pattern of NT covenant witnessing. The patterns interlink and morph until they become virtually inseparable. Therefore the witnessing looks both backwards (OT prophets) and forwards (NT witness) culminating in the eschatological witnessing. Recurrent patterns of witnessing from the beginning to the end. The death of the Baptist prefigures the abeyance of the land covenant made with Abraham because the word “corpse” occurs in Jesus’ “vulture saying” of Matthew 24, and this is in turn linked with the land covenant made with Abram in Genesis 15:\(^ {47}\)

Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

(Matthew 24:28 *NIV*)

**Matthew 24**

- Vultures (v. 28)
- Carcass (v. 28)
- The sun will be darkened (v. 29)
- The sign of the Son of Man will appear (v. 30)

**Genesis 15**

- Vultures (v. 11)
- Carcasses (v. 11)
- Horror and great darkness (v. 15)
- There appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch (v. 17)

Disobedience had in the past led to the abeyance of the land covenant given to Abraham, the people would go back into captivity (effectively back to Egypt); “The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. And no one (i.e., Abraham see Gen 15.11) will frighten them away” (Jer. 7:33 *NKJ*).
The parallels with Revelation are national as Abraham’s children die (a horror of great darkness) and the witnesses (the Baptist, et al) functioning as the covenant sacrifice that is cut in pieces. Therefore, it depicts the kind of national death and temporary abeyance of the Abrahamic land covenant experienced in Jeremiah’s time (the Babylonian captivity) and also experienced after 70CE.

Intertextual parallels are distributed throughout the trumpet section:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 15</th>
<th>Trumpets</th>
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<tr>
<td>Birds descend 11</td>
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<td>Horror of great darkness 12</td>
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<td>Stranger in Egypt 15</td>
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<td>A smoking furnace 17</td>
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<td>Promised to the Euphrates 18</td>
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</table>

The same Greek verb that describes the assembly or gathering together of the vultures is used to describe those who “gather” against Christ (Acts 4:5-6) and Peter, paraphrasing Ps 2.2 names them as, “Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together” (Acts 4:26-27). Significantly, Ps 2 forms an intertextual subtext that begins in Rev 11 with the last trump and extends into Rev 12. At the end of the apocalypse the roles are reversed when the enemy becomes the sacrificial meal of the “birds” (Rev 19.17,19 cf. Ezek.39.17).

This reading of Rev 11, which discovers links with the undoing (reversal) of the land covenant given to Abraham (albeit not a permanent reversal) is confirmed by the Day of Atonement (DOA) subtext which speaks of sending away the scapegoat (the nation) into captivity. The removal of the “unclean spirit” from Legion by Jesus functions as a parable on the DOA and as we have seen, the trumpet section is structured around the DOA. The following table highlights intertextual correspondence between the Legion narrative and the witnessing.
Matthew 8:28-9:8

- Galilee of the Gentiles \(\text{Luke 8.26}\)
- Torment us before the time \(\text{Matt 8.29}\)
- Unclean swine sent into Abyss \(\text{Lk 8.31}\)
- Paralytic raised \(\text{Matt 9.1}\)
- Multitudes afraid, glorify God \(\text{Matt 9.8}\)

Revelation 11

- Given to the Gentiles (v.2)
- Two prophets torment the earth (v.10)
- Beast emerges from Abyss (v.7)
- Witnesses raised (v.12)
- Remnant afraid, glorify God (v.13)

The location of the exorcism is called “country of the Gergesenes” (by Matthew in 8.28) and “the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee” (by Luke in 8.26). This region saw the fulfilment of the Isaiah prophecy (Isa 9.1) where it is named as Galilee of the Gentiles (Matt 4.14-16). The proper noun Gergesenos (Γεργεσήν Ός) is thought to mean, “a stranger drawing near” and Gadarenos (Γαδαρην Ός) “reward at the end”, the location names signifying an end to alienation and the fulfilment of hope.

Mark 5:5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

Mark is obviously drawing on Isaiah’s description of the people; “A rebellious people which sit among the graves and eat swine’s flesh” (Isa 65:4). The “cutting with stones” is (in this context) a reference to the rite of circumcision—originally performed with sharpened flints (Josh 5:2). The binding of the man cf. Ps 2:3) and the request not to be “sent away out of the country” (Mark 5:10) is typical of the threat of exile in Deut 28:64-68 and the imprisonment and deportation of Zedekiah in chains (Jer. 52:11)
Matthew introduces an eschatological element into the narrative with the demoniac’s objection; “art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” as if to say, you are early, it’s not time yet. It is an allusion to the “timely” man who released the goat (sent it to Azazel on the DOA). In this exorcism Jesus functions in the role of the ‘fit’ or ‘timely’ man, who sends the scapegoat bearing the nations impurities (the goat for ‘Azazel’) into the wilderness during the atonement ritual: “And shall send him away at the hand of a fit man into the wilderness” (Lev. 16:22). The Revised Version renders this as “a man (Adam) that is in readiness” with the marginal notation stating “a man of opportunity”. These interpretations carry the idea of a man that has been specifically prepared for the task; although Herbert Rand suggests that it should be understood adverbially.49

The original Hebrew ‘ittîy, carries the meaning of timely and derives from êth — time, in due season. Essentially this expresses the same meaning — a man appointed for this time or season. Note that the “fit man” who released the goat became contaminated by the act and as a consequence had to wash his clothes and his body before re-entering the camp. Jesus transferred the “unclean spirit” into an “unclean” animal (this in contrast with the clean scapegoat). Swine were unclean animals, and for a Jewish audience it would be highly appropriate for “unclean spirits” to inhabit them. The oscillation between singular and plural in the narrative denotes that the man represented the collective state of the nation. The man answers with the Latin loan word legio meaning a legion or regiment of soldiers. This suggests that the word expresses the man’s feeling of being inhabited by a multitude of evil spirits.

The synoptic narrative is connected with the emergence of the apocalyptic beast from the abyss and the murder of the (two?) witnesses; resulting in the rejoicing of the people because the “two prophets had tormented them” with their words. The parallelism is not accidental for the trumpet section in the apocalypse is based on Day of Atonement liturgy — Jesus had come to remove the unclean spirit — he warned that that unless the unclean spirit was replaced with the wholesomeness of the gospel it would re-emerge in a more virulent form (Luke 11.24-36). The work of the witnesses is a continuation of the work of Jesus Christ and meets with the same resistance from the beast (possessed with the unclean spirit) that Jesus cast into the Sea of Galilee (abyss).
A recurrent pattern emerges – the iniquitous nation (like the scapegoat) is sent into captivity (Babylon = the wilderness BCE 586). However, the nation that is restored to the land (back to sanity) again takes “unclean spirits” into itself and refuses the exorcism offered by Jesus. The “house” (temple) of the nation is once again cast out (First Jewish War 70 CE) but in the meantime a replacement “house” is being established in Babylon and a false messiah is elected (Bar Kochba) resulting in a final casting out by Rome (135 CE).

During this period Jewry doubles down on Rabbinical (Babylonian) Judaism. In 1948 a secular, Zionist nation emerges from the abyss (restored by God) but the nation harbours a growing and influential fundamentalist religious (Rabbinical) element. The nation is slavishly supported by American Jewry just as it was by Parthian (Babylonian) Jewry in the first century. The nation still refuses exorcism and denies the messiah. If the pattern holds true we are about to see a final eschatological witnessing and contest between the true and the false.

**To summarise:** Both the Day of Atonement connections and the connections to the land covenant made with Abraham demonstrate that Rev 11 is about the Jewish nation. It depicts a recurrent pattern of witnessing, exorcism, disobedience, casting off and re-emergence from the abyss. This pattern commenced in the Old Testament and continues up to the introduction of the kingdom.
Are the Jews the witnesses?

In Revelation: A Biblical Approach, H.A. Whittaker makes the case that the Jewish nation are God’s witnesses. The strongest supporting evidence is supplied by Isa.44.8-12; “Ye are my witnesses” and (Isa 5.25); “their carcases were as refuse in the midst of the streets”, as well as Psalm 79 forming the intertextual subtext to Rev 11. Whittaker argues that the Jews prophesy through their blindness and deafness. Their disobedience is therefore portrayed as a negative, passive witnessing.

Whittaker is only partially correct in his assessment. The Isaiah passages and Psalm 79 can be historically placed in the Hezekiah era and the Assyrian invasion by Sennacherib. 50 During that period we have two parties (1) A faithful remnant; (2) the rest of the nation. The faithful remnant (including Hezekiah) was saved in Jerusalem while much of the nation was destroyed and taken captive. Similar themes (as noted by HAW himself) are found in Isaiah 26-27:

Isaiah 26:5  – downtrodden (JEBUS)
           v.6  – poor and needy (witnesses)
           v.8  – memorial = Passover = Lord’s table
           v.11 – Elijah (fire) = witnesses
           v.14 – death of God’s enemies
           v.15 – God glorified, Rev.11:13
           v.16 – repentance, Rev.11:13
           v.18 – birth pangs, Rev.12:2
           v.19 – resurrection, Rev.11:18
           v.20 – All this happens at Passover!

Isaiah 27:1 – Leviathan = Dragon, Rev.12:3

In this scenario Hezekiah, the “suffering servant”, typifies the “faithful witness”. He initiated a reformation and cleansed the temple. He sent messengers with an invitation to the northern tribes to celebrate the Passover at Jerusalem. The messengers were scorned and mocked; “Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word (the witnesses), your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, have said, (sarcastically) Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed” (Isa 66.5).
This is virtually a summary of the treatment of the witnesses in Rev 11 and the result of their vindication; “And the remnant were affrighted and gave glory to the God of heaven” (Rev 11.13) also in the same chapter --- mourning (Isa 66.6 cf. Rev 11.3), corpses (Isa 66.24 cf. Rev 11.9), temple theophany (Isa 66.6 cf. Rev 11.19) and labour pains (Isa 66.7-9 cf. Rev 12.1-2). Hezekiah was resurrected (from his sickbed) and the Assyrian enemy was defeated --- unfaithful Israelites perished during the invasion but a faithful remnant was “born” (saved/resurrected) overnight. The situation is therefore complex as we have not two, but three parties interacting. (1) Assyrian invader (2) Northern tribes (3) Hezekiah and the faithful remnant in Judah --- these interactions overlap but are not completely synchronous.

A number of points demonstrate that the witnessing mission is directed at the Jews therefore, ipso facto, the Jews (who are the recipients of the message) cannot be the witnesses.

1) Fire proceeds out of the witnesses mouths. This is the word of prophecy – “I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them”. (Jer. 5:14) This depicts active prophesying and cannot be made to stand for the type of passive, inactive, negative behaviour of the disobedient Jewish nation that H.A. Whittaker suggests.

2) God resurrects the witnesses (v.11) which results in a repentant remnant. The witnesses themselves do not need to repent as their ministry mimics that of the faithful witness (more on this anon). If the witnesses do not need to repent how can they be the disobedient Jewish nation?

3) The reaction at the death of the witnesses: “And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth”. (Rev 11:10) This describes the Jewish Feast of Purim, which in which they celebrated the death of Haman in the time of Esther. God prevented genocide against the Jews and they rejoiced and sent gifts to each other. This Jewish Feast is still celebrated in modern Israel. Gentiles’ adopting a Jewish Feast to celebrate killing Jews makes no sense; ipso facto, we have Jews celebrating Purim because the witnesses have been killed.
4) Resurrection of the witnesses results in repentance of a remnant within the Jewish nation (Rev 11.13) not a remnant from among the Gentiles. How do we know this? Because the (Gentile) nations are still angry (Rev 11.18) and must face the coming wrath of the Lamb that unfolds in the next trump.

5) The example of the first century forerunner to Christ, John the Baptist or second Elijah (if they were willing to receive it) was a faithful Jewish witness preaching to an unfaithful Jewish nation. Therefore the Jewish nation cannot be the witnesses.

H. A. Whittaker is correct in noting the correspondence between the fate of the witnesses and the Jewish nation but his approach requires to be more nuanced. The correspondence between witnesses and nation is deliberate. What happens to the witnesses also happens to the nation as punishment.

This is the outworking of lex talionis an “eye for an eye” on a nation that refuses grace and clings to law. Jesus, as the “true Israel” undeservedly suffered and died in order to inaugurating the new covenant, but the Jewish nation deservedly suffered and died as a consequence of their intransigence. The corpses of the witnesses are left in the street and so the corpses of Israel will also be left in the streets of the “Great City”. Every action has a reaction, what happens to one party will happen to the other. This should not be seen as mere retribution or vengeance, but righteous wrath that is aimed at inducing repentance.

The witnesses are regarded as enemies of the Jewish state because they not only prophesy against the Jews but have power to plague them, and as we noted in the trumpets, the plague woes are intrabiblically linked with the actions of the witnesses. In other words, the result of not listening to the two prophets is the invading armies of the trump-woes. Therefore, the Jews blame the witnesses for their predicament. The result of the witnessing is described as follows:
Great Earthquake (Rev 11.13)

And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

The “city” obviously contains 70,000 people because the 7,000 killed form a tenth. This directly links with Elijah where 7,000 were spared because they refused to bow the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19.14). The interpretive crux is whether or not the 7,000 killed are wicked or faithful. In the past this interpreter understood the passage as a contrast with Elijah (e.g., – in Elijah’s time 7,000 faithful saved in Revelation 7,000 wicked destroyed). However, further analysis makes it more likely that the 7,000 killed are faithful.

These 7,000 refuse to bow down to the image of the beast (cf. Baal) and therefore they are killed (ultimately saved) like the witnesses: “If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints”. (Rev 13:10\textsuperscript{NIV}) This is supported by the fact that the tithe belongs to God (i.e., to his high priest Jesus Christ). This equates with Abraham (the Jewish nation) giving a tenth part of the spoils to Melchizedek (Heb 7.2). In that case the 7,000 are the first fruits of a greater harvest --- in any case the death of the 7,000 results in a repentant remnant, which makes it likely that the vindication of the two murdered witnesses and the death of the 7,000 are related.
The Great City (Rev 11.8)

And their dead bodies will lie in the street (πλατεῖας, *plateias*) of the Great City which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

The city where the witnesses are killed is not named. It is simply called the “Great City” and this is deliberate because elsewhere in Revelation the “Great City” is Babylon (Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18f, 21) with the exception of Rev 21.10 where the Great City is the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. The two “cities” that are engaged in a cosmic conflict in Revelation are therefore Babylon and the heavenly Jerusalem.

Therefore, Babylon becomes representative of whichever city or place is persecuting the saints and this can be either Rome or Jerusalem but in this particular case the identity is further clarified with the words “where also our Lord was crucified” and we are informed that the identification is “spiritually” linked with Sodom and Egypt. The Greek adjective adverb spiritually (πνευματικῶς, *pneumatikos*) is variously translated as figuratively (NIB/NIV) or allegorically (RSV) giving a metaphoric sense that still does not capture the essence of the meaning which is akin to prophetically or rather, in the prophetic spirit, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev 19.10).

The meaning must be sought in prophetic utterances that are made in the spirit and these are found in the OT where Jerusalem is called Sodom and compared to Egypt by the prophets. In Isaiah 1:9-10 the prophet denounced Jerusalem as “Sodom” (see Jer.23:14; Ez.16:46, 49), moreover, they brought their whoredom with them from the land of Egypt (Ezek 23.27) alienating the two “sisters” (Samaria and Jerusalem) from Yahweh.

Moreover, the murder of the two witnesses in Jerusalem reflects the traditional view expressed by Jesus (Lk.13:33), “It cannot be that a prophet perish outside Jerusalem.” Prophets traditionally thought to have been killed in Jerusalem include Isaiah, Uriah (Jer.26:20-23), Zechariah son of Jehoiada (2 Chron.24:20-22; Lk.11:50-51) and some unnamed prophets (Jos. Ant. 10.38). In addition, there was a failed attempt to murder Jeremiah in Jerusalem (Jer.38:4-6).
The objection that Jerusalem (unlike Rome), is not cosmopolitan enough to fulfil the criteria of, “every people, tribe, tongue and nation viewing the bodies” is unfounded. We are told the following in Acts 2:5: “There were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven”. It then proceeds to list 16 different nationalities including strangers and proselytes (2:7-11). It is fair to say that this was the occasion of a great feast which no doubt attracted many Diaspora Jews, but O.T. allusions seem to indicate that the witnesses are killed on a feast day (the Passover, like their Lord?). In any case, the invention of television and the possibility of Jerusalem being declared an ‘international city’ under UN mandate makes a literal and metaphoric fulfilment of v.8 (viewing the bodies) very likely.

Significantly, the city is the place “where also our Lord was crucified” and this can be no other place than Jerusalem. Some pedantic commentators point out that Jesus was crucified “outside the city” and therefore Jerusalem is excluded --- but this type of nit picking would exclude every other city as well and Jesus explicitly talks to Moses and Elijah about “his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9.31).

Finally, the “street” where the corpses are exposed (exhibited) is thought to be well known to John’s readers as the noun is articular and refers to a broad space. The “street” (if we can call it that) was well known even in the Diaspora because it is linked in Daniel’s prophecy with the restoration of Jerusalem ---the same prophecy that provides Rev 11 with a three and one-half year time frame:

*LXE* Daniel 9:25 The street plateia (πλάτος, plateia) shall be built

In the Greek LXX of Dan 9.25 the accusative neuter form of the noun is employed but the location would be clear enough to Jewish readers. Nehemiah refers to the same location (twice; Neh. 3.8 and 12.38) using an adjective normal genitive construct, *LXE* Neh 3.8 and they finished Jerusalem to the broad (πλατεώς, plateos) wall, whereas Rev 11.8 employs an adjective pronoun genitive feminine singular construct (πλατείας, plateias) i.e., “her street” making the city feminine (compare the great whore in 17.1).
In Rev 11, the Great City is **primarily Jerusalem**. However, it is also the literal Babylon, from whence Pharisaic and Rabbinical Judaism emerged and which offered support to the false messiah Bar Kochba. Jerusalem and Babylon are historically and religiously connected through the captivity, for many Jews remained in Babylon (more than a million in the first century) and in subsequent centuries Babylonian Talmudism became the driving force in Judaism.

The Great City is also undeniably Rome (in the first century) where Christians were put to death by Nero who was influenced by his Jewish mistress. Any city who treats the witnesses of Jesus as he himself was treated models herself on Jerusalem, who killed the prophets and stoned them that were sent to her (Mtt.22:37). The Great City is first of all Jerusalem, then any other city that identifies with her deeds. Jerusalem should be considered an archetype on which all the others are based.

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**Isaiah 1:21-27** How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now **murderers**.  
22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:  
23 Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.  
24 Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:  
25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:  
26 And **I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning:** afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.  
27 **Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.**
Witnessing archetypes

As the faithful witness Jesus Christ functions as the proto-type for Revelation 11:

### Jesus Christ
- The faithful witness (Rev 1.5)
- 3½ year ministry
- Protected (Lk 4.29, 30; John 8.59, 10.39)
- Killed by apostate religion (Acts 7.51-53)
- Killed in Jerusalem (Luke 13.33)
- In the grave 3 days (Matt 12.40)
- Ascended in a cloud (Acts 1.9)
- Resurrection earthquake (Matt 27.50-54)
- Repentance (Acts 2.37)
- Birth of a church (John 16.21)

### The Two Witnesses
- My two witnesses (11.3)
- 3½ year ministry (11.3)
- Protected (11.5)
- Killed by the beast (11.7)
- Killed in Jerusalem (11.8)
- Dead for 3½ days (11.9)
- Ascended in a cloud (11.12)
- Resurrection earthquake (11.13)
- Repentance (11.13)
- Birth of a church (Rev 12.5)

The synoptic account of the disciples witnessing during Jesus’ ministry also has parallels with Rev 11:

### Disciples
- Sent out in pairs (Lk 10.1)
- Protected (Lk 10.19)
- Before governors and kings (Matt 10.18)
- Kill the body (Matt 10.28)
- Sodom (Matt 10.15)
- Satan cast out (Lk 10.19)

### Revelation
- Two witnesses (11:3)
- Protected (11.5)
- Before nations and kings (11.3)
- Kill them (11.11)
- Sodom (11.8)
- Satan cast out (12.9)
Conclusions

Jesus told his disciples the following:

_NKJV_ Matthew 10:23 “When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes”.

The appearance of the “Son of Man” was expected in the first century. The question was whether the return was to establish the kingdom or to execute judgement. The fact that the Jews rejected the testimony of John the Baptist (thereby denying his Elijah role), rejected the testimony of the disciples and apostles, and rejected the faithful witness Jesus Christ, made judgement inevitable and delayed the introduction of the kingdom. Henceforth Israel was cast off ---the Abrahamic covenant was once more in abeyance ---the scapegoat was sent away (again) into the wilderness, but a new opportunity was opened up for the Gentiles. The outer court may have been given over to trampling by the Gentiles, but the times of the Gentiles would also gather in a new harvest for the Lord.

The beast that emerged from the abyss (of the Babylonian captivity) murdered the faithful witness Jesus Christ and his servants. Jesus cast the first century beast into the abyss again, but as the times of the Gentiles reach their conclusion the beast is once more in the process of re-emerging. This section began a question; “Who are the witnesses?” This is a complex question, we can clearly establish that the witnesses are not the Jewish nation and we can also clearly establish the identity of the first century witnesses. However, identifying the “last days” witness is more difficult although we have recurrent patterns on which to draw.

The first century priest-prophet who witnessed in the style of the Old Testament was John the Baptist and he was appointed by God through a miraculous birth. However, the Baptist was denied the role of Elijah because of national intransigence --- he was therefore not second Elijah. Another “last days” witness ordained (by birth) in the style of the Baptist is ruled out as the Baptist’s task was unique --- handing over the priesthood to a “better priest” --- the Baptist succeeded in this (even though his ministry of repentance was rejected by the people). If we turn to the New Covenant (New Testament) we find many first century witnesses (disciples, apostles, Stephen etc) given the power and wisdom of the Spirit to deliver their testimony. This is a more likely pattern on which to establish a “last days” witnessing scenario.
In Rev 10, the apostle John is instructed to eat the “little book” (biblaridion) and to prophesy. However, John himself does not prophesy, that task is taken on by the two witnesses of Rev 11, who act as his proxies. This suggests that the “last days” witnesses receive a divine prophetic commission to preach to the Jews and do not act on their own initiative. Moreover, they are given the power of the Spirit.

The “two witnesses” might actually be a single person, or they might be a group of people, or they might be two groups of people. Whatever the case may be, the witnessing is expressed as a singularity --- a unity of purpose stretching backwards to the OT and forwards to the NT as everything hangs together in the archetypical faithful witness, Jesus Christ. It is possible that the two witnesses represent two churches as the seven churches of the letters are also depicted as lampstands. It could possibly represent a Gentile and Jewish church witnessing to the Jewish nation. This is not as strange as it seems as there has been a rise in messianic Judaism (Jews for Jesus) both inside and outside of Israel. The problem is that Jews for Jesus and other such movements are off-shoots of Evangelical Christianity --- but that is better than denying the messiah altogether. Why have Christadelphians, with their monotheistic faith not had a greater impact on Judaism? Perhaps a less diplomatic and sycophantic approach is warranted --- preaching the word to the Jews without fear or favour.

Finally, the Great City in which the witnessing occurs is in the first instance Jerusalem. However, it is an oversimplification to understand the Great City as only Jerusalem as it has the characteristics of Babylon. Babylon was the place of exile, where the Jews further developed the Law into the all encompassing behemoth of tradition known as Rabbinical Judaism. The Great City has a population of 70,000 (Rev 11.13); in Gen 10 the number 70 is associated with the table of seventy Gentile nations. As the outer court is given to the Gentiles (Rev 11.2) this suggest that Diaspora Jews scattered among the nations are also affected ---in that case Jerusalem/Babylon becomes a metaphor for Jews everywhere not just limited to the land. As a people the Jews have suffered immense persecution but have also been extraordinarily successful.
It is not an exaggeration (or anti-Semitic) to state that Jews have a huge controlling stake in global finance and politics, especially in the USA where the predominantly Jewish neoconservative agenda is currently shaping Middle Eastern policies. Therefore, Christians and Jews are presently living in the Great City because Babylon has been globalized. Just as the Jews had a huge stake in the first century success of ancient Parthia (where the Jews were the power behind the throne), so now also. This would mean that witnessing in the last days is not merely limited to Jews living in the land but also to Jewish communities everywhere. If the invasion (or fall) of the state of Israel coincides with last day testifying, the global response of Jewry towards the witnesses would be visceral. There is much that we do not fully comprehend yet, but recurrent patterns point to another three and one-half years of national Jewish tribulation (possible overturning?) and witnessing that will not only impact the land of Israel but Jewish communities everywhere. The whole earth will be able to watch the drama unfold (on TV and the internet) and the final reconciliation of the Jews will mean life from the dead. The faithful witness will be vindicated and so will his servants.
Appendix: Notes on Isaiah 30.13-14

The MT reflected in the textus receptus translated in the KJV:

**KJV Isaiah 30:13** Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

The English translation of the LXX (Greek Septuagint OT):

**LXE Isaiah 30:13** therefore shall this sin be to you as a wall suddenly falling when a strong city has been taken, of which the fall is very near at hand.

The literal Greek (LXX) of the English Greek Translation (LXE):

immediately (παραχρῆμα, parachrEma) city (πόλεως, poleOs) strong (ὀχυρᾶς, othuras) conquered/breached/seized (ἐαλωκυίας, ealOkuias) immediately (παραχρῆμα, parachrEma) that(ής, Es) cometh, at hand (παραχρῆμα, parestin) the/that/this (το, to) ruin/corpse (πτῶμα, ptOma)

The next verse in the LXE (with LXX Greek in parenthesis):

**LXE Isaiah 30:14** And the fall thereof shall be as the breaking (πτῶμα, ptOma) of an earthen vessel

Note that the word body (πτῶμα, ptOma) is used to describe the ruin (death) of the city of Jerusalem that is depicted as swelling (pregnant) with sin (ready to burst her walls) and she becomes a corpse/ruin. The context is sending for Egyptian help (spiritually Egypt) behind Hezekiah’s back (during his sickness) to alleviate the siege. They ignored the prophets (witnesses); **Isaiah 30:10** --- “Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits” and **Isaiah 30:20** --- “yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers”. The divine response was to wait (do nothing): **Isaiah 30:18** --- And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him”. However, when all seemed lost God did rescue Jerusalem (because of the faithfulness of Hezekiah) not so in the first century.
End Notes Chapter 11 Pages 196-242

1 See (recommended), Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology, (T Desmond Alexander (Ed), Simon Gathercole (Ed) Paternoster,2004)

2 Early Judaism also makes explicit the biblical implication about the lampstand by directly asserting that the seven lamps on the lamp-stand symbolized the planets (Josephus, Ant.3.145; War 5.217; Philo, Rev. Div.Her.221–225; Vit. Mos.2.102–105; Quaest. Excld.2.73–81; Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, 5.6) or heaven (Philo, Rev. Div. Her. 227).

3 There were dressing rooms, storage areas, and other designated rooms in Herod’s temple also Ezekiel’s temple mentions priestly chambers (Ezek., 40.46).

4 Revelation 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars

5 Beale comments as follows; “In this light, the dictum of the popular approach to Revelation—interpret literally unless you are forced to interpret symbolically—should be turned on its head. Instead, the programmatic statement about the book’s precise mode of communication in 1:1 is that the warp and woof of it is symbolic, so that the preceding dictum should be reversed to say “interpret symbolically unless you are forced to interpret literally.” Better put, the reader is to expect that the main means of divine revelation in this book is symbolic.” Gregory K. Beale, The Purpose of Symbolism in the Book of Revelation, CTJ41 (2006): 53-66: page 55. [Accessed Feb 2017] [HYPERLINK “http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/beale_symbolism.pdf”]


7 Beale observes, “Taking all of the preceding data into consideration, the three parts of Israel’s temple represented the three parts of the cosmos: the outer court symbolized the visible earth (both land and sea, the place where humans lived); the holy place primarily represented the visible heavens (though there was also garden symbolism); the holy of holies stood for the invisible heavenly dimension of the cosmos where God dwelt (apparently not even the high priest who entered there once a year could see because of the cloud from the incense which he was to put on the fire; cf. Lev. 16:32). As we will see more fully later, this understanding of the temple as a small model of the entire cosmos is part of a larger perspective in which the temple pointed forward to a huge worldwide sanctuary in which God’s presence would dwell in every part of the cosmos”. G. K. Beale, The Temple and the Church’s Mission A Biblical Theology Of the Dwelling Place of God in New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 Series Editor: D. A. Carson, 2005, page 48. [HYPERLINK “http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crepi/fulltext/ctj/124804.pdf”] [Accessed Feb 2017]


9 W. Vogel. The Cultic Motif in Space and Time, p. 150. After a detailed study of the various terms used to designate the temple, holy mountain, holy city, Jerusalem and Zion in the book of Daniel, Vogel (p. 154) concludes that: The subsequent interchangeableness of designations that are so frequent throughout the OT testifies to the fact that a multifaceted and yet unified theology of a Jerusalem cult tradition had developed. The holy mountain, Zion, the temple, and the city had all the same theological function, namely to evoke the presence of Yahweh and his constant call to worship him. This interchangeableness with other designations, especially with “Zion” and “holy mountain”, also strongly suggests that the core element of Jerusalem’s significance was the temple and its function as a cultic centre.’

10 πατέω (pateo) same word used in Rev 11.2


12 On this see P. Wyns, Psalm 82, CEJBI, Vol. 3. No. 1. Jan 2009, pp., 29-38. [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/Ps82.pdf"]


14 Antiquities 12.7.6-7 316-325

15 Josephus was careful to mask his interpretation, Adler comments: “Sensing the obvious political overtones, Josephus carefully avoided any overt reference to an interpretation of Daniel that he knew looked forward to the ‘good things’ of Daniel’s vision: that is, the inauguration of the eternal kingdom of God and the crushing of Rome, the kingdom of Iron’. (213) On Josephus’ allusion to Dan 9:26 in Ant 10.276 Adler says; “The passage, Delphic in its double-edged ambiguity, could also be read to mean that Rome would be laid waste by the Jews”. (216) The destruction of the temple became the terminus of early Jewish interpretations; “It is clear from the testimony of both Josephus and the Jewish chronicle Seder Olam that the process of updating and interpreting Daniel’s vision persisted up to the destruction of the temple in 70”. (209) William Adler, The Jewish apocalyptic heritage in early Christianity, (eds. James C. VanderKam, William Adler: Van Gorcum & Company B.V.; Netherlands,1996)
18 Aspects of the verb ῥ’ ἄνους (strike, dash, throw down) are only used in Jdt 8:10, 9:10, 13:16; Jer. 23:33, 39; Dan 8:10, 11 (LXX and Tb) as in xvi; Jeremiah 23:39 “Therefore, behold, I will seize, and dash down (ῥ’ ἄνους) you and the city which I gave to you and your fathers.” Usually a different aspect is employed (e.g. Isa. 13:16, ῥ’ ἄνους (cast out)) which is the indicative future active 3rd person plural form of the verb.
22 Ibid, p.76
23 Charles C. Torrey, Documents of the Primitive Church, (New York: Harper, 1941), p.77
24 Ibid, p.149
27 Paul uses a different Greek word than Rev. 11:2 namely, ἀπόβολη, (apobole) meaning 1) rejection, repudiation 1a) to throw away from one’s self, cast off, repudiate 2) a losing, a loss.
29 In Acts 21.28, Paul was falsely charged with bringing gentiles into the inner court of the temple. For Paul “given to the gentiles” (Rev 11.2) implies not just the trampling of the old Jewish system but an opportunity for gentiles to be included in the covenant (the new covenant). The casting out of one group meant opportunity for the other group.
32 Young Mog Song, A Partial Preterist understanding of Revelation 12-13 in Intertextual Perspective, (Diss., Rand Afrikaans University, 2003), 99 {HYPERLINK “http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/Mog.pdf”}
35 M"uller, “Our investigation has pointed us in the direction of understanding the two witnesses as the Scriptures of the OT and the NT” Ekkehardt M"uller, Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, 13/2 (Autumn 2002): 30–45,45
36 (a) Fire out of their mouths: compare Elijah bringing fire from heaven; (2 Kings 1: 10, 12); (b) power to shut heaven that it rain not; compare the three and a half years' drought according to the word of Elijah (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17); (c) power to turn waters into blood, the first of the plagues in Egypt; (d) and to smite the earth with all plagues—the rest of the plagues in Egypt. These references to Moses and Elijah are doublet intended to recall the Law and the Prophets, the custody of which forms Israel's supreme witness to the God of Heaven.
37 Never, the Enoch of Pseudographic writings which were not accepted in either the OT or NT canon. Deuteronomy 17:6 “Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness”.
38 Jesus adds the qualifier, “but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he”.

See the excellent book by Bert Dicou, Edom, Israel's Brother and Antagonist: The Role of Edom in Biblical Prophecy and Story, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 1994)

Mishnah Sotah 7:8; Babylonian Talmud Sotah 41a

Edler, Eliezer, History of the Jewish People, The Second Temple Era, (Mesorah Publications Ltd. 1982), 156


Ibid, Müller, p., 40

See the chapter end note on Isa 30:13-14

For the full covenant background to Genesis 15 see, P. Wyns, When the Vultures Gather, CEJBI, Vol. 4, No., 3., Jul 2010, pp., 2-10 [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/vulture.pdf"]

The more neutral “birds” has been chosen rather than vultures or eagles. The KJV has angel in Rev 8.13, the RSV/NIV/NIB/ASV has eagle, the VLT has messenger. Eagle makes sense when depicting the Romans. Herod erected a huge golden eagle (the symbol of the Roman Empire) at the entrance to the temple. Near the end of his reign, on premature rumours of his death, young zealots climbed the temple and smashed the golden Roman eagle over the main entrance; Herod had forty of them along with two of their Rabbis burned alive. (Jos., Antiq., 17, 6, 2) Ancient Egypt was symbolised by the griffon vulture. They are all birds of prey.

Herbert Rand suggests that the word šīṭy in Lev. 16:21 be translated adverbially, i.e., emphasizing the temporary status of the one sending away the scapegoat “and shall dispatch [it] by someone [ad hoc] into the wilderness”, H. Rand, “The Translator’s Dilemma What is itti?”, Jewish Bible Quarterly 22 (1994):110-114.

A Psalm of Asaph places it, with the other Asaph psalms, in the reign of Hezekiah. For the historical background of Psalm 79 and intertextual connections with Rev 11 see George Booker, Psalms Studies Vol 3. [HYPERLINK "http://christadelphianbooks.org/booker/psalms3/psalms07.html"] [Accessed April 2017]. The tripartite nature of Isaiah is rejected on stylistic, theological and historical grounds (which cannot be addressed here) and placed in the reigns of Uzziah-Hezekiah.

Since τῆς πλατείας, “the street” is articulare and the noun occurs here for the first time in Revelation, it is anthaphoric in the sense that it must refer to a street well known (or at least that the author assumes is well known) to the readers. See the translation offered in Aune’s Revelation, p., 580 notes 8c and 8d-d. D. Aune, Word Biblical Commentary, Revelation 6-16, (Thomas Nelson, 1998)

The feminie noun ἡ πλατεία can mean “street” or “public square” or “plaza” (MM, 517); here it appears to mean “public square”. In the similar account found in the Apoc. Elijah, Elijah and Enoch are killed and lie dead for three and one-half days in the “market place [Coptic tagora ntn mpolos] of the Great City”.

We must not forget Christian witness against Nero and witnessing against the false Messiah Bar Kochba. The first and early second centuries saw many instances of Christian witnessing leading to persecution and death.
Birth Pangs of the Messiah

Matthew 24:8 “All these are the beginning of sorrows (ὠδίνων, OdinOn)”

The Greek ὠδίνως refers to the birth pangs a woman experiences while in labour. Basically, the Jews referred to these by the phrase חבל של משיח, literally “the birth pangs of the Messiah.” They are not birth pangs that the Messiah himself experiences (a subjective genitive, if you will), but birth pangs that Israel (personified as a woman) experiences which culminate in the “birth” (i.e., coming into the world) of the Messiah (an objective genitive, if you will).

In other words, Israel will experience great distress and tribulation (represented as birth pangs, ὠδίνως, or חבלים) before the coming of the Messiah into the world. The notion of these birth pangs preceding the Messianic advent originated from the Tanakh. The word for birth-pangs or sorrows occurs in the following places in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) version and also in the Greek of Maccabees:

LXX 2 Kings 19:3 “And they said to him, Thus says Ezekias, This day is a day of tribulation, and rebuke, and provocation: for the children are come to the travail-pangs, (ὠδίνων) but the mother has no strength”.

RSV 4 Maccabees 15:16 “O mother, tried now by more bitter pains than even the birth-pangs (ὠδίνων) you suffered for them!”

LXX Hosea 9:11 “Ephraim has flown away as a bird; their glories from the birth, and the travail, (ὠδίνων) and the conception”.

LXX Isaiah 66:7 “Before she that travailed brought forth, before the travail-pain (ὠδίνων) came on, she escaped it and brought forth a male”.

LXX Ezekiel 7:7 “...the inhabitant of the land: the time is come, the day has drawn nigh, not with tumult, nor with pangs (ὠδίνων)”.

The above references from the LXX demonstrate that the word ὠδίνων is used in connection with national distress or trouble, with the nation depicted as a woman in labour.
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A woman in Labour

The woman in labour is Rachel. She is considered one of the matriarchs of Israel (Ruth 4.11) and the Jews regarded her as the mother of all Israel (see Gen. Rab. 71.3). She was the barren sister who desired a child and who died in childbirth; with her dying breath she named her child the son of my sorrow (Gen 35.18). Rachel is used by Jeremiah to typify the distress of the nation at the time of the looming Babylonian destruction and captivity (removal of her children):

**Jeremiah 31:15**  “Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not”.

Matthew cites this very verse (in Matt 2.18) when he records the events surrounding the birth of Jesus and the flight (exile) into Egypt (more on this anon). Moreover, in John 16.20-22, Jesus employs an allusion to Rachel and the “son of my sorrow”:

**John 16:20-22**  “Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. 21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, (λύπη, lupE) because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. 22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you”.

Jesus conflates the weeping and lamentation of Jer.31.15 with the joy of Isa.51.11, where the same word for sorrow (λύπη, lupE) is employed in the LXX: “For by the help of the Lord they shall return, and come to Sion with joy and everlasting exultation, for praise and joy shall come upon their head: pain, and grief, (λυπη, lupE) and groaning, have fled away.
A great wonder in heaven (Rev 12.2)

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: ‘And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and 
pained (ὠδίνουσα, Odinousa) to be delivered’.

Any first century Jew (or Jewish-Christian) reading these verses would automatically make the association between Rachel, the birth pangs of the messiah and Joseph’s dream (Gen 37.9-10). The connections are glaringly obvious to any Jew versed in the Torah. The aspect of the dream that puzzled Joseph’s father Jacob was that it included Rachel (who had had died) also bowing down to Joseph. His brethren reacted with extreme hatred and sold him into the bondage of Egypt (a land immersed in a death cult) where Joseph prospered and arranged for the salvation of his family.

We return now to the birth of Jesus and the events that Matthew describes concerning the flight to Egypt, where he cites Jer.31.15 – Rachel weeping for her children. This story is known as the “slaughter of the innocents”, when Herod the Great attempted to kill the children of Bethlehem to safe guard any claims against his throne. Scholars often treat the story as unhistorical, as a sort of Midrash, but there are grounds for understanding the events as recording actual historical events.

“He gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem (2:16). Only 123 men returned to Bethlehem from the Babylonian deportation (Ezra 2:21), and it appears not to have grown beyond a small village of perhaps a thousand people at the birth of Jesus. Herod’s forces kill all the infant boys under the age of two years, which would calculate to between ten to thirty boys. Although this number of infant boys massacred would be a huge loss for the village of Bethlehem, it is not an incident that stands out significantly when seen in the light of other horrific events in Herod’s infamous career, and historians would have easily bypassed it. “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning” (2:18). Centuries earlier, Nebuchadnezzar’s army had gathered the captives from Judah in the town of Ramah before they were taken into exile to Babylon (Jer. 40:1–2). Jeremiah depicts Rachel, who is the personification of the mothers of Israel, mourning for her children as they are being carried away. However, there was hope for their future because God would restore Rachel’s children to their own land (31:16–17), and messianic joy would come in the future establishment of the new covenant with Israel (31:31–34)”.
Peter Richardson remarks, “Given Herod’s long-standing concern for the succession (seven wills, intra-family troubles, sibling rivalries, attempts to undercut his hold on power), rumours of a non-Herodian “king of the Jews” would have enraged him—at least that is the view of the sources behind Matthew’s birth story”. Richardson also refers to early Christian tradition; “Herod’s abominable behaviour is described accurately in the Testament of Moses 6:2-6: “An insolent king will succeed them. He will slay the old and the young, and he will not spare. And he will execute judgments on them, just as the Egyptians did.” This does not prove the historical accuracy of the Christian tradition of the incident, since it makes only a very general comment on Herod, but it shows how Christians shaped their history to conform to prevailing assessments of Herod”.

Other scholars have noted intertextual links between Revelation 12 and the Exodus account of the slaughter of Hebrew children by Pharaoh, as well as the wilderness journey and the nation caught up to the throne (Mt Sinai).

There is no doubt that Herod the Great (reign 37–4 BCE) the “temple builder” was a despotic character. Augustus is reported as remarking, “I would rather be Herod’s pig than his son”, emphasizing the revulsion felt at Herod’s treatment of his children. Josephus stated that Herod was so concerned that no one would mourn his death, that he commanded a large group of distinguished men to come to Jericho, and he gave an order that they should be killed at the time of his death so that the displays of grief that he craved would take place. Fortunately for them, Herod’s son Archelaus and sister Salome did not carry out this wish. Josephus wrote that Herod’s final illness—sometimes named “Herod’s Evil” -was excruciating. Based on Josephus’ descriptions, one medical expert has diagnosed Herod’s cause of death as chronic kidney disease complicated by Fournier’s gangrene. Similar symptoms accompanied the death of his grandson Agrippa I in 44 CE. Modern scholars agree Herod suffered throughout his lifetime from depression and paranoia.
A great red Dragon (Rev 12.3)

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red (πυρρός, purros) dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads”.

The first time that πυρρός (purrhos) is encountered in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) is in Genesis:

LXX Genesis 25:30 “And Esau said to Jacob, Let me taste of that red (πυρρός, purros) pottage, because I am fainting; therefore his name was called Edom”.

Esau was the progenitor of the Edomites (Gen 36.1) and the Hebrew Edom (אֱדֹם) is associated with Adam (אָדָם) and means red (red clay?). Therefore, the characters that echo in the background of Revelation 12 are the closely related progenitors -- Rachel, Jacob, Esau and Joseph. Jacob deceived his brother Esau concerning the birthright and later in life was frightened of a looming confrontation with his brother Esau – Jeremiah draws parallels with the looming Babylonian invasion, using birth-pang language:

Jeremiah 30:6-7 “Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? 7 Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it”.

Jeremiah envisions the time of coming distress in terms of Jacob confronting Esau the Edomite. Herod the Great was an Idumean – a descendant of Esau. He was the second son of Antipater the Idumaean, a high-ranked official under ethnarch Hyrcanus II, and Cypros, a Nabatean. Herod’s father was by descent an Edomite whose ancestors had converted to Judaism. Herod was raised as a Jew.
The Herodian dynasty and the church

The early church suffered under the Herodian dynasty. Herod the Great (reigned 37-4 BCE) sought to murder the messiah and slaughtered the innocents in Bethlehem. Herod Antipater (reigned 4 BCE-39 CE) was involved in events that led to the executions of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. Herod Agrippa (reigned 41–44 CE) had James (the brother of John) murdered:

Acts 12:1-3 NLT “About that time King Herod Agrippa began to persecute some believers in the church. He had the apostle James (John’s brother) killed with a sword. When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish people, he also arrested Peter (This took place during the Passover celebration).”

This is significant because the only other place that Revelation employs the word red (πυρρός, purrhos) is in the second seal:

Revelation 6:4 “And there went out another horse that was red (πυρρός, purrhos): and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword”.

James and John were originally disciples of the Baptist and both James and the Baptist were killed by the Herod family. The Baptist was killed by the sword because he condemned Antipater’s adultery and James continued to proclaim the Baptist’s message: “Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4.2). Moreover, he says, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?” (James 4.4). The mention of friendship is significant for, “And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together”. The death of Christ sealed the friendship between the former enemies (Luke 23.12). Note particularly the emphasis on killed with a sword (beheaded like the Baptist?) rather than stoned (like Stephen). Also note the time-frame (Passover, the seals are bracketed by Passover). There are no historical sources that describe a “Herodian party” within first century Judaism. Most scholars accept that it was a political rather than a religious party but in first century temple Judaism politics and religion went hand in hand.
Kaufmann Kohler states the following in the Jewish Encyclopedia --- “Priestly party under the reign of King Herod and his successors; called by the Rabbis “Boethusians,” as adherents of the family of Boethus, whose daughter Mariamne was one of the wives of King Herod, and whose sons were successively made high priests by him. They followed the Sadducees in their opposition to the Pharisees, and were therefore often identified with the former (see Grätz, “Gesch.” 4th ed., iii. 2, 693; Boethusians). According to the Gospels, their plot against the life of Jesus was supported by the Pharisees (Mark iii. 6, xii. 13; Matt. xii. 16); wherefore Jesus warned his disciples, saying “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod” (Mark viii. 15; Matt. xvi. 6 has “Pharisees” and “Sadducees”). “Leaven” is explained in Matt. xvi. 12 to mean “teaching,” that is, “bad teaching” (comp. “se’or sheba-‘isah” = “the leaven in the dough,” corresponding to the “yezer ha-ra’ ”; Ber. 17a). This shows that the Herodians represented a religious party. In Luke xii. 1 the Herodians have been omitted altogether, and the Pharisees alone are represented as the enemies of Jesus; and in Luke xx. 19 the scribes and chief priests are mentioned in place of the Pharisees and the Herodians (see also Mark xii. 13; Matt. xxii. 15-16).17

To summarise: It seems that we do have “Herodians” as a subset of the Sadducee Priesthood but they were called “Boethusians” (Herodian is therefore a NT description). The Herod’s were involved with killing the Baptist, Jesus and James (the brother of John). They were of Edomite (red) heritage. Herod the Great even tried to slaughter the “man child” when he was a baby, causing “Rachel to weep”.
Seven Crowns

Luke sets the scene of the cosmic conflict as follows:

**Luke 3:1** “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness”.

Luke enumerates seven protagonists:

1. Tiberius Caesar
2. Pontius Pilate
3. Herod being tetrarch of Galilee
4. Philip tetrarch of Ituraea
5. Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene
6. Annas and
7. Caiaphas being the high priests
8.

This is the red dragon of Rev 12.3 “a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads”. The beast is always the same in that it always has seven heads and ten horns as it is a composite drawn from Daniel’s imagery, but here it is depicted with seven crowns denoting the kingly and priestly opposition to Jesus and his church, but particularly in the form of the Herod family (red Edomites), client kings of Rome.

The beast mentioned later in Revelation is no longer red but scarlet (Κόκκινος, Kokkinos) and therefore only indirectly related. Interestingly, the prophecy in Num 24.17 concerning the “Star out of Jacob” was probably interpreted by the scribes as a threat to Herod’s throne (And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies v.18) which is why the Bethlehem star required investigation. Ironically, the same prophecy was employed to justify the false messiah Bar Kochba.
The Olivet Prophecy

The Olivet prophecy is directly linked with Revelation 12. The importance of Matt 24.8 has been already noted above but can be expanded with the following allusions:

Matthew 24 & Luke 21

Luke 21:25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars

Luke 21:23 ...for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

Luke 21:12 ...they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you

Luke 21:21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

Revelation 12

1And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows (birth-pangs).

19 And woe unto them...

19 ...that are with child

12 Woe to the inhabiters of the earth...

2 ...and pained to be delivered.

12...for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath...

12...because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

13...he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

Luke 21 relates to the Christian flight to Pella which occurred during the first revolt. It is undeniable that Revelation 12 is (in the first instance) concerned with the first century church before and during the first Jewish revolt in 70 CE. However, the chapter has an individual and a corporate dimension. The “child” is both Jesus and his church (body). The chapter looks backwards (slaughter of the innocents, death of the Baptist etc) and forwards (siege of Jerusalem) and even further forwards (more on this anon).
Psalm 2 and Revelation 12

Any doubts that we may have about this interpretive reading can be laid to rest with the subliminal interweaving of the messianic Psalm 2 into the last trump of Rev 11 with allusions breaching the chapter division and continuing into the body of Rev 12:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm 2</th>
<th>Revelation 11-12 (Last Trump)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?</td>
<td>11.18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.</td>
<td>11.15 The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ (anointed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee</td>
<td>11.18 that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed</td>
<td>11.15 and of his Christ (anointed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Thou art my Son;</td>
<td>12.2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 This day have I begotten thee</td>
<td>12.5 And she brought forth a man child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron</td>
<td>12.5 who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling</td>
<td>11.18 and to the saints, and them that fear thy name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The man-child is therefore Christ and his church, the conquerors were promised (in Rev 2:26-27), “power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron”. Moreover, the end of Psalm 2 relates to the apostle Paul who was a judge at Stephens trial and who was a known persecutor of Christians before his conversion, “Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9.1); his invective reminiscent of “the serpent casting out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman” (Rev 12.15) until the risen Lord confronted Saul on the way to Damascus “and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood” (Rev 12.16) with the risen Christ commissioning Paul to preach to the Gentiles the Gospel of justification by faith (rather than Law).
The complex pattern of interplaying allusions between Ps 2 and Rev 12 commences in the last trump of Rev 11 and continues into Rev 12. This would seem to indicate that Rev 11-12 is sequential but that is not the case as the last trump introduces the kingdom and this contradicts Rev 12, which has its (initial) focus on the first century. The woe in Rev 12.12 seems to indicate that Rev 11-12 is sequential but that is not the case as the last trump introduces the vial-plagues and the kingdom, whereas the woe in Rev 12.12 relates to the short time remaining for the devil to wreak havoc. The “short time” is likely the forty and two months that the beast of Rev 13.5 is “given power to continue” and this beast receives his authority from the dragon of Rev 12.

Historically we halve the first Jewish war lasting the “short time” of 3½ years and some 60 years later the Bar Kochba revolt lasting another “short time” of 3½ years. Once again this highlights the repetitive nature of the drama and explains the consistency of the symbology – the beast only changes minimally throughout the story. It always has seven heads and ten horns only the number of crowns fluctuates from seven crowns (dragon in Rev 12.12) to ten crowns (wounded beast in Rev 13.1) to no crowns (Mystery Babylon in Rev 17.3). The enemy demonstrates consistency throughout the Apocalypse, consistency of character, motivation and action – it blasphemes, persecutes, demands worship and mimics God. Essentially the beasts are different incarnations of the same enemy from the beginning – the causa sui project of the serpent.

Hinlicky cites, “. . . the imago Dei means for man a relationship with, and dependence upon, the one for whom he is only the representative. To wish to be like God, the temptation suggested by the serpent, is to desire to abandon the role of image . . . in behaving thus man degrades himself and falls to the animal level instead of raising himself: to desire to become an angel is to prepare to become a beast”...and be adds....“the creature who in unfaith closes the ear to God’s command-and-promise, who thereby forfeits divine destiny and wreaks havoc on the earth in falling into a godless causa sui project under the curse of divine law”.
A cosmic battle is portrayed (war in heaven) with the ejected beast **constantly emerging** from the abyss, trailing the smoke of devastation in its wake. It is a **repetitive pattern**, with the seeming immortality of the beast (wounded to death then recovered) evoking fear (Rev 13.4) and marvel (even from John in Rev 17.7). The war is **not over until the very end**, “...and...the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful (Rev 17.14)....and.... the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image and these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone (Rev 19:20)....and....cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season” (Rev 20.3).

It is therefore both presumptuous and premature to limit the witnessing or birth narratives of Rev 11-12 only to the first century, or the second, or..., as this is precluded by the nature of the beast. However, the past does paint a picture of the future.
War in heaven (Rev 12.7-12)

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the
dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not;
neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great
dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which
deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels
were cast out with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven,
Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and
the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down,
which accused them before our God day and night. 11 And they
overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their
testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. 12 Therefore
rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of
the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having
great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time”.

The war “in heaven” is obviously metaphorical. These are not the “political heavens” as some
commentators are wont to call them. Heaven is the place where God dwells and therefore war in
heaven denotes the crossing of boundaries, either directly challenging God or introducing the
profane into a holy space. Examples of this are the building of the tower of Babel to reach
heaven in order to make a name (Gen 11.4), or the challenge of the Babylonian king in his
attempt to ascend the mount of congregation and aim for the stars (Isa 14.13), or the trampling
of the starry host by the little horn (Dan 8.10), or the self-aggrandizing “man of sin” who
substitutes himself for God in the temple (2 Thess. 2.4). All these incidents are based on
historical realities, the building of a temple ziggurat (by Nimrod?), the Assyrian attacks against
Yahweh, and desecration of the temple by Antiochus and finally the self-proclaimed messiah
Bar Kochba.

The core of the challenge is found in the meaning of the angel Michael’s name, “Who is like
God?” which is mirrored by the beast-worshippers - - - “who is like the beast?” (Rev 13.4). It is
a rhetorical question – no one is like the beast. The formula is changed into a negative when the
question is posed to the Lord’s anointed (Hezekiah) by Rabshakeh, “Who are they among all the
gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand” (2 Kings 18:35) and
the charge is repeated in Psalms 79.10, “Where is their God?” the question is no longer who is
comparable with God, but where is he?
The interrogative context is that of “holy war” as in Joel 2.7 (YLT) “sanctify a war” (compare Jihad) ---wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? (Joel 2.17). The formula “Who is like God?” is therefore in its positive and negative formulations either an affirmation of, or a challenge to divine authority and thus associated with both physical war and spiritual warfare (more on this anon). However, in ancient times physical war had a spiritual dimension – a contest between the “gods” and their earthly representatives (e.g., Pharaoh against Moses or Sennacherib against Hezekiah). Even in modern times the concept of holy war has at its root the idea of the victory of Allah and his followers over the infidels and their false Christian God. The victory song (Song of the Sea) is found throughout the Apocalypse and forms a subtext to Revelation 12 along with other “Egyptian” associations (slaughter of male children, Passover Lamb etc):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exodus 15</th>
<th>Revelation 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation.</td>
<td>10 Now is come salvation, and strength and the kingdom of our God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea</td>
<td>10 The accuser of our brethren is cast down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?</td>
<td>7 Michael = Who is like God?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 The Lord is a man of war</td>
<td>13.4 Who is like the beast?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Thou has guided them in they strength unto thy holy habitation.</td>
<td>14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex 19.4 I bare you on eagles wings (the cherubim) and brought you unto myself</td>
<td>15 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, The earth swallowed them.</td>
<td>17 Her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The “Great dragon” is given all his aliases --- (1) the accuser (2) the old (ancient) serpent (3) the devil (4) Satan. The enemy manifests through deception, slander, blasphemy and persecution. This is the spiritual dimension of the enemy with the imagery regressing to the deception of Eve in Paradise (cf. the seed of the woman in Rev 12.17). The apostle Paul employs similar language in 2 Corinthians:
Paul has a particular individual in mind: “Satan who fashioned himself into an angel of light” (a messenger of the Gospel). This opponent had become “a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me” (2 Cor.12:7). His ministers were false apostles, deceitful workers (v.13) who preached another Jesus (v.4) and another gospel (v.4). The purpose of this Satan was to devour the new-born ecclesia, to take them captive (v.20) back to the bondage of the law. Paul reminds the church that in contrast with the (as yet unrevealed) man of sin, who “exalts himself above all that is called God” (2 Thess.2:4) Paul had “abased himself in order that the ecclesia might be exalted” (v.7).

 Appropriately, the war in heaven also echoes the slander brought against Joshua (Jesus LXX) the high priest in Zech 3.1-10. It was deemed that the captivity had made Joshua unclean and therefore unfit to serve as a priest and his case was prosecuted in the heavenly court, where the charge was thrown out. Yahweh presides as judge over the heavenly court with Michael acting as the angel for the defence and Satan acting as the prosecutor.
Zechariah-Jude -Revelation

The following matrix of connections exits between Zechariah---Revelation---Jude and although different wording is sometimes employed they convey the same ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zechariah 3.1-7 LXX</th>
<th>Revelation 12.7-11</th>
<th>Jude 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>resist</td>
<td>war + fought</td>
<td>contending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>antikeisthai</td>
<td>polemos + epolemEsen</td>
<td>diakrinomenos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angel</td>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Michael the archangel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aggelou</td>
<td>devil</td>
<td>michaEl ho archaggelos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devil</td>
<td>diabolos</td>
<td>devil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diabolos</td>
<td>resist</td>
<td>diabolO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resist</td>
<td>accuser</td>
<td>disputed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>antikeisthai</td>
<td>katEgOrs</td>
<td>dilegeto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my house</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>the body of Moses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oikon mou</td>
<td>topos</td>
<td>tou mOuseOs sOmatos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lord rebuke thee</td>
<td>prevailed not</td>
<td>The Lord rebuke thee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>epitimEsai en kurios soi</td>
<td>ouk ischusen</td>
<td>epitimEsai soi kurios</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None of these visions is concerned with fallen or rebellious angels. The combative and belligerent language used in these narratives is not meant to reflect an actual “war” occurring in heaven but rather judicial proceedings ---very hostile litigation. However, the court case that is prosecuted “in heaven” has consequences on earth and these do include war and persecution. When the case is dismissed and the charges thrown out of the heavenly court the dragon is depicted as reacting with great wrath on earth – he throws a tantrum!

Conservative scholars date the Epistle of Jude between 70 and 90, J.A.T Robinson between 61-2 and Revelation in late 68. It is however possible to push the dating of Revelation even earlier in ca.65/66 and to understand Jude and Revelation as contemporaneous. In that case Jude would be paraphrasing Revelation, which is in turn paraphrasing Zechariah.

This section of Revelation is saturated with OT allusions and combines them freely. For example, the unnamed angel of Zechariah becomes Michael in Revelation because the seer is using Daniel 12.1 where Michael is depicted as one who , “…stands watch over the sons of your people….there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation”. 29
A cosmic struggle is depicted which commences with the Lord's ministry and crucifixion and continues with the birth of the church. All the forces of the world, dynastic, imperial and religious are aligned against the man child.

If we examine the various word choices the allusions will become clearer. In order to compare the testaments we need to employ the Greek LXX OT with the Greek NT so that we have a level playing field. For Example, the victory is introduced with the words (Rev 12.10 YLT); “Now did come the salvation, and the power (dunamis), and the reign, of our God, and the authority of His Christ”. The LXX employs the same word for the first time in Exod.12.41, which the English (LXE) translation renders thus, “And it came to pass after the four hundred and thirty years, all the forces (dunamis) of the Lord came forth out of the land of Egypt by night”. This was the Passover night (MS self same day [which began at sunset]). The very next verse (Rev 12.11) commences with, “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb”.

The same word is used of Stephen in Acts 6.8, “And Stephen, full of faith and power (dunamis)” when he spoke against (Acts 6.14) “this place” (ton topon), which in Rev 12.8 becomes “nor was a place” (oude topos) found”, which in turn is linked with the prophecy of Caiaphas in John 11.48-52; “the Romans shall come and take away both our place (ton topon) and nation” ….compare…but they did not prevail, nor was a place (oude topos) found for them in heaven any longer” (Rev.12.8). They falsely accused Stephen (and Jesus) in a rigged court before the Sanhedrin with the focus being the temple (our place, this place) and the traditions of Moses (Acts 6.14) but Jesus says, “Do not think that I will accuse (katEgorEsO) you to the Father: there is one that accuseth (katEgorOn) you, even Moses, in whom ye trust” (John 5:45). The tables have been turned on the accuser (katEgOrs) of Rev 12.10 as the witness for the prosecution (Moses) becomes a witness for the defence of Christ and his apostles.

Moreover Jesus has prepared his own place for his church (John 14.2); “I go to prepare a place (ton topon) for you” ……where she hath a place (ton topon) prepared of God (Rev.12.6). The LXE of Deut 1:31 relates how in the wilderness God will, “bear thee as a nursling, as if any man should nurse his child, through all the way which ye have gone until ye came to this place (ton topon)” and “I took you up as upon eagles’ wings” (Exod 19.4 cf. Rev 12.14) that, she might fly into the wilderness to her place (ton topon)”. The charge given to Jesus (LXX) in Zech 3.7 is, “And if you will keep My command, Then you shall also judge My house”(oikon mou). The “house” in Zechariah was the nation under the Law of Moses. Hebrews says that “Moses was faithful in all his house, as a servant but Christ as a son over his own house (Heb 3.5-6).
Jude paraphrases the “house of Moses” as “the body of Moses” (in contrast to the body of Christ) which is appropriate as Moses was refused entry into the land because he did not sanctify God. Similarly, the Enochic heresy that Jude countered (v.8) also “rejected authority and slandered celestial beings” in other words they did not sanctify God or his angels and use of Enochic literature was probably a deliberate ploy by a Judaist (Law-of-Moses) party to subvert Christianity by presenting Echonic literature as authoritative. The purpose of such a strategy was to justify and promote lewd behaviour which would alienate Jews and confuse newly converted Gentiles.33 Jude represents the law as a dead corpse (Moses) that could not enter the kingdom, the Law only wrought death in its outworking in contrasted with the risen Lord and his living body (the church) who were able to enter the kingdom under grace, wrought by the blood of the Lamb.

The devil (dragon/Satan/serpent etc) “prevailed not” (ouk ischusen) against the early church (Rev 12.8) – Contrast Acts 19.20, “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (ischusen) in fact the same chapter (v.16) recounts how a man with an evil spirit prevailed (ischusen) against the seven sons of a Jewish chief priest (depicting the seven high priests of the first century temple Judaism) fleeing the house naked and wounded (Acts 19.16). This was the Lords’ rebuke against the nation.
The cross and the devil

At an individual level, the casting out of the devil began during Jesus’ ministry and was completed with his death on the cross but the pattern was repeated with his church (his corporate body) and with the death of his martyrs, for the servant is not above his master and victory over the devil is a pattern constantly repeated until the end. The devil or accuser takes many forms:

“And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing” (Matt 27.12).

“And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him” (Lk 23.10).

The same form of the word (katEgoreisthai) is used here as in Rev 12 and the accusation comes from the very beginning, the causa sui project of self-divinization to “become like the elohim” proposed by the serpent. God gave the Jews a law to demonstrate the impossibility of the task -- they could not keep it --- with the exception of Jesus, who nevertheless refused to grasp at divinity and voluntarily chose death thereby ensuring that the accuser could never again achieve a victory against mankind because the very nature that was alienated from God was now destroyed. Although, the war has been decisively won by Christ, the battles are still ongoing but mankind now has a choice to identify with the “second Adam” and share the victory through him.

John 12

28 Then came a voice from heaven, saying, I have glorified it and will glorify it again

31 Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out

Revelation 12

10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, Now is the salvation, and the power and the kingdom, become our God’s

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil

16 The earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth
Lifting up from the earth refers to both the crucifixion and the resurrection. All men (both Jew and Gentile, without distinction) were drawn to Christ and when the risen Christ appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus he stopped the flood of persecution, at the same time commissioning Saul to preach to the Gentiles.

The “prince of this world” (the destroyer on Passover night?) is an interesting expression as it indicates the cosmic nature of the victory. According to Paul the Law was “ordained by angels” (Gal 3.19) and Jesus nailed the Law (ordinances) to the cross thereby “triumphing over them (the angels) in it” and in “spoiling principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly” (see Col 2.14-23). This is why Paul warns (v.18) against “a voluntary humility (self-abasement) and worshipping of angels” which in the context of the previous verses (a holy day or feast day see v.16) refers to the self-abasement (RSV) practiced on the Day of Atonement. The “worship of angels” literally translates as “and-ritual-of-the-messengers” (ISA) as the Greek (thrEskeia) can mean ritual, religion or worship.

Paul is arguing that the Law (even Yom Kippur, their holiest day of self-abasement) becomes a mere “ritual of the messengers” unless it is observed in faith, because the law and its rituals “are a shadow of things to come” (v.17), after all, Jesus had “triumphed” over the Law and its administrators/messengers (both of the earthly and heavenly variety).

Unlike God, the angels are not omniscient or all knowing. Angels are often sent to test men as with the sacrifice of Isaac –“for now I know that thou fearest God” (Gen 22.12) and “Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?” (Job 1.9) Of course, God already knows the answer to both those questions but the testing is undertaken as much for angelic edification as it is for human refinement.

When he was tested in the wilderness Jesus refused to worship Satan. He would not misuse his status as the messiah or the power of the Spirit for personal ambition. He refused to grasp at divinity. He refused to be crowned as king of the Jews (John 6.15) instead choosing the path of obedience and suffering. Ironically, King of the Jews became his epitaph on the cross.
Jesus triumphed over earthly and heavenly principalities and powers not only at his death, but also during his ministry:

Matthew 4
8 Satan…shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them…all these things will I give you

Revelation 13
2 The dragon (Satan) gave him his power and his seat (throne RV) and great authority

8….if you will fall down and worship me (Satan)

8…all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him (beast/Satan)

Finally, the angels had an answer to their questions; “Now I know that Jesus fears God” and “Does Jesus fear God for nought?” These were things that even “angels desire to look into” (1 Pet 1.12). At last, here was a man who lived the Law (he was the word made flesh) and who worshipped God in spirit and truth, out of love, not for personal gain. Neither did Jesus keep the Law as an act of self-divinization. Even Satan, who had the authority to gift him the “kingdoms of the world and the glory of them” could not tempt him. Jesus delivered a total victory, over men, angels and Law. None could accuse him. Satan was cast out --- “the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (John 14.30).

“Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?” (Heb 1.4-5)
1 Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shekalim 11a
2 Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 98b
3 cp. Isa 13:8; 26:17, 66:7-8; Jer. 30:5-7
4 She had “hard labour” (Gen 35:16)
6 Peter Richardson, Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans,(Univ of South Carolina Press, 1996),296
7 On the date, see J. Priest, in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 1:920—21 and literature cited there, especially G. W. E. Nicklesburg chaps. 6 and 7 belong to the early Christian period.
8 Ibid., p., 298
10Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.4.1
14 We also detect echoes of Adam, Eve and the serpent in Rev 12.
17 Entry by Kaufmann Kohler from The unedited full-text of the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia, electronic version (See there for Bibliography)
18 In a previous exposition of Revelation the suggestion of some scholars was accepted that Rev 17.9-10 was an interpolation, originally dislocated from below Rev 12.3 and transferred to Rev 17. This no longer seems possible or even probable. Beside the fact that we have no manuscript evidence of such a variant the beast in Rev 17 is a different (yet similar) beast to that of Rev 12. That said, the similarities between the beasts of Rev 12 and 17 is striking and we are perhaps dealing with analepsis or parenthetical explanations, with similar patterns repeated and similar phrases used (e.g. short time 12.12 and short space 17.10). This will be examined in depth in Rev 17.
19 See the flight to Pella in the historical chapter: [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/Digressions/christians.pdf"]
20 Psalm 2:10 be instructed, ye judges of the earth [Saul]
21 Psalm 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way [to Damascus]
22 Psalm 2:8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for inheritance [preaching to Gentiles]
23 Psalm 2:12 Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. [justification by faith]
24 Some scholars believe that another flight to Pella occurred during this period see Jewish-Christians in the period 70 CE - 135 CE.
25 Paul R. Hinlicky, Beloved Community: Critical Dogmatics after Christendom, (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015), ad loc. for sources
26 The Assyrian kings took the honorific title “king of Babylon” when they conquered the city. A number of invasions against Israel occurred in the 8th century BCE, the best recorded that of Sennacherib against Judah during the reign of Hezekiah. It was known for its direct challenge against Yahweh (holy war) and character of its invasions against Israel occurred in the 8th century BCE, the best recorded that of Sennacherib against Judah during the reign of Hezekiah. It was known for its direct challenge against Yahweh (holy war) and characterized by blasphemy and arrogance. *Isaiah 37:3* And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.
27 Psalm 79 is intertextually linked with Rev 11. [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/html/ch11.html" \l "P208"]
28 Jude 9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring a railing accusation against him, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. See the digression: [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/Digressions/Jude.pdf"]
29 Of course, in Daniel the resurrection is anticipated at the end of this 3½ year period – but that only happened for Christ after his 3½ year ministry (hour of tribulation) but not for the faithful after the 3½ year Roman war.
30 The dragon represents the powers hostile to Christ and his first century church –the Herodian Dynasty, Imperial Rome and Judaism. The religious power is represented in Luke’s enumeration (Luke 1.3) of the seven powers (heads of Daniel’s beast) in the mentioning of two high priests –it is difficult to know how to define this “religious power” (as it was not homogenous) and the term Judaism has been employed rather than Sadducees because the Pharisees also participated in the Sanhedrin. Moreover, the Pharisees were the embryonic form of rabbinical Judaism. At the basis of this all was the Law of Moses which had been wrested by elite hierophants.
31 This was exactly 430 years after Abraham received the (Passover- night) vision-promise of Genesis 15
Compare; “...her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev12.17).

Interestingly, the book of Enoch was not canonised by the rabbis at Yavne (Jamina) where the Sanhedrin met in ca 80 CE. Therefore the book of Enoch and other pseudographic literature never formed part of the Old Testament, supposedly, because references to a pre-existing “Son of Man” looked very much like the New Testament Jesus. Enochic material obviously relies on Daniel and uses familiar terms such as the “Son of Man” designation and terms like “watchers” etc. Neither was Enochic literature included in the New Testament cannon as it was not inspired and contained heresy. Enochic literature was widespread in first century temple Judaism and it was probably the ideal vehicle for some sort of Judaist Law-of-Moses party to deliberately promote the idea of “loose living” and confuse newly converted Gentiles in an attempt to subvert Christianity. Perhaps the example of rebellious angels from Enochic literature was combined with a wresting of Paul's gospel of grace; “And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just” (Rom 3.8). It is difficult to reverse engineer the arguments that Jude's opponents used but as Jude points out even in their own Enoch story the wrong doers were punished. See the digression: [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/Digressions/Jude.pdf"]

Interlinear Scripture Analyzer 3 (ISA basic 3.0) [HYPERLINK "http://www.scripture4all.org/"]
Revelation chapter 13 is a recasting of the Book of Daniel as the following comparison table demonstrates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daniel</th>
<th>Revelation 13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar becomes a beast 4.25</td>
<td>A beast (v.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Nebuchadnezzar) like a lion 7.4</td>
<td>...mouth of a lion (v.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A second, like to a bear 7.5</td>
<td>...the feet of a bear (v.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another, like a leopard….four heads 7.6</td>
<td>...like unto a leopard (v.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth terrible beast with ten horns 7.7</td>
<td>...and ten horns (v.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total seven heads ten horns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daniel</th>
<th>Revelation 13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar</td>
<td>A beast (v.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Nebuchadnezzar)</td>
<td>...having seven heads and ten horns (v.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babylon</td>
<td>...his heads the name of blasphemy (v.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? 4.30</td>
<td>her forehead Mystery Babylon (17.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That great city Babylon (18.10)</td>
<td>That great city Babylon (18.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and dominion was given to it 7.6</td>
<td>...the dragon gave him his power (v.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints… 7.21</td>
<td>Who is able to make war with him? (v.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>great words which the horn spake 7.11</td>
<td>a mouth speaking great things (v.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time 7.12</td>
<td>...and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months (v.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished 12.7</td>
<td>If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints. (v.10 NIB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>….and prevailed against them 7.21</td>
<td>A ram which had two horns 8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He had two horns like a lamb (v.11)</td>
<td>He had two horns like a lamb (v.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold 3.1</td>
<td>they should make an image to the beast (v.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whoso falleth not down and worshippeth …(is killed) 3.6</td>
<td>…would not worship the image of the beast should be killed (v.14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Apocalypse reuses the imagery of Daniel in order to depict a beast rising out of the sea. However, whereas the empires in Daniel were successive, the Apocalypse depicts a composite beast with the focus falling on the seventh head as this head has ten horns (the horns are therefore not evenly distributed over all seven heads).
The previous beast (the dragon) also had ten horns with **seven crowns on seven heads** denoting seven authorities which we identified with the seven rulers enumerated by Luke. Note that the crowns are on the heads of the dragon but on the horns of the sea beast. It would seem that whereas a crown on the head is generic a crown on a horn is specific i.e., a particular individual (king).² The dragon crowns were a collection of Idumean (Edomite) and Roman rulers, who together with the Jewish priestly establishment aligned against the pre-70 church. The dragon transfers power to the sea-beast which now has ten crowns. In other words we have a continuation of **religious persecution** against the “saints” (the church) and at the core is **Judaism including temple worship** (the glorious house built in Babylon). Therefore, an explanation must be sought beyond power struggles between Rome and Parthia or the fate of the Jewish nation *per se* — it must be sought in how these power struggles affected the early second century. In Daniel the terrible beast with ten horns was identified with the persecuting power of Antiochus Epiphanes **not with Rome.**³ Therefore, the Roman Empire plays **no part** in the sea beast with ten crowns. In fact, the composite sea beast emphasises the **Babylonian aspect.** King Nebuchadnezzar, who erected an image (of the beast) and is depicted as a lion in the empire visions of Daniel, was actually transformed into a beast by his mental disease. The “mouthpiece” of the beast in Rev 13 is therefore the “lion mouth” (Rev 13.2) as the lion of the Danielic visions symbolised Nebuchadnezzar. What does the lion mouth say? It speaks great things and blasphemy (Rev 13.5) — the analogy is Nebuchadnezzar’s boast regarding “Great Babylon” in Dan 4.30. It should be recognized that Daniel 4 functions as a Midrash against the Jewish nation, not just a condemnation of a foreign king.⁴ The attitude of king Nebuchadnezzar typifies the attitude of the Jewish nation that was sent into exile (and established a base in Shinar). Further, the blaspheming “lion mouth” also mirrors the hubris and arrogance of the little horn (Antiochus Epiphanes = god manifest) who desecrated the temple (trampled the host) with the true temple now represented in Revelation by the persecuted saints.

Therefore the sea-beast represents the **Jews of the Parthian Empire** with their religious schools, their Exilarchate and their fanaticism with tradition and Law. The Parthian Empire subsumed the neo-Babylonian Empire, Medo-persia and parts of the Seleucid Greek Empire belonging to the “little horn” (Armenia, Cappadocia, Pontus etc)⁵. The sea-beast is therefore an accurate portrayal of the Parthian Empire **rising out of the Persian Gulf.**
However, it was not the Parthian Empire that was responsible for the persecution of the church but many of the Jews from the Jewish Parthian community that supported Bar Kochba’s rebellion in Judea. In other words the persecution of Jewish-Christians that occurred during the Judean bar Kochba rebellion against Rome was a consequence of the support offered by Babylonian Jews.

The Roman Emperor Trajan’s victories against Parthia were short lived and Hadrian reached a peace treaty that accommodated the Parthians—they had no interest in supporting a Judean revolt (Bar Kochba) against Rome and remained “neutral”. However, within Parthia there were large numbers of Jews living in semi-independent satrapies that did support and coordinate the rebellion by sending arms etc. The ten crowns of the sea-beast are not as easily identifiable as the seven crowns of the dragon as we have no Luke commentary for this later period. Suffice to say that they were religious authorities within the Jewish community (the Exilarch and rabbinical heads of the torah schools) and Jewish rulers in the various satrapies. Many of these rulers wore crowns or turbans and the Persian sash of high office the appropriateness of which was debated by later rabbis. Nebuchadnezzar was a “King of Kings” (Ezek. 26.7, Dan 2.37) and the Persian monarchs that followed (like Artaxerxes) also styled themselves as “King of Kings” (Ezra 7.12) this titular epithet was used by the Babylonian and then the Persian monarchs because they ruled over minor kings and semi-autonomous provinces. This Persian/Babylonian titular epithet is also used to describe Christ in Rev.17.14 and 19.16 and would have been familiar to Parthian Jews and first century Christians and would not be mistaken for the titular epithets used by Roman emperors.

A number of candidates for the “crowns” are possible for example, Adiabene (Adiabenian rulers converted to Judaism from paganism in the 1st century), and Media also remained subject to the Arsacids or Parthians, who changed the name of Rhagae, or Europus, into Arsacia, and divided the country into five small provinces. Elymais or Elamais was also a semi-independent state of the 2nd century BCE to the early 3rd century CE, frequently a vassal under Parthian control, and located at the head of the Persian Gulf in the present-day region of Khuzestan. Hatra was an ancient city in the Ninawa Governorate and al-Jazira region of Iraq. Hatra became an important fortified frontier city and withstood repeated attacks by the Roman Empire, and played an important role in the Second Parthian War. It repulsed the sieges of both Trajan (116/117 CE) and Septimius Severus (198/199 CE). The Parthian Empire even had satrapies in Afghanistan and Pakistan (the Indo-Parthian kingdom).
The Parthian Empire itself did not offer military support (troops) to the Judean uprising against Rome but turned a blind eye to Jewish militants living within her realms. It was, after all, to their advantage if Rome was weakened and the creation of an independent Jewish buffer state would have suited Parthian policy. So, while they did not actively support the rebellion they certainly did nothing to prevent the Romans getting a bloody nose. Jacob Neusner summarises the situation as follows:

“Only with the advent of Vologases in 51 did the situation begin to stabilize. Supported by the Greeks and opposed by the Parthian nobles, he was eager to win Jewish allies as well, and so very likely created a Jewish ethnarch, known later on as the resh galuta, or Exilarch, to administer the affairs of the Jewish community. The destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem further necessitated some such step, even had local conditions not required it, for the Parthian government had to take measures to ensure that its local Jewish community would not be subjected to the decrees of a Jewish regime subservient to Rome. One gains the impression, therefore, that Babylonian Jewry played a significant and in some ways central role in Parthian political affairs. I should suppose that its location in the heart of the western satrapies and its considerable influence across the frontier lent it greater importance than it would have otherwise enjoyed. In any event, not only did the Parthians have to attend to the “Jewish problem,” but the Palestinian government also had to pay attention to its “Babylonian problem.” It is perfectly clear that whoever governed Palestine would have to consider the potential whether hostile or benevolent of a large community situated across a contested border. Herod, a while earlier, had tried to cultivate Babylonian Jewish friendship by appointing a Babylonian priest to the high priesthood of Jerusalem. The Jews across the Euphrates had long prided themselves on their superior genealogy, and the priesthood in particular supposedly preserved its line without “contamination”; hence it was a shrewd and meaningful gesture. [Op., cit., p., 70-71]

Rabbi Akiva visited the Exilarch in Mesopotamia to garner support for the revolt. Many of the Jews living in the Parthian Empire did not support the uprising as it would have interrupted their lucrative trade with the Roman Empire. Although Akiva’s mission did not achieve unqualified success there can be no doubt that he recruited to his cause. It is known that 24,000 “Torah students” (think here of the Taliban) died in the Bar Kochba rebellion. At least some of these would have been recruited by Akiva from the academies in Parthia. This was a “religious war” and Christians who did not support the false messiah were regarded as traitors.
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It is interesting to reflect on the origins of the Jews in Parthia as they were probably not all the remnant of descendants of the Babylonian exile of Judah in BCE 586. The “house of Joseph” (Ephraim and Manasseh) had been exiled about 136 years previously by the Assyrians and (unlike Judah) never returned from exile giving rise to the myth of the “ten lost tribes” of Israel. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. (2 Kings 17:3–6). The term “cities of the Medes” mentioned above may be a corruption from an original text “Mountains of Media”.

It is beyond the remit of this book to delve into the geography or history of the ten tribes but suffice to say that Israelites from the “house of Joseph” must have dwelt in the Parthian Empire alongside Jews (Judeans) from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. It is unlikely that the “ten tribes” were completely absorbed by the surrounding peoples even though Rabbi Akiva stated that the “house of Joseph” would not return from the captivity. From the book of Acts (2.9) we know that, “Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia” (all Jews [Judeans] and Israelites) made annual pilgrimages to worship at the Jewish Temple during the Feast Days. Wikipedia states; “Many Persian Jews claim to be descendants of Ephraim. Further afield, in India the Telugu Jews claim descent from Ephraim, and call themselves Bene Ephraim, relating similar traditions to those of the Mizo Jews, whom the modern state of Israel regards as descendants of Manasseh”. There is also relevant genetic research pointing to relationships between Assyria and certain Jewish communities demonstrating that they were probably not all absorbed by the surrounding peoples.

At the end of the Bar Kochba rebellion the Romans executed what became known as the “ten martyrs” (including Akiva on the eve of the Day of Atonement) who had supported the rebellion. According to the rabbi’s the reason that God punished them was not for the failed messianic rebellion but because their ancestors had sold Joseph into Egypt. The ten princes (crowns) of Israel had sold Joseph to Egypt (Gen 37.18-37). The punishment for kidnapping under the Law was death (Exod 21.16) and therefore ten rabbis where vicariously punished for the sins of their ancestors. The pseudographic book of Jubilees recounts how Jacob had been deceived on the tenth day of the seventh month (the Day of Atonement) by a garment dipped in goats’ blood. The garment of many colours was associated in rabbinical writings with the high priestly garments.
We note with interest that Rev 12 commences with Joseph’s dream and that the enslavement of Joseph into the land of death (Egypt) by his ten brethren typifies the rejection of Christ (they envied that the Father loved him). Ironically, even Jewish self-justifying myth points to the real reason behind divine punishment as the ten crowns (ten princes of Israel) blamed a beast for their brother’s demise and were now persecuting his offspring (Jewish Christians in Judea).
The false religious system

The beast which emerges from the sea (Sea-beast) is a proto-type of the Scarlet beast\(^2\) ridden by mystery Babylon (controlled by a false religious system) shown at a later stage to John in the wilderness.

In the second century it was the Jews of Parthia and of Palestine (the ancient territories of Babylon) that transformed the Law into *causa sui* project, a rabbinical quagmire of tradition and self-righteous that offered false hope and ignored the will of God. As if that were not enough they elected to put their faith in a false messiah and attempted to resurrect temple worship.

Yahweh had removed the temple but instead of reflection and repentance they doubled down on iniquity. In fact, they concluded that they needed more of the same, more rigorous Law keeping, more tradition more perverse moulding of Scripture in their own image (the Babylonian Talmud) thereby making the Law of no consequence.

It did not occur to them (for they refused to consider) that these things happened because they rejected Jesus. They did not need or want a suffering messiah. Einstein once said that the definition of insanity is to constantly repeat the same actions expecting a different outcome. That is exactly what they did. They had learned nothing and tried to breathe life into dead temple worship (not recognising Jesus as the new temple) and therefore their attempt at *reinstituting temple worship* was nothing more than erecting an idol to the beast (their false Babylonian, false messiah, false Law keeping system).

Their revolt lasted 3½ years (42 months) *following the pattern of the first revolt* and once again their idol was removed. It is for this reason that the Apocalypse depicts the beast as the antichrist (note that the characteristics of the Sea-beast and Scarlet beast are *merged* despite them being separated in historical time):
Jesus

- Emerges from waters of Baptism
- Receives the holy spirit
- Tempted in the wilderness
- Lamb, as though it had been slain
- Is, was, is to come
- The world follows him (Jhn.12: 19)
- Worship me (Satan)
- Satan promises world kingdoms
- Ministry 3½ years

Beast

- Emerges from the sea
- Given power to do great signs
- Beast and rider in the wilderness
- One of its heads slain to death
- Was, is not, shall ascend
- All the world wondered after him
- Worship the beast and his image
- Dragon (Satan) gave him his power
- Exists a “short time” (42 months)

The temple had become nothing more than a self-serving idol. A resurrection of past glory with no recognition of the wrong they had done. God had destroyed the temple and given them a new one, Jesus Christ being the express image of his person (Heb 1.3). This they refused and made their own image (temple) and like Nebuchadnezzar forced everyone (including Jewish-Christians) to worship their messianic ideal.

It matters not whether Bar Kochba actually completed the building of a temple or whether he simply erected an altar and commenced sacrificial worship ---he produced coinage that depicted his star elevated above the temple and the intent if not the complete realization of temple (idol) worship was there. This was both an abomination and an insult to God. Like Babel they had built a tower to the very heavens challenging God himself. Like Nebuchadnezzar they had become bestial in their defiance and their hubris in building (to paraphrase) “Great Babylon for my glory”. Like Adam they gasped at divinity, something Christ refused to do. Jesus answered Satan; “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” Jesus refused the overtures of Satan. In 2 Thess.2.9 it is claimed that the coming of the lawless one will be by the activity of Satan with all power and signs and lying (pseudos) wonders.
The lie is that man is God – showing himself that he is God (v.4). This is the original sin of Genesis 3.5. The challenge did not go unanswered — the audacity of their defiance shook the very host of heaven — they had attempted to steal and wrest the divine plan for redemption, to provide their own temple and their own messiah (after all God had done for them).

This is why the struggle is depicted as a cosmic battle and until adamic nature is finally destroyed the same patterns (variations of them) will continue to repeat. This is also why Jesus warns his followers (in the Olivet prophecy) not to be deceived because the appearance of a victorious Jewish messiah was very seductive (even for the very elect), especially for second century Christians, who had never seen Jesus (the apostles had all passed away by then). Those who withstood the false messiah became “witnesses” (like their first century counterparts) and died for their testimony. Jerusalem was fully cast off and became a gentile city. Henceforth the gospel would be preached to the gentiles. Meanwhile, the Jews continued their rabbinic rebellion in Babylon which has lasted two thousand years to the present day. The Jews still refuse Jesus as the messiah. Nothing has been learned in the intervening two thousand years therefore the pattern will repeat again (a separate chapter will be devoted to this).
Babylon the Great (Rev 13.3)

“And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast”.

The beast is the archetypal Babylon. It is the glory of kingdoms (Isa 13: 19) it is the temporary dwelling place of God’s people, who are encouraged to plant and build until God performs his good word (Jer. 29.5-10), it is full of graven images (Jer. 51.47) and vaunting pride (Isa 14.13, Dan 4.30). Its ultimate destiny is destruction (Rev 14.8) but not before God’s people come out of her (Rev 18.4). This is a parody of the Lamb standing as though it had been slain (Rev 5. 6). The Lamb is the one that lives and was dead (1: 18) the beast also, “was and is not; and shall ascend out of the abyss” (Rev 17.8). One of the heads appeared to be fatally wounded but the mortal wound had healed. Which head was wounded? Here the cardinal number one can also be an ordinal number: the first head appeared to be fatally wounded. This is the Babylonian head of the beast. Whilst in verse three it is only the first head that is wounded, later this becomes a metaphor for the whole monster: “the first beast whose deadly wound was healed” (v.12) “the beast which had the wound by a sword and did live.” (v.14) Babylon is the fatally wounded head whose mortal wound was healed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Babylon in Jeremiah 51</th>
<th>Babylon in Revelation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o Roar like lions (v.38)</td>
<td>o Mouth like a lion (13.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Drunk and rejoicing (v.39)</td>
<td>o Drunk and rejoicing (17.6, 11.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Babylon covered by the sea (v.42)</td>
<td>o Emerges from the sea (13.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o A sword upon Babylon (50.35, 37)</td>
<td>o Wounded by a sword (13.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Astonishment at her destruction (v.41)</td>
<td>o Astonishment at her resurrection (17.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o A dwelling place for dragons (v.37)</td>
<td>o Lamb speaks like a dragon (13.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Judgement on her graven images (v.37)</td>
<td>o Image of the beast (13.15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The whole world wondered after the beast because although it was once mortally wounded, now it appeared phoenix like from the ashes; “It shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation” (Jer. 50.39). “The beast thou sawest was, is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit” (Rev 17.8). The whole world wondered after the beast (Rev 13.3). Yet again we observe that although they are separated by historical time the beasts of Rev 13 and Rev 17 morph into a single entity --- they are the same, yet different.
The morphing of the beasts

Despite being separated by historical time the beasts (Dragon/Sea-beast/Scarlet beast) are all very similar and this causes exegetical confusion. The phases of the beast will be further analysed in Rev.17 but suffice to say that the battle is not with beasts (plural) but with “a beast” or “the beast” (singular) because it is depicted as a cosmic battle (more on this in Rev 17). The beast has different (but similar) “manifestations” throughout history which can be identified with particular historical peoples, kings, empires etc but we are reminded that they are the same spiritual materialization from the beginning of time until the end of time.

That “old Serpent” (Rev 12.9) who tempted Eve and persecuted the faithful seed and who was thrown “out of heaven” in the first century is consigned to the abyss (again) when Christ returns at the start of the millennium; “And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years” (Rev 20.2) and the ancient serpent is released from the abyss (yet again) at the end of the thousand years.

We have then a shape-shifting, reincarnated beast that deceives the world whenever it reappears (because it seems different every time), but it is actually the same beast because it is animated by the same spirit. We must therefore train ourselves in pattern recognition so that we can identify the repeat patterns (Won’t Get Fooled Again).
War with the saints (Rev 13.7-8)

“And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”.

In his commentary Peter Watkins draws parallels between Rev 11.7-9 and Rev 13.7,8 where similar terminology is employed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revelation 11</th>
<th>Revelation 13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• shall make war against them, and shall overcome them</td>
<td>• to make war with the saints, and to overcome them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• people and kindreds and tongues and nations</td>
<td>• kindreds, and tongues, and nations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• that dwell upon the earth</td>
<td>• that dwell upon the earth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the basis of parallel language Watkins argues for equating the witness of Rev 11 with the saints of Rev 13 but there is an important difference as the beast of Rev 11 emerges from the abyss and the beast in Rev 13 emerges from the Sea.

Although the abyss and the sea have overlapping semantic domains they are subtly different. The Greek for abyss or the bottomless pit is ἄβυσσος (abussos) and the Greek for sea is θάλασσα (thalassa). An examination of the terms throughout the Apocalypse produces the following (only relevant occurrences of sea are shown):
### Key of the Bottomless Pit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Abyss/Sea</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>key of the bottomless pit</td>
<td>given to fifth trumpet angel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>he opened the bottomless pit</td>
<td>Smoke and locusts emerge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.11</td>
<td>angel of the bottomless pit</td>
<td>Abaddon/Apollyon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>beast ascends out of bottomless pit</td>
<td>Witnesses killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>sand of the sea a beast out of the sea</td>
<td>Sea-beast emerges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>shall ascend out of the bottomless pit</td>
<td>The beast that was, and is not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>having the key of the bottomless pit</td>
<td>Angel opens abyss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>And cast him into the bottomless pit</td>
<td>Satan bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.13</td>
<td>And the sea gave up the dead</td>
<td>Resurrection and judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>there was no more sea</td>
<td>The first mention of sea Gen 1.26²⁶</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sea is employed in a universal sense to denote the Gentile nations in Rev 20.13 and in Rev 21.1 and is often contrasted in Revelation with the earth in order to distinguish national Israel from the Gentile nations. In Rev 13.1 it has a specific sense and is the great sea of Dan 7.2 from which the beasts emerge. The netBible comments; “The referent of the great sea is unclear. The common view that the expression refers to the Mediterranean Sea is conjectural.” Daniel was in the city of Susa when he received his second vision which was 150 miles (240 km) north of the Persian Gulf in present-day Iranian Khuzistan. The opening to the Persian Gulf was described, but not given a name, in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, a 1st-century mariner’s guide:

> “At the upper end of these Calaei islands is a range of mountains called Calon, and there follows not far beyond, the mouth of the Persian Gulf, where there is much diving for the pearl-mussel. To the left of the straits are great mountains called Asabon and to the right there rises in full view another round and high mountain called Semiramis; between them the passage across the strait is about six hundred stadia; beyond which that very great and broad sea, the Persian Gulf, reaches far into the interior. At the upper end of this gulf there is a market-town designated by law called Apologus, situated near Charaex Spasini and the River Euphrates.” ²⁷

The beasts of Daniel are all centred on Babylon, even Alexander the Great died in Babylon before his kingdom split, by the first century the only independent kingdom that remained from these successive powers was Parthia, therefore, the “Great Sea” of Daniel and consequently the sea of Rev 13.1 is the Persian Gulf.
The beasts of Rev 17.8 and Rev 11.7 ascend from the abyss in contrast with the beast of Rev 13 that emerges from the sea. Note that the beast of Rev 11.7 is not identified e.g. it is not called “Scarlet” or “Red” and at this point in the story a first-time reader would be left wondering what empire the beast signified. Because Rev 11.7 is placed just before the seventh trump it is likely that the beast of 11.7 should be equated with the Scarlet beast. However, the fact that the beast in 11.7 is not differentiated introduces a deliberate ambiguity because we are dealing with a repetitive pattern. So, the type of response (persecution etc) that the saints receive in Rev 13 is similar to the response to the witnesses in Rev 11 and to the man child in Rev 12 (Great Red Dragon) and to the saints of Rev 17 (Scarlet Beast). They are different phases of the same beast, living in different historical time periods but repeating the same behaviours.

We are not permitted to forget that the monster acts only by divine permission, and that all he does is foreseen and provided for in the grand strategy of God. He is only allowed to attack the witnesses after they have finished their ministry –“shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them” (11.7). This verse alludes to Dan.7.21 and probably to the LXX Dan.7.8, “and he waged war against the saints”

In Dan.7.21, it says that the little horn, “made war with the holy ones and was prevailing over them.” The extent of the monster’s authority is over every tribe, people tongue and nation. The tribes of the earth are the Jews (see 1.7 R.V.) people tongue and nation are rendered in the singular (R.V.) – this is no doubt to remind us that, “the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined (R.V. purposed) to do.” (Gen.11.6). Therefore, monster is building the tower of Babel, a temple that will be a place of worship for the Diaspora.
The False Messiah (Rev 13.11-12)

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed”.

As Ramsay pointed out, whatever comes from the sea is foreign, and whatever comes from the land is a native product. Peter Watkins comments: These words come straight after the description of the beast whose deadly wound is healed. From all the information given in Revelation 13, it can be seen that this second beast is not an independent political power that exists at the same time as the beast. Rather, it is a publicity agent for the first beast. It “causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.”

Both ewes (the females) and rams may or may not have horns, depending on the breed of sheep. In this case the two horned lamb is a parody of Christ who also had a “wound” that was healed (Rev 5.6) but note the dualism of the symbols as the Christ-Lamb is also a Lion (but unlike the royal Babylonian lion). The Lamb is therefore a messianic symbol- it represents Jesus Christ the Jewish messiah ipso facto a lamb that speaks like a dragon (serpent) is a false Jewish Messiah. It cannot be anything else – the symbolism will not allow it. As previously discussed the dragon/serpent motif is the desire to be like the Elohim.

The fact that it is called a dragon purposely takes us back to the Great Red Dragon that built the second temple and administered it (the Herod’s, Priests, Romans etc). This depicts the desire to build a temple (image of the beast) and the authority to do so was transferred from the Palestinian beast (Red Dragon) to the Sea-beast (Parthia/Babylon) emerging from the Persian Gulf to the Earth-beast (two horned Lamb) which represents the false messiah Bar Kochba coming out of the Earth (land of Israel) who supported the Sea-beast (and was in turn himself supported) in its desire for a temple and an independent Judea.
Note that the two-horned lamb (false messiah) is not wounded…it is the Sea-beast that at some time in the past had received a mortal wound. We would expect the Red Dragon to have the mortal wound which is why the dragon transfers power to the Sea-beast but it seems as if the dragon shares the wound with the Sea-beast. The head that was wounded (only one of them is wounded) seems to be the first head, or the “Babylonian” (Parthian) head. The explanation may lie in the fact that both Palestinian and Parthian Jewry saw the loss of the temple as both a religious and political threat.

The Jews of Parthia lived in autonomous satraps and practiced their religion unhindered but the fall of the temple was the thin end of the wedge as Trajan pursued a more aggressive policy towards Parthia. Not only had they lost the temple but they lost any chance of influence over Palestinian Jewry and this was regarded as an imminent threat. The temple was a religious and political rallying point for international Judaism, without such a focal point there was the danger of instability, drift and disruption of lucrative trade ties, moreover, Judea was not far from the borders of Parthia (Babylon).

It is no coincidence that this period saw Diaspora insurrections across the Roman Empire and we can but speculate that they were encouraged (if not supported) by Parthian Jews who felt threatened. So, both Palestinian and Parthian Jewry was mortally wounded by the loss of the temple --- but a plan was launched to restore the temple and free Israel from the Roman yoke --- the rebellion of the false messiah, Bar Kochba. Pharisees and Sadducees formed the “two horns” acting as religious propagandists for the false messiah and one of these horns is regarded as an important founder of rabbinical Judaism, with Bar Kochba held up as a shining example of self reliance and freedom fighting by the current Zionist state. The “two horns” form the counterpart to the “two witnesses” that testify of the true messiah. Worship of the Earth-beast (false messiah) is therefore tantamount to worshiping the first beast – which is Babylon, the place of idol worship where the nation had been exiled some six hundred years previously, when their temple had also been removed because of disobedience.
Great Wonders (Rev 13.13-15)

“And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed”.

Jesus had previously warned the saints in the Olivet prophecy; “For there shall arise false Christ’s and false prophets, and shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Mtt.24. 24; to seduce [like the serpent], if it were possible the very elect – Mk.13.22). There are two “wonders” or miracles in this section, namely calling down heavenly fire and causing the image to “speak” which is taken as proof of life. It will be demonstrated that the dual themes of heavenly fire and speaking are linked. Many commentaries understand the cult image as a reference to the imperial cult – the Caesars where worshipped as divinities – and pagan “cult images” were sometimes rigged with speaking tubes and moving parts so that they could issue oracles. However, it has already been established that the two horned lamb is a false Jewish messiah and not a Caesar, moreover, Jews were hardly going to be “deceived” by a talking statute.

Matthew 7: 15-23

- Beware of false prophets
- In sheep’s clothing
- Inwardly ravening wolves
- By their fruits ye shall know
- In thy name done wonders
- I never knew you: depart

Revelation 13

- The false prophet
- Like a Lamb
- Speaks like a serpent
- Makes an image of the beast.
- Doeth great signs and wonders
- Cast into lake of fire (19.20)
It is not as though the Jews had not received fair warning, as even Moses told them in Deuteronomy:

**Deuteronomy 13**
- If there arise among thee a prophet
- And give thee a sign or a wonder
- Whereof he spake unto thee saying
- Let us go after other gods
- And shall burn that city with fire

**Revelation 13**
- Like a lamb but spoke as a dragon
- And he doeth great wonders
- Saying to them that dwell on earth
- make an image to the beast
- and burn the city with fire *(17.17)*

For those willing to pursue the matter Rev 13 has six allusions/echoes to Isaiah 46 and five to Exodus 4.27-31. So, Jews familiar with Scripture would have understood the warning in Rev 13 and could not feign ignorance. Peter most certainly had Revelation 13 in mind when he wrote these words.*

**2 Peter 2. 1-3**
- False prophets among the people
- Who, with feigned words
- make merchandise of you

**Revelation 13**
- Serpent-Lamb (false prophet)
- saying … make an image
- no buying etc without the mark

In the OT the motif of “fire from heaven” is linked with consuming a sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering. This happened at the dedication of Solomon's temple but also with the altar built on Mt Carmel where Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal. Both these occasions are important to understanding these verses. In the Elijah account the challenge is clarified with the words; “the God who answers by fire, he is God” *(1 Kings 18.24)*. The “god” Baal could not meet the challenge; “there was no voice, and no one answered” *(v.26)*. In this account fire from heaven is equated with the voice of the God/god.

Therefore fire from heaven is equivalent to God speaking. It is noteworthy that one of the witnesses is modelled on Elijah thus the false messiah and his pseudo witnesses copy the Elijah miracle. The “wonder” is performed in order to deceive people that the image of the beast has life.
At the dedication of Solomon’s temple the sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering was consumed by fire from heaven. The second book of Maccabees is informative as it mentions the “the feast of the fire” given when Nehemiah, who built the temple and the altar, offered sacrifices”. Maccabees is an account of the Hasmonean revolt against the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes and how the Maccabees consequently cleansed and rededicated the temple. Although Maccabees gives a largely historical account of the independence struggle under the priestly dynasty much of the writing is tendentious i.e., for propaganda purposes etc. It is for example clear that Nehemiah did not build the temple.\(^{33}\) This is of course a legendary story in which Nehemiah is depicted as using a petroleum product (the LXE has naphtha).\(^{34}\) The New Oxford Annotated Bible has the following summary under Maccabees 1-2:

1.10—2.18: Another letter to the Jews of Egypt. This letter focuses on the history of the fire on the altar of the Temple of Jerusalem, working backward from Nehemiah through Jeremiah to Solomon. It claims that the fire that descended from heaven in the days of Solomon (2.10; 2 Chr 7.3) was hidden by pious priests at the time of the destruction of the First Temple (1.19). At the time of the restoration, it was found by Nehemiah, after a metamorphosis into a viscous and combustible liquid (1.20-36). He used some of it to rekindle the fire on the altar of the Second Temple, while the rest of it was preserved in rocks (1.31—32), from which Judas would eventually extract it when rededicating the Temple (10.3). So the restored Temple still had the original fire that descended from heaven. Thus, this letter constitutes an extended argument for the legitimacy of the Second Temple by connecting Nehemiah’s restoration and Judas’s rededication to Solomon’s original dedication.\(^{35}\)

The story is obviously mythical and designed to legitimize the rededication of the temple by the Maccabees. The only place where petroleum products are easily available is Mesopotamia and we are in fact told in Gen 11.3 that bitumen or asphalt was used as mortar when building the tower of Babel. Volatile petroleum compounds are found on the surface (or when digging wells) in the regions of Babylon and the Maccabees probably ignited the altar in a spectacular event using such volatile organics. The story is then a justification of how the priests got hold of “divine fire”, it had been kept continually burning since the time of Nehemiah (presumably Nehemiah kept the flame alive in Persia) and then handed down the priestly line to the Maccabees or, as the passage states it was preserved in rocks and the secret of how to use the “fire” was passed on to the priests.
We can speculate that Bar Kochba did something similar --- perhaps his minions even soaked the altar in water like Elijah and then it was ignited – instantly exploding. We can imagine Bar Kochba claiming that he had been handed the “fire from heaven” that was preserved since the time of the Maccabees (which in turn had been kept constantly burning like the Olympic flame since Jeremiah’s time or preserved in rocks?). This was then a sign guaranteeing legitimacy of the false messiah’s project to rebuild the temple. The “fire from heaven” (really a petrol bomb) is equated with the image (idol) “speaking” because that is how it was depicted in Elijah’s time.

The “image” now has life or legitimacy – the project to rebuild the temple has the divine blessing. One cannot miss the analogy between Elijah and the prophets of Baal –the false prophets have their answer as Baal (the image/idol) now “speaks” through his pseudo-miracle of divine fire, thus granting his blessing on the building of a new temple. Of course, this is nothing like Elijah’s miracle which was probably caused by a small meteorite impacting the altar.

Nevertheless, for those willing to be deceived the flaming/exploding altar must have seemed like spectacular confirmation from their new “messiah” and coupled with him thrashing the Roman Legions and declaring the “freedom and redemption” of Jerusalem it must have seemed like the kingdom had arrived.

But the faithful, who had been warned by the Apocalypse, were not deceived. This was in fact a Priestly rebellion as they were keen to restore their lucrative positions of power and this is reflected by the intertextual links with the wicked sons of the high priest Eli --:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Samuel</th>
<th>Rev 13 &amp; 2 Thess. 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sons of Belial. [sons of wickedness] (2.12)</td>
<td>Then shall that wicked be revealed. (2 Thess.2.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They abhorred the offering of the Lord. (2.17)</td>
<td>Who believed not the truth (2 Thess.2.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hophni – meaning: fighter, pugilist (took what belonged to God by violence)</td>
<td>Who is able to make war with him? (13.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phineas – meaning: mouth of a serpent</td>
<td>That they should believe a lie Spake as a serpent (13.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? (4.8)</td>
<td>Who is able to make war with him? (13.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the iniquity which he knoweth and he restrained them not. (3.13)</td>
<td>That which restraineth to the end….there is one that restraineth now. (2 Thess. 2.6,7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eli sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. (1.9)</td>
<td>Sitteth in the temple of God. (2 Thess.2.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk no more so exceeding proudly: Let not arrogancy come out of your mouth. (2.3)</td>
<td>Who opposeth and exalteth himself. (2 Thess.2.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lord killeth, and maketh alive. (2.6)</td>
<td>Death stroke was healed. (13.13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eli and his sons represented a corrupt priesthood. Eli suffered the fate of a broken neck, (and his sons were killed) this was the consequence dictated by the law for an unredeemed ass. (Ex.34.20), which was a symbol of royalty. Israel was meant to be a royal-priesthood. The sons of Eli “abhorred the offering of the Lord” in the same manner as Jews who believed not the truth (covenants of promise concerning the messiah Jesus).

They were rogue priests, using violence to take the choice parts of the sacrifices and fornicating with the women who serviced the tabernacle. They used the Ark of the Covenant for their own ends, as an instrument of war, thus turning the sacred relic into an idol (image) in the same manner as the golden calf was a corruption of the living creatures (cherubim) causing Paul in Rom 1.25 to remark: “Who changed the truth of God (covenants) into a lie (idol-image), and worshipped and served the creature (calf cherubim) more than the Creator”. It is notable that the high priest Aaron participated in this apostasy (probably because he was afraid) and offered the lame excuse that he just threw some stuff into the fire and lo and behold the calf suddenly appeared (LOL). The reason for the apostasy was Moses’ delay in coming down from the Mount – they thought he was dead and couldn’t even wait for forty days. Thus we have established that whenever Israel apostatizes they do so by misappropriating temple iconography.
“And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven”.

The mention of the “tabernacle” rather than the temple is not accidental (the author of Hebrews also substitutes the temple for the tabernacle). The divine dwelling place is not a permanent “temple” made with hands but rather a temporary dwelling place. The monster blasphemes Gods name, and his tabernacle, and those that dwell in heaven. (A.V.) However, the best MSS omit ‘and’ and the Chester Beatty papyrus reads “his dwelling in heaven” the R.V. renders ‘and’ as ‘even’. One of the fundamental rules of textual criticism is that the hardest reading is always best (translators have a penchant for simplifying or interpreting a reading). The most probable reading is then: Gods name, and his tabernacle (skênê), them that dwell (skênoo) in heaven.

In Rev.21: 3 skênê is used almost as the equivalent of the Hebrew shekinah, to denote God’s tabernacling presence, and we are told that with the descent of the new Jerusalem this presence is at last among men. The tabernacle was a temporary dwelling place – the word skênê is used in the Septuagint for the tabernacle in the wilderness. The tabernacle could be dismantled and erected, it signified in the first instance the indwelling of the shekinah in mortal flesh.

In other words, the false messiah Bar Kochba and his newly appointed priests were emboldened by their victory over Rome and their plans to re-establish a temple. They saw this as the vindication of rabbinical Judaism over Christianity. They poked fun at the “Christian God” in the same way as Elijah did to the prophets of Baal;

1 Kings 18:27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

We can imagine the mocking. Where is your “Christ” that predicted the fall of the temple? Perhaps, he is asleep? Where is his supposed kingdom? We have a temple now (or are about to build one) look we even have God’s blessing in the form of “divine fire”. We will weed out the heretics now that Rome and your God/Christ can no longer protect you. You “law breakers” will all be killed because you refuse to worship at the temple of God’s chosen one. You have been proven to be false prophets of Baal and we will kill all of you. And so began a pogrom against (predominantly) Jewish-Christians in the land of Judea.
Extent of the Bar Kochba Revolt


The Book of life (Rev 13.8-9)

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear.”

Abraham was the founder of the “Jewish world” (by faith in the covenant promises made by God): “And Abraham, rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8.56). Abraham “saw” the slain lamb on Mt. Moriah – on the mountain of the Lord it (the Lamb) shall be seen (Gen.22: 14). From the foundation of the “Jewish world” the Lamb was slain (in type) and Abraham the father of the Jews “saw” it. Once again it is the Jewish world that is referenced here as the New Testament church is but a “branch” in a tree that has roots in the Abrahamic covenants. The “earth” dwellers are therefore Jews. All believers (Jews and Gentiles) are therefore written in the Lamb’s book from the foundation of the (Jewish) world. This interpretation finds support from 17.8 which is a doublet:

**Rev 13.8**

whose name was not written
in the book of life
of the Lamb slaughtered
from the foundation of the world

**Rev 17.8**

whose name was not written
in the book of life
-----
from the foundation of the world

“If any man have an ear, let him hear”. In each of the seven letters to the churches these words accompanied the promise to the conqueror. By their solemn repetition here at the heart of his book John indicates that he is turning once again to give the church its marching orders. If God allows the monster to wage war on his people and conquer them, what must Gods people do? They must allow themselves to be conquered as their Lord has done, so that like their Lord they may win a victory not of this world.
Killing with the sword (Rev 13.10)

**KJV** He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

**NIB** If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

The KJV and NIB translations give a different sense – whereas the KJV reads the Greek as if the saints are actively killing with the sword, the NIB understands the saints objectively, “to be killed with the sword”. This verse is based on an allusion to LXX Jer.15:2; “Those who are destined for pestilence, to pestilence, those who are destined for the sword to the sword; those who are destined for famine to famine; those who are destined for captivity, to captivity.” (See also LXX Jer.50:11 and M.T. Jer.43:11). The Apocalypse is adapting Jeremiah’s prophetic warning against Jerusalem (of impending Babylonian invasion) towards the saints (the New Jerusalem).

A parallel can be found in the words of Jesus, spoken to Peter at Gethsemane: “All who take the sword, shall perish by the sword.” (Mt.26:52). Whether the KJV or the NIB reading is preferred, the meaning is clear (despite the textual ambiguity), namely, those who take up arms in support of Bar Kochba will perish and those saints who are destined to be killed by the sword (due to persecution) will be killed. There will be no immediate intervention or deliverance and this will require patient endurance on the part of the saints. Hebrews comments “For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb 12.3).
And his number is 666

Many commentators regard the 666 as a reference to Nero and in this they are partially correct as he typified the persecuting aspect of the beast pre-70. He did not dream up the persecution of an insignificant sect known as “Christians” on his own but was influenced by his mistress Poppaea who was a Jewish convert. The entry by Kohler et al. in the Jewish Encyclopedia reads:

“Mistress and, after 62 C.E., second wife of the emperor Nero; died 65. She had a certain predilection for Judaism, and is characterized by Josephus ("Ant." xx. 8, § 11; "Vita," § 3) as θεοσεβής ("religious"). Some Jews, such as the actor Alityros, were well received at court, and Poppaea was always ready to second Jewish petitions before the emperor. In 64 Josephus went to Rome to obtain the liberation of some priests related to him who had been taken captive to that city for some minor offense. With the help of Alityros, Josephus succeeded in gaining the intercession of the empress, and returned home with his friends, bearing rich gifts with him.

When King Agrippa added a tower to the ancient palace of the Hasmoneans, at Jerusalem, that he might overlook the city and the Temple and watch the ceremonial in the sanctuary, the priests cut off his view by a high wall. He then appealed to the procurator Festus, but a Jewish delegation sent to Rome succeeded through Poppaea's intercession in having the case decided in favor of the priests. The last procurator, Gessius Florus (64-66), owed his appointment to the empress, who was a friend of his wife Cleopatra”.

It is quite plausible that Poppaea suggested the Christians as a scapegoat to Nero at the instigation of Jewish priests that she come into contact with. It is improbable that Nero would have stumbled on the idea without prompting and it was a way to curry favour with his mistress/wife and with the Jews. Whether it is true or legendary, the Talmud relates that one of Kochba’s supporters was related to Nero and it hardly seems to the benefit of a Rabbi to allow such rumours to circulate unless they contained a grain of truth. Wikipedia states, “The Talmud adds that the sage Reb Meir Baal HaNess, Rabbi Meir or Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes (Rabbi Meir the miracle maker) was a Jewish sage who lived in the time of the Mishna a prominent supporter of the Bar Kokhba rebellion against Roman rule. He was considered one of the greatest of the Tannaim of the third generation (139-163). According to the Talmud, his father was a descendant of the Roman Emperor Nero who had converted to Judaism. His wife Bruriah is one of the few women cited in the Gemara. He is the third most frequently mentioned sage in the Mishnah”.

40
However, it has been demonstrated that the epithet of Bar Kochba is also 666 and he is the candidate best suited (post 70 CE) to typify the beast. The imprint of Babylon is indisputable in the book of Revelation. The Chaldean Empire was called Leb – kamai (Jer.51.1)\textsuperscript{41} which means the heart of them that rise up against me – it was from Babylon that Adonikam (Lord of the uprising or enemy) returned from captivity with his 666 children. (Ezra 2.13)\textsuperscript{42}

Once again this strongly suggests that we are looking for a Jewish fulfilment of this passage – the rebellious children have returned from Babylon to their homeland, but in fact they never really left. We have already encountered 666 in relation to Solomon’s kingdom, which became a travesty of the real thing. It is a number that recurs in scripture and it signifies open rebellion against God. Goliath was 6 cubits and a span. His spear head weighed 600 shekels of iron. He had six pieces of armour. Nebuchadnezzar’s image was 60 x 6 cubits. It was worshipped when 6 instruments were heard. The numerical value of all the words describing the image in Daniel 3 is 4662 (7 x 666). The number 666 is the sum of all numbers from 1 to 36. The number 36 is the square of 6. The number 6 is itself a triangular number.

\begin{array}{cccc}
1 \\
2 & 3 \\
4 & 5 & 6
\end{array}

This triangle has three numbers on each side, 666 is also triangular with 36 numbers on each of the three sides. This suggests the unholy trinity of the beast, the false prophet and the image worshipers. (19: 20)

It is the second beast, the lamb with two horns that forces everyone to receive the mark of the first beast. Receiving the mark should be seen as metaphorically erecting an image to the first beast. The all is socially comprehensive and describes every strata of society. They are placed under economic bondage. The Greek word for beast (\textit{therion}) when transliterated into the Hebrew has the numerical value 666. (t = 400; r = 200; y = 10; w = 6; n = 50) There are ambiguities in the original text which do not make matters easier; a man in verse sixteen could be rendered simply “man”, for there is no indefinite article in the Greek. This latter is the translation adopted by the NIV (cf. RSV). If this is correct then it rules out all those interpretations which explain 666 as signifying the name of one particular individual.
In favour of the NIV rendering is the fact that “man” is the Greek *anthropos*, which usually has the generic sense of mankind. If it had a single male person in mind then we would expect *aner*. Nevertheless, first century Christians saw *Nero* as the personification of the beast and second century Christians saw *Bar Kochba* as the personification of the beast.

Bible students are aware that 7 represents completeness, that 8 represents a new beginning, for Christ was raised on the first day of the new week – 6 is therefore the number of man in a generic sense, for he was made on the sixth day. In contrast with the mark of the beast, we have the 144,000 who bare “his name and his Fathers’ name on their foreheads.” The name of the Lamb is Jesus, meaning Yahweh saves. It therefore also includes the name of the Father. In Greek Jesus is *Iesous* - which gives the numerical value of 888. The triple six of the beast’s name is yet a further example of anti-Christian parody, this time on the name of Jesus which is triple eight. The “mark” put upon the worshipers was discussed in the trumpet section and the “buying and selling” will be further elaborated in Rev 18.
Conclusion

Strong evidence has been presented to see a realization of Rev 13 in the events of the Bar Kochba rebellion and the attempt to restore temple worship. This chapter is about a false Jewish messiah and a false temple (image of the beast). However, one should not regard this as “past history” an issue that has been fulfilled and relegated to the dust bin of history. It establishes an important pattern – that is constantly repeated – and elements of this beast reappear in the Scarlet beast right at the end.
End Notes Chapter 13 Pages 264-292

1 Our comparison table also has allusions to Rev 17.5 and Rev 18.10 demonstrating that the Scarlet Beast of Rev 17 is in many ways similar to the Sea-beast of Rev 13. So not only is the generic “beast” a composite from Daniel it is also a supra-historical repeat pattern transcending space-time.


3 “It is obviously intended that the reader identifies the fourth beast with the metallic image-empires of chapter 2, which is why the hybrid monster has metallic appendages – but the correlation is deliberately unspecified, precluding complete identification with either one or the other empire of chapter 2 but containing elements of both. Therefore the brass (Greek) empire of chapter 2 includes the split into four (Greek) empires in chapter 7 (Leopard with four heads) and chapter 8 (Goat with four horns) and subsequently focuses attention on the Syrian Greek empire (fourth beast) and the Antiochene protagonist (Little horn) of chapter 7 and 8”. See P. Wyns, God is Judge: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel, (Biblaridion Media, 2011), 63 {HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/daniel/danhtml/dch4.html"}

4 See, God is Judge, The Insanity of the King, pp., 88-107 {HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/daniel/danhtml/dch6.html"}

5 These provinces frequently exchanged hands between Parthia and Rome.

6 The establishment date of the Exilarchate is difficult to ascertain, Neusner (and others) present good historical arguments for placing it in the reign of Vologases I of Parthia 51-78 CE; “These are reasons, therefore, for Parthian efforts to establish a Jewish ethnarchy. The form of such an ethnarchy was determined by Parthian political institutions: Parthia was a highly feudalized state, with many kinds of authorities owing fealty to the throne. For the Jews, likewise, a feudal ruler was required, one who would hold office by the grace of the shahanshah to rule over carefully delineated areas or groups. We have no evidence on the basis of which to date the institution of the exilarchate. It is likely to have begun during Vologases' reorganization of the empire. By the first third of the second century, at the latest, such a Jewish local self-government did exist”. Jacob Neusner, A History of the Jews in Babylonia, Part 1: The Parthian Period, (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008), 60-61

7 The Exilarchs, professors scions of the biblical Davidic royal line, were leaders of the Jews of Babylonia in antiquity. They were said to be powerful political figures and to lead a decadent lifestyle. Their princely trappings and high-handed manner were legend. They were reported to be completely assimilated into Persian culture.

8 King of Kings (and sometimes also Lord of Lords) was a title employed by the Arsacid Persian dynasty e.g., Volageses I: King of Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellen, The Lord. The Greek titulature epithets carry the following meanings: Epiphanes = God Manifest, Philhellen = the admirer of Greeks and everything Greek

9 Rev 17.4 and 19.9 hints that the beast of Rev 13 is Persia/Babylon, otherwise Christ would have adopted a Roman epithet: “And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS”. Expounding on Rev 17.4 Peter Watkins notes; “This means that ten kings ask the beast to be king over them. Because they are themselves kings, they virtually invite the beast to be King of Kings. Hence the comment: The Lamb shall overcome them: for he [not the beast] is Lord of Lords and King of Kings.” Peter Watkins, Exploring the Apocalypse and the Future: An Urgent Message for All Who Await the Lord’s Return, (Publisher: John Watkins, 1980), 64 Note: this does not mean that the sea-beast is the same as the scarlet beast but they do share similar characteristics.

10 Rome was a republic until about 27 BCE. Modern historians conventionally regard Augustus as the first Emperor whereas Julius Caesar is considered the last dictator of the Roman Republic, a view having its origins in the Roman writers Plutarch, Tacitus and Cassius Dio. However, the majority of Roman writers, including Josephus, Pliny the Younger, Suetonius and Appian, as well as most of the ordinary people of the Empire, thought of Julius Caesar as the first Emperor. Titular epithets carry the following meanings: Augustus = majestical, or, the increaser, or venerable, Caesar = derived from the cognomen of Julius Caesar, imperator = commander (from which Emperor), Principes = first in time or order; the first, foremost, Pontifex Maximus = literally, greatest pontiff or, greatest bridge-builder (i.e., high priest). Roman emperor, (2017, April 19). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia., from {HYPERLINK "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Roman_emperor&oldid=776234914"} Retrieved 04:22, April 22, 2017.

11 Jacob Neusner states; “We have already noted the conversion of the royal family of Adiabene to Judaism. We may usefully consider the matter at greater length. Adiabene occupied part of the territories of ancient Assyria; when Trajan established the province of Assyria, he included Adiabene in it. Nisibis, which was placed under Adiabenean rule by Artabanus, contained a Jewish population, as we have already noted, and was a center for the collection of
Temple funds from the surrounding area. A Temple official, Judah b. Bathrya, lived there. The neighbouring lands, particularly Armenia, also had Jewish populations. In the first century, Armenia was ruled by a Jewish dynasty descended from Herod, as were Chaleis, Cappadocia, Itrura, and Abielen. Further to the south, in Babylonia, large numbers of Jews lived, and at the time of the conversion of the nobility of Adiabene, they maintained an autonomous state under Amelius and Axineus. \textit{Ibid.}, Neusner, p. 61–62

12 Jacob Neusner says, “While Parthia did not openly intervene in the conflict the government did not prevent Adiabenean Jews from participating in the revolution, and it is entirely probable that though prevented by treaty from intervening themselves, the Parthian had no objection whatever to the assistance rendered by their satrapy...[p.63]. Thus Palestinian Jewish zealots and Parthia shared a similar purpose: the exclusion of Rome from Near Eastern and Middle Eastern affairs.” [p.76]. Neusner, \textit{Op. cit}. See also Abraham Ben-Yaakov, \textit{Jewish Communities of Kurdistan} [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem 1961) pp. 11-13. Kurdish Jews believe themselves descended from the Ten Tribes. See also J. Marquardt, \textit{Osteuropäische und Ostantasiatische Streifzüge}, 1903, p. 228f, and Pigulevskaja, Vol. 3, pp. 52-7, 64-78, 94, 113-115, etc. Besides the Neusner footnote see also: Tobit (which is part of the Apocrypha) that suggests that there were people of the tribe of Naphtali living in Rhages (Rey, Iran) and Ecbatana (Hamedan) at the time of the Assyrians (Book of Tobit 6:12) and also Josephus Flavius, (wrote in the 80s CE), who recorded: “The Ten Tribes are beyond the Euphrates until this day, and are an immense multitude whose numbers cannot be estimated.” (\textit{Antiq.}, 11, 5.2).


14 Akiva’s statement was contrary to the rabbinical opinion of his day (and of later Eras) and was possibly provoked by those of Ephramite descent refusing his call to arms.


16 Gene Expression, Razib Khan, \textit{The Assyrians and Jews: 3,000 years of common history}, (2011), [accessed April 2017]


19 Although the Sea-beast is similar to the Scarlet-beast they are not the same animal.

20 Commenting on the story of Rabbi Ishmael learning about the necessity for the martyrdom Knust et al says; “The martyrs makes absolutely clear that the spilling of the martyr’s blood will affect atonement for the blood of the Jewish people” [p. 272] and, “Israel’s need for communal atonement on Yom Kippur entered rabbinic martyrology from early Jewish sources of the Second Temple period. The clearest statement of this etiology for the holiday is found in the second century text Jubilees (34:12-19)”[p. 271] Jennifer Wright Knust, Zsuzsanna Varhelyi, \textit{Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice}, (Oxford University Press, 2011)


22 The three terms that Revelation uses are: \textit{οἰκονομία} (oikonomenv) civilized world (i.e., Greek speaking; Rev 3.10, 12.9, 16.4); \textit{γή} (ge) solid earth or soil often as contrast with the sea (82 times), and \textit{κόσμος}, (kosmos), world as in Jewish World (Rev.11.15, 13.8, 17.8). The Greek of Rev 13.3 is \textit{γή} (ge), or earth; John uses a similar phraseology in his gospel using \textit{κόσμος}; The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world \textit{(κόσμος)} is gone after him.” (John 12.19) \textit{κόσμος} is often not meant universally as Johannine idiom for the Jewish world; (1)Show thyself to the world (John 7.4) jeered his brothers; (2) This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men (Jews) loved darkness rather than light (John 3.9); (3) See also 1: 29; 8: 26; 15: 19; 17: 14.

23 Peter Watkins, Exploring the Apocalypse and the future,(1980),70-71

24 The LXX Greek of sea in Gen 26.1 is \textit{θαλάσσας} the genitive feminine singular form of the noun.
The manuscript contains a dense text discussing various biblical and historical topics. It references the Hebrew language, the names Sheshach and Babel, and the significance of certain names and words in the context of Babylonian and biblical narratives. The text also delves into the alphabet system called Athbash and its implications for understanding biblical names and concepts.

Some key points include:

- Discussing the name Sheshach and its connection to Babel, indicating a wordplay on the Hebrew alphabet.
- Exploring the Athbash system and how it relates to the Hebrew alphabet.
- Examining the significance of the number 42, which is associated with the humiliation and punishment of Babel.
- Mentioning the letter Sh, which is the 2nd letter from the end in reverse order, and how it can be seen in Babel.
- Referencing the Septuagint at various places, such as John 1.14 and Hebrews 9.3, 7, to discuss translations and meanings.
- Noting the use of λαμ (lamb) and its translation into Greek, which may be related to the concept of the Messiah.
- Discussing the significance of Nehemiah and his role in the rebuilding of the Second Temple.

The text is rich with references to both biblical and historical contexts, providing a detailed exploration of linguistic and cultural themes.
Seven thunders

Thunder is associated in scripture with the voice of God. The rabbinical term is the **bat qol** (literally, ‘daughter of a voice’) tradition has it that the voice of God on Sinai was heard as seven thunders. The voice of God is often compared with the sound of thunder\(^1\) though only in Psalm 29.3-9, with **seven thunders**, with the Lord sitting as King on the **flood** (v.10).

**Thunder** (voices) and storm imagery, taken together with the **rainbow** of Rev 10.1 and the **five months** of torment (Rev 9.5,10, denoting the 150 days of flood water in Gen 8.3) all point to an overflowing of destructions.

John (the son of thunder cf. Mk 3.17) was instructed to “seal up” the thunders --- the instruction given to John to “**write not**” (Rev 10.4) was intended to signify that the time had not yet arrived,\(^2\) however, in Rev 14.3 he receives the counter instruction: **“Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth”**. The seven thunders (voices) are therefore unsealed in Rev 14:

- **1st thunder** - - Voice from heaven [many waters] (14.2)
- **2nd thunder** - - Another angel saying [everlasting gospel] (14.6-7)
- **3rd thunder** - - And there followed another angel, saying, [Babylon fallen] (14.8)
- **4th thunder** - - third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice [mark of Beast] (14.9)
- **5th thunder** - - And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write (14.13)
- **6th thunder** - - crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud (14.15)
- **7th thunder** - - And I heard a great voice out of the temple. (16.1)

The rabbis reasoned that as they were custodians of the Torah, and as the Law was not in heaven but rather on earth (Deut 13.12), therefore a heavenly voice (from God) must not be allowed to overturn or interfere with their interpretation of the Law, an interpretation adopted by the majority opinion of the sages.\(^3\) In other words, their interpretation of God’s Law was more authoritative than a voice from heaven instructing them otherwise! However, the voices (thunders) of Rev 14 could not be as easily ignored and the outworking of the thunders would have consequences lasting millennia for the obdurate nation. Although God would (eventually) have mercy on the nation (rainbow) the left (curse) foot of the angel rested on the land and the right (blessing) foot on the gentile sea. The nation was about to be cast off. The gospel would henceforth be preached not only to the earth but to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people (14.6).\(^4\)
It is now frequently observed by scholars that the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, with its procession of palms and laudatory praise, echoes the entry of the Maccabees into Jerusalem following their triumph over the Seleucids. (See, for example, Witherington’s summary of the material in John’s Wisdom, p., 221.) Simon entered Jerusalem “with a chorus of praise and the waving of palm branches” (1 Macc. 13.51).° The Lamb stands triumphant on Mt Zion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John 12</th>
<th>Rev 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord (v.13).</td>
<td>And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion (v.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh...(v.15)</td>
<td>These are they that follow the Lamb withersoever he goeth. (v.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall my servant be. (v.26)</td>
<td>These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb. (v.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verily, verily, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (v.24)</td>
<td>From henceforth saith the spirit, (RVmg), yea, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. (v.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He that loveth his life shall loose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. (v.25)</td>
<td>A voice from heaven saying. (v.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The people said that it thundered, others said, an angel spake to him. (v.29)</td>
<td>Saying with a loud voice (the voice of an angel) The voice of a great thunder. (v.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For this cause came I unto this hour.(v.27)</td>
<td>The hour of his judgment is come. (v.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. (v.31)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moreover, the two harvests depicted in this chapter (the grain and the vintage) depict the “body and blood” of the nation, very similar to the “Super of the Great God” (Rev 19.9), this messianic banquet (“last supper”) is reserved for the nation and the winepress was trodden without the city (Rev 14.20) to simulate the crucifixion outside of the city walls (cf. “without the camp” in Heb 13.11).

The theme of John chapter 12 is the crucifixion. The “judgment of the world” occurred when Jesus was “lifted up” (v.32). In the same way the judgment of Jewry is present in the death and martyrdom of the saints (first-fruits = true witnesses). The point that John emphasises repeatedly is that initial victory by Jesus needed to be repeated in the victory of the conquerors (those that overcome). This is followed by the death of what the prophet Isaiah terms as, “the blind and deaf witnesses” (Isa 43.8-12) --- the nation that refuses to listen and therefore they witnesses passively (through their obstinacy) rather than actively (like the true witnesses). Everything that Christ endured is reflected first positively by the true witnesses and then negatively by the stubborn “witness” of the nation. What happens to one happens to the other. They wanted to live by the Law and the Law demanded (though not literally) an “eye for an eye”, now they would experience lex talionis to its fullest extent ---the day of wrath and retribution ---the day of vengeance.

Isaiah 5 tells of the vineyard, which God had prepared for His “Beloved.” In spite of much effort and tender care it brought forth only wild grapes. Wherefore, “I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be burnt up (RVm.): I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down ... My people are gone into captivity because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst ... Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them; and the hills did tremble: and their carcases were as refuse in the midst of the streets (RV).” Then follows a description in vv. 26-30 of how this retribution is to come - nations coming from far, with horses and chariots (the Fifth and Sixth Trumpets!) roaring like lions (the Fifth and Sixth Trumpets!) and all this in a day of unnatural darkness (the Fifth Trumpet!).

Without Guile verses Son of a deceiver

“And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Rev 14.5).

This links Rev 14.5 with John 1.47, “Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” This is important because in John 1.49 Nathanael recognises Jesus as, “The Son of God and the King of Israel”. There was no deception (Jacob) in Nathanael --- he was a true Israelite. The suggestion has been made that Nathaniel was meditating under the fig tree on his forthcoming wedding (described in John 2) and his thoughts had wandered to how Jacob (the deceiver) had himself been tricked on his wedding night. **Jesus had read Nathanael's mind.**

Jesus responded as follows: “Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (John 1.50-51). This is a reference to the dream that Jacob had at Bethel, known as “Jacob’s ladder” (Gen 28.12).

This is significant because the “first-fruits” follow the Lamb for, like Nathanael, they recognize Jesus as the true messiah. In contrast many Jews followed the false messiah Bar Kochba the “son of a star”, regarded as the fulfilment of the “Star out of Jacob” prophecy (Num 24.17). Kochba was derided (after the failed revolt) as the **son of a deceiver**. Just as Jacob (the deceiver) had been tricked on his wedding night, so also the nation had been deceived with the exception of the “virgins” (Rev 14.4) who follow Christ. Bar Kochba had truly become the son of Jacob. Not only John 12, but also John 1 has multiple connections with Revelation 14:
John 1

39 Come and see

36 Behold the Lamb of God!

37 they followed Jesus

49 Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

Revelation 14

1 And I looked

1 Lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion

4 which follow the Lamb

Contrast—“Son of a star”, Bar Kochba “star out of Jacob” renamed “son of deceit”

5 And in their mouth was found no guile (Jacob)

47 Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile (Jacob)

51 Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man.

Jesus is not only the Son of God and the King of Israel he is also a Rabbi --- “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God” (John 3.2). In fact in the Fourth Gospel Jesus is depicted as the rabbi par excellence admonishing the sage Nicodemus --- “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” (John 3.10). Over a century later rabbinical Judaism had completely corrupted the interpretation of Torah and had singularly failed to recognise the messiah even though their own scriptures spoke of him. Their obstinacy and self righteousness drove them to choose a false messiah, well might Jesus say; “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (John 5.43-44). They listened to Rabbi Akiva, rather than to Rabbi Jesus.
The **Son of man** designation in both John and Revelation is pertinent. It is an obvious reference to the judgment scene in Dan 7.13 paraphrased by Jesus at his trial, “Hereafter shall ye see the **Son of man** sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matt 26.64).

In effect, Jesus is telling the Sanhedrin and rabbinate that he would return and function as their judge. Jesus uses the same “like unto the Son of man” circumlocution in Rev 1.13 and introduces his Revelation (1.7) with a conflation of Dan 7.13 and Zech 12.7, -- “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him”. Appropriately, the Sanhedrin had sought refuge with their false messiah Bar Kochba and perished together with him in Betar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daniel 7</th>
<th>Revelation 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14,27 whose kingdom <em>is</em> an everlasting kingdom</td>
<td>6 the everlasting gospel to preach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 behold, <em>one</em> like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven</td>
<td>14 behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud <em>one</em> sat like unto the Son of man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.</td>
<td>7 Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bar Kochba and Revelation 14

For the general history of the period and of the revolt, readers are referred to the chapter on the Post 70 CE Jewish History. After the fall of Jerusalem, Bar Kochba and the Sanhedrin fled to the fort at Betar. This fort overlooked the valley of Sorek, the place where Samson encountered Delilah (Judg 16.4). Interestingly, rabbinic legend recounts the strength and courage of Bar Kochba ---he could rip out “Cedars of Lebanon” with his bare hands from horseback. Apparently, he honed the skills of his cavalry by having them rip seedlings out of the ground.

The valley of Sorek is doubtless Wadi eṣ-Ṣarār, which commences about 13 miles west, slightly south of Jerusalem and pursues a tortuous course in a north westerly direction toward the Mediterranean Sea. It is traversed by a stream which falls into the sea about 8½ miles south of Joppa. This was the location “without the city”, where the grapes were crushed.

The destruction of Betar in 135 put an end to the last great Jewish revolt against Rome, and effectively quashed any Jewish hopes for self-governance in that period. Accounts of the event in Talmudic and Midrashic writings thus reflect and amplify its importance in the Jewish psyche and oral tradition in the subsequent period. The best known is from the Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 57a-b:

These are the eighty thousand battle trumpets which assembled in the city of Bethar, when it was taken and men, women and children were slain in it until their blood ran into the Great Sea [=Mediterranean].

It has been taught: R. Eleazar the Great said: There are two streams in the valley of Yadaim, one running in one direction and one in another, and the Sages estimated that [at that time] they ran with two parts water to one of blood.

In a Baraita it has been taught: 'For seven years [after the massacre at Beitar] the gentiles fertilized their vineyards with the blood of Israel without using manure.'
Rab Judah reported Samuel as saying in the name of Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel: What is signified by the verse (Lamentations 3:51), "Mine eye affecteth my soul, because of all the daughters of my city?" There were four hundred synagogues in the city of Bethar, and in every one were four hundred teachers of children, and each one had under him four hundred pupils, and when the enemy entered there they pierced them with their staves, and when the enemy prevailed and captured them, they wrapped them in their scrolls and burnt them with fire.

The Jerusalem Talmud relates that the number of slain was so enormous, that the Romans "went on killing until their horses were submerged in blood to their nostrils," and that the flow of blood overturned large stones in its course, and that when the flow of blood travelled along a riverine brook at a distance of 40 biblical miles to the Mediterranean sea, the red hue from the blood of the slain could still be seen in the sea at a distance of 4 biblical miles. Such hyperbolic speech was used only to emphasize the horrendous scene after the capture of the city, and the ensuing massacre of its inhabitants. The same account reports that the corpses were collected and used to make a hedge around the vineyard belonging to Hadrian, and which hedge stretched many long biblical miles and was as high as a man's stature.

Hadrian had prohibited their burial, and so all the bodies remained above ground. Miraculously, they did not decompose. Many years later Hadrian's successor, Antoninus (Pius), allowed the dead to be afforded a decent burial.
Rabbinical accounts and the trumpets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revelation</th>
<th>Rabbis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.8 Second trumpet: third part of sea becomes blood</td>
<td>One third becomes blood Sea becomes blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.10 Third trump: a great star falls</td>
<td>Son of a Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5 Fifth Trump: Five months torment</td>
<td>Five month siege destroyed on 9 Av</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.20 Winepress was trodden without the city</td>
<td>Betar fortress located 13 miles from Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.20 Blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles</td>
<td>Blood up to the horses nostrils Blood used to fertilize vineyards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.9 True witnesses unburied</td>
<td>Contrast: Rebel corpses left unburied (corpses used as a vineyard hedge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2-3 3½ years</td>
<td>Revolt lasted 3½ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Rabbis describe the utter devastation of Yahweh’s vineyard (Isa 5) in similar terms to those found in Revelation. Were they subconsciously influenced by the apocalypse? It was most certainly in circulation at that time. Perhaps they deliberately appropriated some of the language as they saw themselves as the “true” witnesses?

Bar Kochba’s followers were religious fanatics (compare the Islamic Taliban or “students”). They were ordered to cut off their little fingers to demonstrate their devotion to the cause (mark in their right hand? Rev 13.16). Three hundred baskets of phylacteries (Hebrew: tefillin) were found in Betar. The strap was wrapped around the arm, hand and fingers while the head- tefillin, or shel rosh, is placed above the forehead (it contained portions of the Torah) and was worn during prayer in what was an obvious corruption of Exodus 13.16. Obviously, during the revolt only the coins issued by Bar Kochba would be valid currency --- the use of Roman coinage was probably regarded as traitorous and Jewish-Christians, who dismissed Kochba’s messianic claim, would no doubt, refuse to use his denomination.

Many other, semi-legendary anecdotes and tales exist around Bar Kochba. For example, Jerome notes his pseudo-miracles: “That famed Barchochebas, the instigator of the Jewish uprising, kept fanning a lighted blade of straw in his mouth with puffs of breath so as to give the impression that he was spewing out flames”.


Bar Kochba had strong religious support from the sage Eleazar, his uncle, who sat in sackcloth and prayed continually (false witness?). However, Eleazar was kicked to death by Bar Kochba after being set-up as a spy in a Roman ruse. Among the dead bodies, the legionaries recognized that of Simon, the son of Kosiba. When they brought his head to the emperor Hadrian, he said: ‘If his God had not slain him, who could have overcome him?’ Other accounts relate that a snake was found wrapped around his body. According to the Talmud, Kochba became so convinced of his own powers that he arrogantly ordered God to stay out of his affairs, demanding, “Lord of the Universe, neither help nor hinder us”. This is reminiscent of Zeph 1.12: “… will punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zephaniah 3</th>
<th>Revelation 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 Therefore wait upon me saith the Lord, until the day when I rise up for a witness,[LXX]</td>
<td>1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8b For my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation.</td>
<td>10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 For then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty in my holy mountain. (RV)</td>
<td>11 They have no rest day and night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 I will also leave in the midst of them an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.</td>
<td>1 The 144,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth.</td>
<td>5 And in their mouth was found no guile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bar Kochba most certainly instituted some form of sacrificial worship in Jerusalem, even if it was only the building of an altar in anticipation of reconstructing a temple. He issued coinage depicting his “star” above the Ark of the Covenant and the Temple; “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:11)…..Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:4).
A banquet of consequences

Robert Louis Stevenson said that, “Sooner or later everyone sits down to a banquet of consequences”. The nation sat down and ate its fill of their “messianic banquet” suffering indigestion from their “last supper” that lasted two millennia. The revolt cost 580,000 Jewish lives (Dio Cassius) and the nation was “cast off” as the time of the Gentiles commenced. Christianity became a distinct religion rather than a Jewish sect and the “everlasting gospel” outlived the messianic ructions of the era, and was preached to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. Jerusalem was turned into a pagan city called Aelia Capitolina, and Jews were forbidden to live there. They were permitted to enter only on the 9th of Av to mourn their losses in the revolt. A pagan temple was erected.

Bloom notes that, “Hadrian changed the country’s name from Judaea to Syria Palestina — a pointed reference to the Phillistines, the Jews’ long-established arch-enemy. The appellation “Pales-tine” was thus enshrined for two millennia as a deliberate rebuke to and repudiation of the Jewish connection to the land, until the accession of the Zionist movement of the late nineteenth century. Note, though, that by that time the advocates of a Jewish homeland were already referring to the preferred location as Eretz Yisroel (the Land of Israel)”.

Like Samson, Bar Kochba had pulled the house down on his own head and the country now bore the name of the “uncircumcised” Philistines. Unlike Samson, Kochba was not a main of faith. The Zionist movement draws heavily on the historiography and hero worship of their failed messiah --- the lesson of the age has not been learned.
1 2 Sam. 22:14; Job 37:2-5; Ps. 18:13; Isa. 29:6; 30:30-31; Jer. 25:30; Amos 1:2
2 Or, possibly the thunders could have remained sealed if the nation had responded differently
3 See, Talmudic tale (Bava Metzia 59b)
4 Galatians 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.
5 But the power of this reminiscence, particularly in John's Gospel, is not recognized until the full interplay of resonance between the two events are fed carefully through the interpretive framework established by the two principal biblical texts informing Palm Sunday: Psalm 118 and the context of Zechariah 9.9-10. Tim Gallant, The triumphal entry: Israel's new King's counterpoint to the Maccabean triumph: an intertextual meditation (Biblical Studies Center) [Accessed March 2017]
6 Rev. 19.9 depicts a similar scenario; “…treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Rev 19.15) with judgements against the beast and his image (Rev 19.19-20 cf. 14.9-11). Rev 19 is the outworking of the agenda of the vial/plagues of Rev 16. The vial/plagues themselves belong to the seventh (LAST) trumpet, which is not sounded in the first or second centuries as Israel was cast out. Therefore, another pattern is set to repeat in the near future.
7 This section is taken from Whittakers' Revelation: A Biblical Approach. Whittaker equates the Jews with “witnessing” in a passive negative sense. However, the Jews are not the “true witnesses” as will become apparent when the question is addressed in the chapter on witnessing. Suffice to say that the witnesses are depicted in a contest (with the false), that the Jews celebrate their death at Purim and that their witnessing mimics that of Christ himself. {HYPERLINK "http://christadelphianbooks.org/haw/rev/rev25.html" [Accessed March 2017]}
8 Israel means “God Rules” and Jacob (the deceiver) was renamed after the wrestling, when he overcame (his old nature)
10 Westminster Dictionary of the Bible (1944), p., 576
12 Ta'anit 4.5 (24a-b); also repeated in Midrash Rabba (Lamentations Rabba 2:5)
14 The [Bar Kochba] letters seem to confirm the image of the man either as a tyrannical fanatic or a strict disciplinarian, depending on one's modern political or religious sensibilities. (so, Bloom, Ibid, p., 209)
15 Midrash Rabba (Lamentations Rabba 2:5)
16 Exodus 13:16 - And it shall be a sign upon your hand, and as totafot between your eyes; for with a mighty hand did the LORD bring us forth out of Egypt.
17 Revelation 13.17 - And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.
18 Jerome, Against Rufinus 3.31.
19 Bloom, Ibid, p., 208
Chapter 15
Structure of Revelation 15

Despite Rev 15 being only eight verses long discerning the macro-chiasm proved difficult and the commentaries were unhelpful, fracturing the Song into decreasing micro-chiasms without giving insight into the overall structure. After much experimentation the following macro chiasm emerged forming a reverse alternate pattern with the focal point concentrating on \( A^2 \).

\[
\begin{align*}
A^1 & \quad \text{In heaven: Seven angels with seven plagues (marvellous sign) Victorious saints} \quad \text{v.1-2} \\
B^1 & \quad \text{Worship offered by……..} \quad b^1 \text{ saints (for marvellous works) v.3-4} \\
&A^2 \quad \text{In heaven: Tabernacle of witness [OPEN]} \quad \text{v.5} \\
B^2 & \quad \text{Punishment delivered by: seven angels who [EXIT]…} \quad b^2 \text{ bearing seven plagues v.6-7} \\
&A^3 \quad \text{Until seven plagues from seven angels fulfilled [CLOSED]} \quad \text{v.8}
\end{align*}
\]

The above connects the worship that is offered in \( B^1 \) with the punishment delivered in \( B^2 \). The seven angels with seven plagues are the primary subject of both \( A^1 \) and \( A^3 \) – in the initial instance the angels are described as a “great and marvellous sign” and in the final instance the temple is inaccessible until their work is done. The victorious saints (in v.2 of \( A^1 \)) is therefore connected with the Tabernacle in \( A^2 \) which becomes the focal point (if this schema is accepted as correct) and both \( A^1-A^2 \) record the location as “in heaven”.

This would make v.5 the centre of the spiral and it is difficult to understand why such a short verse should be so important. Translations of verse 5 show the unusual mention of the temple and the tabernacle not combined anywhere else in this format:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{NKJV Revelation 15:5} & \quad \text{After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.} \\
\text{RSV Revelation 15:5} & \quad \text{After this I looked, and the temple of the tent of witness in heaven was opened.}
\end{align*}
\]
Aune remarks, “Charles thought the phrase so difficult that he considered τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου to be a latter addition to the text (2:38). Eichhorn (2:170) tried to solve the problem by translating the entire clause aperiēbatur templum illud coeleste, in quo arca foederis [should not Eichhorn have used testimoniē] reposita erat, “the heavenly temple was opened in which the ark of covenant was located.” The same solution appears in the TEV: “After this I saw the temple of heaven open, with the Covenant Tent in it”. This is indeed an unusual phrase; ISA renders the verse as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>καὶ</th>
<th>ἔνοιχη</th>
<th>ὁ</th>
<th>ναὸς</th>
<th>τῆς</th>
<th>σκηνῆς</th>
<th>τοῦ</th>
<th>μαρτυρίου</th>
<th>ἐν</th>
<th>τῷ</th>
<th>οὐρανῷ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AND</td>
<td>WAS-UP-OPENED</td>
<td>THE</td>
<td>TEMPLE</td>
<td>OF-THE</td>
<td>TABERNACLE</td>
<td>OF-THE</td>
<td>WITNESS</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>THE</td>
<td>HEAVEN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CLV: and opened was the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven

Is the temple being equated with the tabernacle or is the **tabernacle inside the temple?** It seems that Solomon stored the tabernacle itself, along with the ark and the other instruments inside the newly built temple; “And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, these did the priests and the Levites bring up” (see 2 Chron 5:2-9). Randall Price has the following to say;

The extrabiblical writers explain why the Tabernacle is set within the Temple. Josephus states that the Tabernacle was brought into the First Temple (Antiquities 8.101.106) and that the spread-winged cherubim were designed to appear as a tent (8.103). Rabbinic tradition further asserts that the tent of meeting was stored away in the subterranean vault beneath the Holy of Holies (see Babylonian Talmud, Sota 9a; Yoma 21b; Rashi on Genesis 9:27). Friedman again interprets this for us:

It is possible that the Tabernacle was in fact stored in the manner which the Talmud describes, while the appropriately measured space beneath the wings of the cherubim meanwhile corresponded to it above.

What this means is that the Tabernacle was deposited in the chamber Solomon constructed to house the Temple treasures. Directly above it, in the Holy of Holies, the Tabernacle was represented at the Ark. Some have even argued that the inner tent of the Tabernacle was physically present with the Ark, appearing in the form of the dividing or covering curtain known as the **paroket.** The idea by this arrangement may have been to testify to the immanence of God with the Ark and the Tabernacle, and to the transcendence of God with the tent. This reveals that the Jews believed the prior sanctity’ of a structure can continue to sanctify whatever contains it, in this case the Temple. Therefore, just as the Tabernacle was present beneath the First Temple, yet continued to provide a sanctity to the Holy of Holies above it, so in the Second Temple, when the Ark joined the tent of meeting in the secret chamber, it too could provide this function for the empty Holy of Holies. This, then, suggests the existence of a hiding place for the Ark when such became necessary. Later Judaism describes such a repository.”
Of course, it is unlikely that the Ark of the Covenant is hidden somewhere under the temple mount – that is probably a fiction. However, it is very likely that the dismantled tabernacle was stored inside Solomon’s temple. It was a “holy relic” and Solomon would not have destroyed it. It probably perished when Solomon’s temple was destroyed by the Babylonians unless it was stored under ground (a warren of tunnels and caves exist under the mount).

So then, the tabernacle was stored inside the temple. But what has this got to do with the victorious saints of verse two? In Rev 13.6 it is the tabernacle (not the temple) that is blasphemed: “And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven” (Rev 13.6) and in Rev 21.3, “the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them”. Note that the “temple” has been replaced by the “tabernacle” (the in-dwelling presence) because the saints (who were disassembled and re-erected like the tent of meeting) now represented the resurrected indwelling presence of Yahweh.

Moreover, this is the tent of testimony or witness μαρτυρίου (marturiou) from which the English words martyr and martyrdom – those who testify (like the two witnesses and like Christ the faithful witness). Thus, the tabernacle of witness represents the conquerors that gained victory and overcame the beast. However, this is not a hymn of praise addressed to the conquerors, nor does it list the supposed virtues of the conquerors – it is “the Lord God Almighty” who is praised – a title that speaks of omnipotence and sovereignty and particularly of the covenant blessing of fecundity. The victory was wrought by God and belongs to God alone and therefore his victorious saints offer praise.

There are a number of songs of praise in Revelation starting with the “new song” in Rev 5.9 which is called the “song of the redeemed” who praise the Lamb because they have been saved by his blood. It is logical to call this “new song” the “Song of the Lamb” and the “new song” is sung again in Rev 14.3. It is only in Rev 15.3 that the victors sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. The “song” of Rev 15 is therefore a duet between Moses and the Lamb! It is the “old song” combined with the “new song” (old and new covenants) singing together in harmonious unity, sung by the saints of all ages. The historical context can be depicted thus:
Historical setting of the Sealing and the victory Songs

Seals

Rev 6.9

5

How Long?

Nero Persecution c. 65 CE

6

Fall of Jerusalem c. 70 CE

Rev 7

144,000 Sealed

Rev 8.1

7th Seal

First Trumpet

Rev 9.13

6th Trumpet

Rev 10

Rainbow Angel

Write not (Rev 10.4)

Write (Rev 14.13)

Rev 14

144,000 on Mt Zion

Seven Thunders

Rev 15

Victorious Saints

Bar Kochba c. 135

Rev 16-19

70 years

Rev 11.14-15

Last Trump

Seven Last Plagues

Hallelujah (Rev 19.1)

Write (Rev 19.9)

Kingdom
It will be demonstrated in the exposition that follows that Rev 15 looks back on the historical situation of Rev 14 but it also looks forwards anticipating the looming judgments of Rev 16-19 that introduce the kingdom. Thus it functions as both analepsis and prolepsis flashing back to past victories (to draw strength and faith) and flashing forward in anticipation of the ultimate victory. It celebrates Yahweh’s past judgements and his future judgements and in so doing establishes the absolute certainty of the outcome – it is already a done deal – the wicked are already defeated they just don’t know it yet.

Of course the events of Rev 16-19 are more difficult to quantify – they (the plague-vials) occur within the seventh trump. Do they last seven years or forty-nine years or three-and-one-half years? What do these plagues actually represent (what events). In order to understand Rev 16-19 we can only draw on already established patterns and make suggestions regarding current events (more on this anon). We also note that there has been a huge prophetic “gap” since BCE 135 in which time the gospel was preached to the Gentiles.

It is only now that the Jews have returned to the land that the “prophetic clock” has started ticking again and a repeat pattern of trumpets, witnessing etc can replay. We note that the first and second centuries never got to the stage of the last trump and the plague-vials…therefore the full realization of Rev 15 onwards is in our present and future. Turning away from such thoughts we can now progress with an exposition of Rev 15.
Seven angels with seven plagues (Rev 15.1)

“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.”

John commences the chapter with “And I saw another sign in heaven”. The word sign (σημεῖον) establishes the link with 12.1 which, together with the customary rubric, reinforces the fact that we are still in the same series. Rev 15 forms the seventh and final section in the series, and, as with the seventh seal (8.1) and seventh trumpet (11.15), it introduces us to a further series of seven – the vials. Chapters 12-14 consisted of a parenthesis, half recapitulatory, half anticipatory. Hence Rev 15 is both the continuation and expansion of the closing verses of chapter 11, where we witnessed the opening of the temple in heaven.

The seven angels John beheld had “the seven last plagues” with which “the wrath of God is completed” (v.1). Although described as plagues, the Greek word πλῆγμα, a cognate of the verb plesso (to strike), simply denotes a “blow”. Thus here are the seven last punitive, of an assorted nature as we shall see, that God has to deliver against mankind. Fair warning has been given, but neglected. Now is the time for the divine wrath to be finally exhausted upon the ungodly of the world. Seven plagues are mentioned in Lev 26.21; “If you walk contrary to me, and will not hearken to me, I will bring more plagues upon you, sevenfold as many as your sins.” But these plagues are not limited to Israel, they are universal in scope.

The seven angels having the seven last plagues are described as another sign in heaven, great and marvellous which (as already noted) is used to describe the celestial woman in Rev 12.1 but also the celestial Red Dragon in Rev 12.3. The “sign in heaven, great and marvellous” (σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ μέγα καὶ θαυμαστόν) of Rev 15.1 becomes “Great and marvellous the acts [works] of you” (Μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστὰ τὰ ἔργα σου) in the praises of the saints in Rev 15.3. The LXX version of the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15) employs the adjective nominative to describe divine glory; “Who is like to thee among the gods, O Lord? Who is like to thee? Glorified in holiness, marvellous (θαυμαστός, thaumastos) in glories, doing wonders” (Exod 15.11, LXE) and again in Exodus 34.10 (θαυμαστὰ, thaumasta) which is a reference to the plagues (wonders) of Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea (Ps 106.22 LXX Ps 105.22, θαυμαστὰ).
Reference is again made to Yahweh’s past marvellous works in the Asaph Psalm sung when the ark was brought up to Jerusalem by David. Perhaps the most significant intertext is LXX Psalm 98.1: Sing to the Lord a new song; for the Lord has wrought wonderful works (θαυμαστὰ ἐποίησεν, thauama epoiEsen) the complete Psalm (KJV) reads:

Psalm 98:1 <A Psalm.> O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. 2 The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. 3 He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. 4 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. 5 Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. 6 With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King. 7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 8 Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together 9 Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

The setting of Psalm 98 is most probably (Passover) deliverance from Assyria during the Hezekiah era. Psalm 98 contains many of the themes found in Rev 15, particularly the manifestation of divine judgements on the Gentiles. A “new song” is sung – a song of salvation that now includes both Jew and Gentile (not just the 144,000) who together “Exodus out of Egypt” as a mixed multitude, because the “new song” harmonizes both old (Moses) and new (Lamb) testaments. The viewpoint becomes panoramic, moving away from a narrow ethnocentric Jewish focus and so the judgements also become universal when the “kings of the earth and the whole world” (Rev 16.14) are gathered together, and the final punishment involves not only the “great city”, but also the “cities of the nations” (Rev 16.19). Of the ten plagues of Egypt, only the first three affected both Jews and Egyptians, however, the last seven plagues only touched the Egyptians.
The conquerors (Rev 15.2)

“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God”.

In Rev 13 we find the Dragon standing upon (ἐστάθη ἐπί, estathē epi) the sand of sea shore. Some translations have John standing on the sea shore but the Dragon typology is better suited to the Egyptians pursuing the Israelites to the shores of the Red Sea. On that occasion Yahweh looked down/through “the pillar of fire and cloud” (Exod 14.24) and “congealed” the sea (Exod 15.8). However, now we see the saints standing upon (ἐστῶτας ἐπί, estOtas epi) a sea of glass mingled with fire. The Dragon who stood on the shore transferred his authority to the Sea-beast who continued the dragon’s pursuit but the saints have escaped their clutches and emerge victorious from the typological “Red sea” (of Exodus 15) and are now standing upon the clear glass sea of the throne room (cf. Rev 4.6) that is now mingled with the fire of judgement. One of the plague angels has the power over fire (Rev 16.8) and the whore is utterly burned (Rev 17.16) the eyes of Christ are flames of fire (Rev 19.12) and all the miscreants are cast into the lake of fire (Rev 19.20). Therefore the saints now look down/through the transparent floor the tranquil glass sea of the throne room (Like Yahweh looking down/through the fiery cloud-pillar) on the unfolding punishments.

Osborne, states; “The three aspects of the Antichrist over which they emerge victorious are drawn from 13:1-2 (the beast), v.14 (his image), and v.17-18 (the number of his name). They sum up all aspects of the evil empire by which the Antichrist will force the nations to worship him instead of God. As such they stress the personal conflict (with the beast), the religious pressure (with his image), and the economic persecution (with the number of his name)”.

The saints are therefore looking backwards to the victory achieved in Rev 13-14 and forwards to the victory of Rev 16-19. Although the actors may change the script is predictable as the patterns repeat. In Rev 14 we see a vision of the redeemed first (before the seven thunders), so also in Rev 15 the redeemed are seen before the plague-vial tribulations. God declares the end from the beginning.
Song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev 15.3-4)

“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest”.

This hymn of praise is directed at God as solely responsible for the victory and it draws on allusions found throughout the OT. Mounce comments as follows: “Practically every phrase of the hymn is taken from the rich vocabulary of the OT. For the first strophe cf. Ps 111:3 (“Glorious and majestic are his deeds”); Amos 4:13 (“the Lord God Almighty is his name”); Deut 32:4 (“all his ways are just”); Jer. 10:7 (“O King of the nations”). In the Nestle-Aland text almost 80 percent of the words in the hymn (10 of 48) are italicized to show that they have been taken from the OT”. The canticle itself is therefore a mosaic of Old Testament phrases (besides those mentioned by Mounce above see; Ps 139.14; Ps 145.17; Ps 86.9; Mal 1.11; Ps 98.2).

Before we explore the OT inter-texts we note (once again) the emphasis placed on the unity between Moses the Servant of God and the Lamb who sing one “new song” together. The song consists of a number of OT themes given new life. The OT is therefore not redundant as it finds its true meaning in the Lamb. In the same manner the “New Jerusalem” is built on the foundation of the twelve apostles (Rev 21.14) and has gates with the names of the twelve patriarchs (Rev 21.12). The Old and the New sing together in harmony.

Mounce has pointed to a number of OT allusions but there are even more that can be unpacked. However, first we commence with the Song of Moses which naturally suggests Exodus 15 (Song of the Sea) but the other Song of Moses is found in Deut 32 which is called the “Song of Witness” (in Deut 31.19). An allusion is made to Deut 32.4 in Rev 15.3c; “his works are true and all his ways are just”. Moreover, the “Song of Witness” is extensively alluded to throughout Revelation and (as we shall see) Rev 19-20 contains widespread allusions to Ezekiel 38-39 which in turn plays of Deut 32.
This “farewell of Moses” focuses on the sovereign justice of Yahweh and a warning to rebellious Israel of his justice and wrath. Deuteronomy 32 is primarily a “covenant lawsuit” and can be organized via a covenant form, with witnesses (vv.1-2), title of God (vv. 3-4), historical review (vv. 5-14), indictment (vv.15-18), judgment (vv. 19-29), assurance of salvation (vv. 30-38), and the divine oath (vv. 39-42). So, the two “Songs of Moses” are used throughout Revelation to depict the Passover Exodus from Egypt and the covenant lawsuit before entering the kingdom.

Bauckham (1993b: 298-300) notes that the hymn partakes of a Jewish tradition of reinterpreting key texts via verbal links. As in Isa. 12.1-6 (Tell of his wonderful works...remember the wonderful works he has done) builds on the Song of Moses, so also the hymn in Rev 15 builds on both Songs of Moses. But, to paraphrase Bauckham -- the “Songs of Moses” gave rise to a rich vein of themes that are reinterpreted in Jewish tradition, particularly in the Hallel (Passover) psalms etc and these “spin-offs” on the Exodus theme are again alluded to in the “new song” of Rev 15. Therefore, each redemptive intervention gives rise to reinterpretation and application of older patterns within new historical settings. A closer look at some of these allusions will demonstrate a complex intertextual web.

The “song of the Lamb” is no doubt a reference to the fact that Psalm 118 which is based on Exodus 15, is one of the Passover Psalms, known as the “Paschal Hallel” (Passover praise), these were sung at Passover (Ps.113-118). Psalm 118 was literally the “Song of the Lamb”. It, together with Psalm 117 perhaps, was the hymn sung by the Lord and his disciples at the Last Supper (Matt.26.30).

Exodus 15

- Israel cried out unto the Lord. *(14.10)*
- *Yah* is my strength and song. *(v.2)*
- The right hand of the Lord. *(v.6,12)*
- My father’s God, and I will exalt thee. *(v.2)*

Psalm 118

- I cried unto *Yah* in my distress. *(v.5)*
- *Yah* is my strength and song *(v.14,21)*
- The right hand of the Lord*(v.15,16)*
- Thou art my God, I will exalt thee *(v.28)*
According to the Talmud, the “Hallel” recorded five things: “The coming out of Egypt, the dividing of the sea, the giving of the law, the resurrection of the dead, and the lot of the Messiah.” The theme of Passover deliverance is continued in the Hallel of praise found at the commencement of Rev 19 which is based on Psalm 113. The vision of the redeemed in Rev 15 (based on Passover deliverance) is in stark contrast with the pouring out of judgements depicted later on in Rev 15 (based on the Day of Atonement). The punishments are described in detail in Rev 16. The prophet Isaiah also recycled Exodus 15 to celebrate Passover deliverance from the Assyrians during the reign of Hezekiah (note the emphasis on water and the construction of Hezekiah’s water tunnel for the siege).

Isaiah 12

Yah is my strength, song and salvation (v.2)
The wells of salvation (v.3)
Sing as Yah does excellent things (v.4 -5)

Exodus 15

-Yah is my strength, song and salvation (v.2)
-Twelve wells of water at Elim (v.27)
-Then sang Moses and Israel this song (v.1)

Each salvic event sees the reworking of the same traditional themes. Jeremiah 10 is employed because of its underlying concern with the heathen and therefore it forms a suitable inter-text for the coming judgements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jeremiah 10</th>
<th>Revelation 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them (v.2)</td>
<td>And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous (v.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pour out thy fury upon the heathen (v.25)</td>
<td>Pour out the vials of wrath (16.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? (v.7)</td>
<td>Thou King of nations. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? (v.3-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brutish and foolish (v.8)</td>
<td>The beast worshippers, (v.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His molten image is falsehood (v.14)</td>
<td>Image worshippers (v.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The plague vials given (Rev 15.5-7)

“And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever”.

The importance of the phrase “the temple of the tabernacle of witness” has already been discussed above. The temple is opened and the angels have exited but soon it will be closed until their work is done. The angels emerge from the very presence of God himself, from whence no doubt they have received their instructions. They are clad in white linen, denoting righteousness. Purity of motive is being stressed. Margaret Barker says, “Any priest would wear a multi-coloured sash of red, blue, purple and white, but only the high priest wore a sash interwoven with gold (Ant. 3.159). The prescription in Leviticus 16.4 is that the high priest has to wear four linen garments when he enters the holy of holies: the loin cloth, the coat, the sash and the turban; and at the end of the second temple period, it was still the custom to enter the holy of holies wearing white linen (m. Yoma 3.6)”.

It was only on the Day of Atonement that the high priest wore the “white garments” with a golden sash on all other occasions the priestly garment was multi-coloured and highly decorated. Thus we are dealing with atonement ritual similar to Rev 8 which is also based on the Day of Atonement. The angels perform their tasks out of righteous concern for justice and nothing more. In verse five we witness a reversal of the Day of Atonement ritual of Lev 16 where the high priest emerges to pronounce the blessing.

In contrast, angels bearing punishments exit the inner sanctum. Atonement can no longer be obtained by means of the blood of animals, or even by the blood of the Lamb; now only the shedding of the sinner’s own blood will suffice. The earth can only be sanctified and cleansed from iniquity through the pouring out of the seven vials, imitating the ritual of Lev 16.19. In Rev 15.7 the angels receive seven vials from one of the four living creatures (the cherubim in the heavenly throne room i.e., the sancta sanctorum or “holy of holies”).
If we are correct in understanding these four living creatures as representing creation then this act is appropriate in view of the universal nature of these final judgments. The angels are already in possession of the plagues but they are handed the vessels to transport them and pour them as they exit the “holy of holies” into the “holy place”. Perhaps these vessels were the empty vessels that had contained the blood that was sprinkled seven times on the mercy seat.\(^{18}\)

The word phiale, generally rendered “vial”, has sacrificial connotations, being commonly used in the Septuagint for certain sacred bowls employed in the sanctuary (Exod.27.3, Num.4.14). It may also denote a “cup” (Prov.23.31) for drinking wine. In Rev 16.7 the vials are described as being “full of the wrath of God”. Here then we perceive the “cup of his indignation” mentioned earlier in Rev 14.9 as the counterpart to the cup of the harlot. The word also has connections with Rev 5.8 where an identical vessel contained the prayers of the saints. In the fifth seal that prayer request was; “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev 6.9).
Day of Atonement (Rev 15.8)

“And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled”.

The picture here is based on the Day of Atonement when a cloud of incense was used to protect the high priest. However, instead of incense it is called “smoke from the glory of God”. The phrase “and no man was able to enter into the temple” is reminiscent of Leviticus 16.17; “And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place”. In Rabbinical writing this was thought to mean that the priest was transformed into an angel of the divine presence on this one particular day, but such an angelomorphic interpretation is not necessary, it simply means that no other priests were present in the outer sanctuary (holy place) when the high priest entered the inner sanctum. Here it means that no intercession is possible until divine wrath is executed. There follows a series of impressive punishments that are decisive, swift and just. They leave no doubt to who is in charge “The LORD GOD ALMIGHTY” and they are perceived as “righteous acts” by the Gentiles and “marvellous wonders” by the saints.
End Notes Chapter 15 Pages 304-317

1. Ibid, Aune, Rev 6-16, p.877-878
3. Randall Price, Searching for the Ark of the Covenant, (Harvest House Publishers, 2005), 140-141
4. But remember that for John Rev 14 was still in the future – a future that he would not see because he had passed away by then.
5. Note the ancient constellations and associated mythology such as Virgo (the woman), Drako (the dragon/serpent) and the seven stars of Orion the hunter or the herald (messenger) of the gods.
7. Exodus 34:10 And the Lord said to Moses, Behold, I establish a covenant for thee in the presence of all thy people; I will do glorious things, which have not been done in all the earth, or in any nation; and all the people among whom thou art shall see the works of the Lord, that they are wonderful, which I will do for thee.
8. In the LXX: Marvellous (θαυμάσια, thaumasia) together with works (ἐποίησις, epiOisen), wonders (τέρατα, terata) and judgements (σκοπία, krimata) in 1 Chron 16.12 (LXE): “Remember his wonderful (marvellous) works which he has wrought, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth” Also in v. 24 “Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations” (this verse is present in the MT but missing in the LXX).
10. In Rev 13.1 the NIB/NIV/CLV/ISA have either “it” or “the dragon” and the older translations have “I” (John) standing on the shore. Aune is neutral in his translation giving “He stood…” but listing the variants in the notes.
11. Both Egypt and Babylon are referred to as Dragons (Isa 51.9, Jer. 51.34). Of course the Red Dragon of Rev 12 was the Idumean Dynasty of Herod. However, in a similar fashion to Pharaoh, Herod the Great is depicted as attempting to slaughter male Hebrew children.
12. Ibid, Osborne, 563
14. In the NA only ὅτι μόνος ὄνος, ὅτι [PW: “because Thou alone art kind, because” ] and the final clause (ὅτι τὰ δικαιώματά σου ἐφανερώθησαν) are not italicized. [PW: final clause: “that the judgements of you were made manifest”]
15. See the comparison table in the chapter on Revelation 10 page 190 (http://www.biblaridion.info/html/ch10.html)
16. See Niehaus, NIDOTTE 4:539
17. Margaret Barker, Revelation of Jesus Christ: Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place, (A&C Black, 2000), 85
18. If each one represented the empty vessel retained after the Day of Atonement ritual then we have seven empty vessels representing seven years of Atonement rituals – this suggests a seven year period of “blood sprinkling” on the mercy seat – the empty vessels are then filled with “plagues”- could this denote that the seven plagues represent a seven year period rather than 49 years?
19. As noted previously the Seals are associated with Passover and the Trumpets with Atonement and Rev 15-16 is here also based on the Day of Atonement. Other references to Jewish feasts can be found (such as Tabernacles etc) suggesting that the Apocalypse is based on a three-and-one-half year conceptual framework of Feasts which makes liturgical sense as the Jews had a three-and-one half year (triennial) reading cycle of the OT. On this see the Digression on the Triennial Cycle. (http://www.biblaridion.info/Digressions/rev_feasts.pdf)
Chapter 16
The wrath of God—Seven Plagues

A number of questions require clarification before we further analyse the plague-vials. It has been noted by scholars such as H.-P. Müller\(^1\) that the vials are stereotypical or formulaic, much more so than the seals or the trumpets, for example they can be deconstructed into:

> And [the X (angel)].....then [the X-angel] poured out his bowel upon the......and [it] happened…with the result that….and….into three parts happened…

Most of the vial-plagues follow the established stereotypical rubric shown above and some of them demonstrate correspondence with the trumpets:

- **Revelation 9:20** - these plagues (fifth)
- **Revelation 16:9** - these plagues (fourth)

- **Revelation 8:8** - the third part of the sea became blood (second)
- **Revelation 16:3** - upon the sea, as the blood of a dead (second)

- **Revelation 8:10** - star upon the fountains of waters (third)
- **Revelation 16:4** - upon the rivers and fountains of waters (third)

- **Revelation 9:20** - yet repented not (sixth)
- **Revelation 16:11** - repented not of their deeds (fifth)

This has some preterist commentators concluding that the vial-plagues were all realized in the first century particularly as the “same” protagonists occur, namely, the dragon, the beast and the false prophet (Rev 16.13). That a relationship exists between the trumpets and Rev 16 is undeniable but is it, identical, equal, equivalent or isomorphic? Similar questions are posed in mathematical number theory etc where it becomes clear that the terms are not interchangeable.\(^2\) So also here, equivalence does not mean equal or identical.\(^3\) Suffice to say that there is a period when the beast “is not” (does not exist) and therefore the beasts that John is shown do not from a historic continuum. At some point this beast is dead until it is reincarnated in the future and the fact that the dragon becomes the “old serpent” (even after it no longer exists as a historical entity) and the earth-beast (two horned Lamb) becomes the “false prophet” in later chapters (Rev 16.3, 19.20, 20.10) indicates equivalence but not identity. The same can be said of the “beast” of Rev 16 which carries no descriptor such as “red” or “scarlet” or, “emerges from the sea”. Therefore the beast of Rev 16 is not a specific beast but a generic concatenation that represents all of them. On each occasion when the beast reappears it is subtly different, yet still recognizable (always with seven heads and ten horns).
Therefore we need to progress with care as from Rev 16 onwards we are dealing with a new historical phenomenon, albeit bearing similarities with patterns established in the past. A brief survey suggests that Rev 15-22 is sequential and in parts parallel:

**Rev 15** - In heaven seven angels with seven vials  
**Rev 16** - Pour out the vials of wrath on the earth  
**Rev 17** - Vial angel shows John the Judgement of the great whore  
**Rev 18** - Lament: Babylon is fallen  
**Rev 19** - Marriage Supper of the Lamb  
**Rev 20** - The Thousand years  
**Rev 21-22** - New Heavens and Earth

Therefore, Rev 16 sets the agenda for the following chapters, first using the ten kings as an instrument for retributive justice against Babylon (the great whore) and then universal judgements at Armageddon (marriage Supper of the Lamb) in so doing the Apocalypse draws on examples from the Old Testament – principally, the plagues of Egypt and the judgement of Babylon (like the seals and trumpets did) but it also draws on earlier intra-biblical material from the Apocalypse itself in order to depict a picture that has past manifestations of the beast merging into a future “parousia” of the beast creating a supra-historical reality – a larger than life monster that represents everything that went wrong throughout history.

The Apocalypse is able to recycle its own material because first and second century historical patterns build up to a finale. Similar themes deliver similar but not exactly the same outcomes because this time, rather than a “coming in judgement”, the sequence ends with the physical presence of the kingdom on earth. John lived at a time when he only saw the first phase play out (the fall of Jerusalem) but he would have understood (from the Olivet prophecy etc) that further repeats were necessitated by the obstinate refusal of the Jews to repent. In other words, in order to achieve full realization of the covenant, Yahweh would need to keep repeating the patterns until the obstinate spirit of Jewry was shattered and this has proven extremely difficult as pogroms, genocides and holocausts have failed to make an impact on the indomitable character of Jacob who was almost (but not quite) able to wrestle God himself to a stand-still. No wonder John was amazed and marvelled at the persistence of the beast. However, John is asked why he marvelled (Rev 17.7) as θαυμάζω (admiration) is one step removed from worship.
The lesson to us is not to act as sycophants or cheerleaders to an apostate nation – their hearts have been hardened (like that of Pharaoh) --- “What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” (Rom 9.22-24). But God always remembers mercy (the rainbow covenant) in wrath. The consequence of Jewish intransigence was the offer of hope to the Gentiles --- an in-grafted branch into the one “holy Church” of God that has its root in the covenant promises concerning the messiah. The reconciliation of Israel at the end of the trumpets is both literally and spiritually “life from the dead” when there will be no more “Jew” or “Gentile” but one people – a kingdom of priests, although God will vent his wrath on the heathen nations at the last (Rev 11.18) for their over-zealous retribution against his people (Isa 10.5-15). Israel will be judged but also the Gentiles. In the meantime the tragedy must play out one more time – but this time it ends positively resulting in praise (Rev 15.3-4) from the saints for his marvellous works (saving works) and from the Gentiles for his judgements (righteous punishments).

At this point we have truly reached the “end of history” as the “man of sin” has been revealed in all his “glory” and the glory of Yahweh (Jesus Christ) is manifested with the destruction of the enduring principle of self-divinization that has bedevilled history in the form of empire and religion from the beginning of time. Only then will it become undeniable that there is a God in Israel who is sovereign over all creation and that, “he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17.31).

Therefore the penultimate challenge to the authority of God has truly cosmic proportions and spiritual dimensions – good versus evil, light versus eternal darkness. This is not an exaggeration as everything that man has created is opposed to God (as will become abundantly and undeniably apparent) and humankind will learn the hard way that man is not, nor ever can become divine through self-determination. Man is not the creator of his own destiny, the master of his own soul. In the denial of his creator he has become but a brute beast, satisfying his own appetites and destroying the beautiful world that has been gifted to him.
Pour out the vials (Rev 16.1)

“And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth”.

Even though this chapter concludes with the pouring forth of the seventh bowl, at which the work of God’s wrath is complete, John’s vision will not be complete. For three more chapters (Rev 17, Rev 18, and Rev 19) remain within which John is shown details attending the judgments associated with these bowls culminating in the Second Coming of Christ and the binding of Satan prior to the Millennial Kingdom (Rev 20).

In Psalm 79 we find the following appeal: “Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know you, and on the kingdoms that do not call on your name”. The context of the Psalm is the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the cities of Judea during Hezekiah’s reign. Previously it was demonstrated that Psalm 79 is an important inter-text for Rev 11 informing the background of the witnessing program that resulted in a repentant remnant. It seems then that this final onslaught and devastation of the “great city” has the desired result (repentance) and the wrath of God is now turned against the Gentiles. The thought in their hearts was that there was no longer a God in Israel as the undefeatable Jews had been shattered. However, God had allowed the Gentiles (the ten kings) to function as his instrument of retribution but they had acted in a high-handed unrestrained manner (cf. Isa 10.5-15) and now they would reap the consequences. The following table gives an overview of the vial-plagues:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rev 16</th>
<th>Vial</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Plague</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.2</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Grievous sore</td>
<td>Image worshippers (666) dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.3</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Sea</td>
<td>Blood</td>
<td>Living souls died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.4-5</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Rivers &amp; fountains</td>
<td>Blood</td>
<td>Give them blood to drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.8-9</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Scorching</td>
<td>Blasphemy, unrepentant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.10</td>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>Seat of the Beast</td>
<td>Darkness</td>
<td>Pain, blasphemy, unrepentant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.12</td>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>Euphrates</td>
<td>Dried up</td>
<td>Prepared for kings of the East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.13</td>
<td>Mouth dragon, beast, false prophet</td>
<td>Three unclean Spirits like frogs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.14</td>
<td>spirits of devils working miracles</td>
<td>Gather them to the battle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.15</td>
<td>Warning</td>
<td></td>
<td>I come as a thief</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.16</td>
<td>Armageddon</td>
<td></td>
<td>gathered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.17</td>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>Air</td>
<td>Great voice</td>
<td>It is done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.18-20</td>
<td>Great Babylon</td>
<td>Great Earthquake</td>
<td>City divided into three parts, islands flee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.21</td>
<td>Upon men</td>
<td>Great hail</td>
<td>Blasphemed God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The plagues of Rev 16 employ the plagues against Egypt as inter-text:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vials (Revelation)</th>
<th>Plagues of Egypt (Exodus)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. The sea as the blood of a dead man.</td>
<td>2. Pharaoh’s army drowned in the sea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sun scorches men with fire.</td>
<td>4. The Shekinah glory?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Darkness.</td>
<td>5. Darkness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Unclean spirits like frogs.</td>
<td>6. Frogs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Hail, with fire.</td>
<td>7. Hail and lightning – “fire ran along the ground.” (Ex.9: 23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The effect:** they repented not, they blasphemed God. (16: 9,11,21)

**The effect:** Pharaoh hardened his heart.
The fist plague (Rev 16.2)

“And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image”.

The context of Exodus is theomachy, a contest between Yahweh (the God of Israel) and Pharaoh (the god of Egypt). Each “plague” was a judgement against a “god” (the Nile was a “god”, frogs were “gods” etc). Rev 16 contains numerous echoes and intertextual linguistic connections with Exodus. The first plague is described as a “noisome and grievous sore” (harmful and festering). The resemblance to the plague of Egypt is unmistakable even the same word (belkos) as the Septuagint (LXX) is used [sore] (Ex.9: 8-12). The victims of the second plague (16.3) are literally, hos nekros – as (like a) dead [man] echoing (Ex.12: 33); “we be all dead men”.

It is interesting to note that Moses’ first miracles were mimicked by Pharaoh’s magicians. These “false prophets” are traditionally referred to by the Talmudists and the Rabbis as “Jannes and Jambres” and are used as examples of reprobation in 2 Tim 3.8. Expanding beyond the context of Rev 16 we find that two witnesses were initially sent to a place “spiritually called Egypt…” (Rev 11.3) to “…smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will” (v.6) alluding to the prophetic ministry of the witnesses Moses (and Elijah who invokes drought).

In Rev.13.13-14 the false prophet mimics the wonders of the true witnesses for a similar time period (three-and-a-half-years) and in Rev 15.3 the martyred victors are portrayed as singing the Song of Moses the servant of God (Song of the Sea) in anticipation of judgement vial-plagues of Exodus. The Song of Moses (Exod 15) and the Song of Witness (Deut. 31.21-32.52), form the woof and weave of Rev 16. Deuteronomy 31 introduces the Song of Witness (v.21) which was to be used as a testimony against the people, because after the death of Moses they would break covenant and worship strange gods. The Song of Witness that follows is prophetic, “will befall you in the latter days” (v.29).

In our analysis of Rev 10 we observed by means of a comparison table how allusions to the Song of Witness function as an inter-text throughout the Apocalypse. Below we concentrate specifically on allusions found in Rev 16:
Revelation 16

Men which had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image. (v.2)

**Third Vial:** For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink. (v.16)

Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. (v.7)

**Fourth Vial:** And the forth Angel poured his vial upon the sun; and power was given him to scorch men with fire. (v.8)

Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people. (v.43)

For all his ways are judgment: a God of truth without iniquity, just and right is he. (v.4)

For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.... I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them.... (Deut. 32:22-24)

The Song of Witness is employed in Rev 13 to contrast the power of God with the power of the beast:

**Deuteronomy 32**

8 And there is no god with me...

9 I kill, and I make alive; I wound and I heal....

Neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. (v.39)

**Revelation 13**

Who is like unto the beast? (13.4)

...he exerciseth all the power of the first beast (13.12)

...to give life to the image of the beast. (13: 15)

One of his heads as though it were wounded unto death; and his deadly wound was healed. (13: 3)

...who is able to make war with him? (13.4)
The matrix of links is complex\textsuperscript{10}, for example, Ezek 38 (Gog invasion) is linked with Deut 32, which in turn is linked with Rev 20. Armageddon in Rev 16 (expanded in the Great Supper of Rev 19) is connected with Ezek 39, Ps 22 and Gen 15 (land covenant).\textsuperscript{11} A schematic matrix is drawn below with Rev 16 at the centre. However, each of these chapters forms the centre of its own matrix in an ever increasing web of complexity. Moreover, the matrix below is not exhaustive as there are many other links both within Revelation and across the Testaments.

Of course, we need to remind ourselves that the “beast” and the “image worshippers” in this chapter (Rev 16) are not the same ones as found in the second century (Rev 13). It is a repeat pattern. In the same way as we do not regard the invasion of Psalm 79 as depicting a literal invasion by an Assyrian king ---these are types and patterns.
The Second Plague (Rev 16.3)

“And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.”

The first plague was poured out on the “earth” (i.e., Israel) because that is where the beast and the image worshipers are found. They have the “mark of the beast” but now they are also marked by God with a “grievous sore”. They are therefore readily identifiable as they carry two marks, one from the beast that allows the beast worshipers economic freedom and one from God that speaks of their uncleanness and unsuitability for any form of worship, as those with festering leprous sores were not allowed before the divine presence until healed and ritually cleansed. Lilje comments that “those who once bore the mark of the beast are now visited by ‘marks’ of God.” God promised to strike Israel with similar boils if they continued in disobedience toward Him (Deut 28.27, 28.35).

However, the beast has no such qualms and does not allow impurity to disrupt his lucrative trade in everything under the sun including the “souls of men” (Rev 18.13 i.e., the living or breathing). The outpouring of the vial on the sea disrupts the beasts’ life sustaining force – just as Egypt was economically ruined by the death of the Nile so now also the beast when his lucrative trade from Gentile nations (the sea) is disrupted. In this way Yahweh demonstrates his sovereignty over both earth (Jew) and sea (Gentile) and every living (breathing) creature.

The unusual phrase, blood of as a dead man is used here. The KJV renders a more exact translation as the word man is not found in the original Greek and is therefore placed in italics. Literally it reads, hos nekros – as (like a) dead. This is a direct allusion to the effect of the last plague on Egypt: “And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste: for they said, we be all dead men.” (Exod.12.33). The nation of Israel was God’s wife and she had been taken by another man; “But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said unto him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman that thou has taken; for she is married to a husband” (Gen.20.3RVmg). God will punish the heathen nations that have taken his bride, but he will also punish the nation for being a harlot.
Unlike Sarah, this wife proved to be unfaithful, for as soon as she was free from Egyptian bondage she worshipped the image of the beast (golden calf – Exod 32.8) and was given the waters of jealousy to drink (Num 5); “Moses took the calf they had made, burnt it with fire, ground it to powder, sprinkled it on the water and made them drink it” (Exod 32.20). The next vial describes how the harlot is made to drink blood because of her unfaithfulness.

It has already been noted that the vial-plague of 16.3 is similar to the trumpet judgement in Rev 8.8 and that indicates that although they are separated in historical time the punishments are dealing with familiar themes. In the second century it was the establishment of temple worship under the false messiah bar Kochba with the support of the Parthian (Babylonian) beast. Jewish trade was temporarily interrupted when Trajan conquered Parthia. Moreover, Bar Kochba issued his own coinage depicting his “messianic star” rising above the temple. Without his coinage Jews would have not be able to “buy or sell” and objecting Christians would have been easily singled out. In the trumpets only a third of the sea became blood, now the whole sea becomes lifeless\textsuperscript{14} – the judgements have universal consequences beyond the shores of Israel.
The Third Plague (Rev 16.4-7)

“And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments”.

The vial punishment in these verses is enlarged upon in the vision shown to John in chpt.17.

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**Revelation 16**

- The third poured his vial upon the rivers (v.4)
- The angel of the waters (v.5)
- Give them blood to drink (v.7)

**Revelation 17**

- Vial angel….I will show you the judgment (v.1)
- Of the whore that sits upon many waters (v.1)
- The whore drunk saints blood (v.6)

The “rivers and fountains” of waters indicate the source of the “many waters” that the harlot sits upon. In the kingdom age the New Jerusalem is depicted as the source of healing waters that flow to the nations- the “living waters” being idiom for the gospel that flows from Jerusalem when her king reigns. Here, the harlot city reigns supreme and poisons the world with her gospel she is the source of apostasy. The angel “of the water (judgement) that shows John the fate of the harlot in Rev 17 is one of the vial angels. The comparison makes it likely that the vial angel who interprets the vision in Rev 17.1 is the same as the angel of the waters in Rev 16.5.

The third vial is therefore a description of the destruction of the harlot city. She is the source of intoxication for all the surrounding nations. The “many waters” that she sits upon are now turned into rivers of blood. The waters are, “peoples, and multitudes nations and tongues” (Rev 17.1) which form the source of her wealth and admiration. The “harlot city” has become a prostitute, a place of global worship, but despite the outward appearance of gaudy religiosity and purity her god is mammon.
Then I heard another out of the altar say — the RV, NSRV and NIV have the altar itself responding, thereby personifying the altar itself. This is wrong for the verb, “I heard” is linked with a partitive genitive, the AV translation is therefore correct — another (or someone) out of the altar. This is obviously a reference to the martyrs of Rev 6.10 (from way back in the first century) — whose blood lies poured out at the base of the altar. God responds with the principle of lex talionis, an eye for an eye (cf. Ps 79.3; Ezek 32.6-7). This section ends with an allusion to the Song of Witness; “For all his ways are judgment: a God of truth without iniquity, just and right is he” (Deut 32.4) demonstrating that the “harlot city” is Jerusalem/Babylon.

Isaiah 49:26 And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

Matthew 23:35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

{HYPERLINK "http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/revelation/introduction/hebrew-and-greek-fonts.html" "2.2.2.6" \t "_blank"} [Axioi gar eisi], For worthy they are. By their works, they have demonstrated their worthiness of this righteous punishment. Although the vial judgments do not recapitulate the trumpet judgements there is a striking similarity between them with a third of the rivers and springs of water becoming wormwood in Rev 8.8. The trumpet-plagues are partial in their effect (one-third of the earth is burned, Rev 8.7; one-third of the sea becomes blood, Rev 8.8; see also Rev. 8.9-12) while the vials are universal (“every living soul died,” Rev 16.3; “every island fled away,” Rev 16.20) and final; (2) the trumpets are to a certain extent a call to repentance while the bowls are the pouring out of divine wrath; and (3) man is affected indirectly by the first four trumpets but is directly attacked from the outset by the bowls. It should also be noticed that the bowls are poured out in rapid succession with the customary interlude between the sixth and seventh elements of the sequence missing.¹⁵
The Fourth Plague (Rev 16.8-9)

“And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.”

To scorch is καυματίσαι [kaumatisai] the intense scorching heat they endure is an indication of judgment (Rev 14.18). This may well allude to Isa.30.26: “The light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days”, this is in connection with, “the day of the great slaughter.” While the worshippers of the beast suffer pain and thirst and are fearfully scorched by the sun, the martyrs have gone where “they shall never be hungry nor thirsty again; never shall the sun strike them or any scorching heat.” (Rev 7.16), where, “pain shall be no more” (Rev 21.4). However, God will save the Jews, once they have been humbled, he will not give the heathen opportunity to despise his name (cf. Isa 30.29). These vials affect those who are too deeply involved in Babylon’s sins to be disassociated from her fall, those who had the mark of the beast, which worshipped his image, who shed the blood of saints and prophets, who blasphemed the name of God.

The last phrase is of peculiar importance, because, outside the present chapter, John in the prophetic part of his book attributes blasphemy only to the beast (Rev 13.1, 5, 6; 17.3). The thrice-repeated statement that men blasphemed (Rev 16.9, 11, 21) can only mean that they have wholly taken on the character of the false god they serve. There can be no question about John’s belief that in some men the mark of the beast might become indelible and earn for them final reprobation and annihilation (Rev 14.10-11; 20.15; 21.8; 22.15). “They repented not to give him glory.” This is in stark contrast with the death and vindication of the witnesses, which resulted in a repentant remnant, and the birth of a church (Rev 11.14). Well might John say, “He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still” (Rev 22.11).
The Fifth Plague (Rev 16.10-11)

“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds”.

The previous plague was scorching heat from a burning sun and this is immediately followed by darkness in imitation of the Egyptian plagues (Exod 10.21-23). It is poured out on the “seat of the Beast” which is the “throne”. This has religious implications, for the throne of Yahweh was the Ark of the Covenant. The “throne” is situated in Babylon (Rev 16.19 Cf. Zech 5.11) the headquarters of false worship –rabbinic Judaism (Jerusalem/Babylon) is no longer a “light” to the Gentiles. The Jews were confident that they were a guide of the blind and a light to those in darkness (Rom 2.19). But Jesus says, “But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt 6.23-24).

One can but speculate on the plague phenomenon – they are supernatural but carry a spiritual as well as a literal or natural dimension and follow each other in quick succession. They suggest cosmic events – perhaps a tipping point is reached in global warming and increased radiation causes an outbreak of melanomas, perhaps an unusually large solar flare? An electromagnetic pulse (EMP), also sometimes called a transient electromagnetic disturbance, is a short burst of electromagnetic energy. Such a pulse’s origination may be a natural occurrence or man-made and can occur as a radiated, electric or magnetic field or a conducted electric current, depending on the source. It destroys electronic equipment and would literally thrust us back to the dark ages – the end of civilization as we know it. Water turning blood-red might be linked to algae blooms known as “red tide” often caused by water that is oxygen depleted because it is too warm. However, the plagues also have spiritual dimensions as the sea is linked in scripture with the Gentiles and also (see Rev 18) with sea-borne trade. Perhaps magnetic fluctuations lead to increased plate activity resulting in the sky being darkened by volcanic ash and pyroclastic flows. Enormous ash clouds cause electric storms in the upper atmosphere and giant hail stones? Finally, tectonic activity results in the greatest earthquake the earth has ever experienced in civilized history. It is a fact that since the year 2000 much more earthquake activity has been recorded around the plate boundaries than in the previous one hundred years.
It seems that the earth is on the move and a number of calderas are swelling. Constant drilling, fracking and the building of dams on fault lines does not help the situation. Of course this is speculation and we can imagine that such events would be blamed on “natural phenomenon” or explained away as the Egyptian magicians (our scientists) did in the past. On top of all this we are overdue the greatest financial crash in history. Civilisation is about to be rocked to its core – man will be shown to be completely naked and vulnerable. Without God there is only darkness. However, none of these plagues led to repentance. This suggests that mankind has become completely reprobate at this point and would rather be destroyed than submit to the will of God. This fact alone justifies the punishments as righteous.
The Sixth Plague (Rev 16.12-14)

“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty”.

Without citing any sources (to save embarrassment) let us summarise the type of “traditional interpretation” usually accorded to the frog spirits; “The interpretation that puts forward the Frankish origin of the frog as a heraldic symbol, and its association with the early Frankish king Clovis is sound. These are the rights of freedom, equality and liberty offered in the Declaration of Rights formulated by the French (frogs) in the French (frog) Revolution of 1789”. One is left dumbfounded and flabbergasted at what can only be described as abuse of Scripture with no regard to context, intertextuality or relevant history.

A scripturally sound approach is taken by Ha Young Son.

“This is an excellent exegesis that can be further elaborated by understanding the role of frogs in the ancient cultures of Egypt and Greece and then connecting it with the Euphrates (the source of the frogs) and the intra-texts within the Apocalypse itself and further intertextual allusions in the OT. That is how sound hermeneutics is conducted.”
In Egyptian mythology, the Ogdoad (Greek ογδοάς “the eightfold”, Egyptian Khemenu, Ḫmnw) were eight primordial deities worshipped in Hermopolis during the Old Kingdom period (27th to 22nd centuries). Out of that era emerged the many great kingdoms of Egypt, who worshiped the eight immortal deities including Kek for the next two thousand years. Kek is the deification of the primordial concept of darkness in ancient Egyptian religion. As part of the Ogdoad (the eight primordial gods), Kek was viewed as androgynous, his female form being known as Keket or Heqet, which is simply the female form of the word Kek. Like all four dualistic concepts in the Ogdoad, Kek’s male form was depicted as a frog, or as a frog-headed man. To the Egyptians, the frog was a symbol of life and fertility, since millions of them were born after the annual inundation of the Nile, which brought fertility to the otherwise barren lands. Heqet (Keket), a goddess in the form of a frog, was associated with the final stages of childbirth and also with rebirth. The life cycle of frogs and toads involves at least one major transformation, from tadpole to adult. Many also shed their skins regularly as they grow, and some species eat the shed skin. These spectacular transformations may explain why many cultures see frogs and toads as symbolic of re-creation, or as keepers of the secrets of transformations.

This is relevant in light of the Beast who was at one stage dead. The reincarnated beast sends forth “frog spirits” associated with rebirth and re-creation – the message of the deceased second century monster has been resurrected and reinvigorated. This reading is also supported by a famous Greek play by Aristophanes that provided a look into the Underworld in his satirical farce, called Frogs. This ancient play was produced in the year 405 BCE and played at two different festivals (an unusual honour) where it won first prize and was well known in the ancient world the play tells the story of the journey by the god Dionysus to bring someone back from Hades and its chorus of croaking frogs (from which the play takes its title) that surround the lake of the dead. Edmonds says, “For these frogs are not simply the ordinary frogs that sing in the marshes of Attica, but ‘swan-frogs’ (βατράχοι κύκνοι), whose song is amazingly beautiful. As befits pipers in the realm of the dead, their song is a ‘swan-song’, since the song of the swan is heard only at death.” Frogs themselves, as creatures that live in the two worlds of water and land, are appropriate creatures to facilitate the transition of Dionysos across the border between the worlds of living and dead”. In Plutarch’s (ca.46–120CE) much later De Sera Num. 567f, Nero is transformed into a frog in the afterlife, a fare befitting his pretensions to singing in life no doubt encouraged by the myths surrounding his return from the dead.
Therefore, cultural and religious beliefs in Egypt and Greece support the themes of rebirth from the underworld. However, there is more as the “frog sprits” are also characterized as “unclean” (ἀκαθαρτα, akathartα) and “the spirits of devils (δαιμονίων, daimoniOn) working miracles”. The same words are used in Rev 18.2 to describe Babylon as a location of unclean/devils. The only time these words occur together in the NT is in Luke 4.33: “And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil (δαιμονίου ἀκαθάρτου).” Perry demonstrates that the man in the synagogue was “possessed by Egypt” and Jesus’ healing of the man was perceived by the audience as an expression of doctrine (v.36) – it was therefore an acted parable about Jewry who refused to leave Egypt behind. Egypt was the land of the dead with an elaborate death cult; it is fitting then that “unclean demons” that look like (the plague of Egyptian) “frogs” emerge from the mouth of creatures who have on multiple occasions been condemned to the underworld (the beast is not cf. Rev 17.8, 10, 11).

Contacting the dead is necromancy which is condemned in scripture, yet the world is willing to be deceived by something that should have remained dead; “Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God” (Lev 19.31 ESV). The priesthood was instructed not to be defiled by the dead (Lev 21.1) nor to marry a whore (Lev 21.7) and to burn by fire any daughter given to prostitution (Lev 21.9) and yet all these events are alluded to in the Apocalypse. To be unclean (ἀκαθαρτα, akatharta) refers to ritual or ceremonial impurity in relation to temple worship and the word is used thirty one times in Septuagint (LXX) of Lev 11; of particular interest is (vv.31-32) the fact that a creature on the list of unclean foods could contaminate anything that it came into contact with even after it had died and especially vessels (think here of the temple service) required to be either scrubbed clean (brass) or smashed (clay).

Josephus (J.W. 7.185) defines “demon” as the “spirits of wicked men” and Aune comments that it is a “major way in which daimons were understood in the Greco-Roman world: cf. Plutarch De def.orac., 415B-C. In the OT “demons” are always associated with idol worship which makes it a good term to describe worshippers of the “image of the beast” which in the first and second centuries became the temple:

Revelation 9:20-21 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.
The “idols” described here consist of a number of materials that were employed to construct the temple and many of the same materials describe the beauty of Babylon in Rev 18.12. All these elements are found in the temple as 2 Tim 2.20 makes apparent when drawing a parallel between believers and a “great house” (i.e. the temple); “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth (earthenware or clay); and some to honour, and some to dishonour”. The first use of “brass” (χαλκᾶ) in the LXX is Exod 27.3, employed to describe the temple instruments and “stone” (λίθινα) is used to describe the Law tables given to Moses in Exod 24.12, with the adjective wooden (ξυλίνα) used as a genitive (ξυλίνου) in Lev 11.32 to describe vessels made of wood and again as a genitive noun to describe the ark, of shittim-wood (ξυλων). The first mention of the word-pair gold/silver in the LXX is the Genesis account of Rebecca’s dowry and the next mention of the word-pair is in Exod 3.22 as the “dowry” that the Egyptians gave the Israelites when they leave Egypt to marry Yahweh. The wealth of Egypt was used to construct the tabernacle. Soon after leaving Egypt they used the gold to construct a facsimile of the cherubim (golden calf); “And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold” (Exod 32.31). Stephen refers to this incident in Acts 7.41; “And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands” and then he adds (vv. 47-48); “But Solomon built him a house. Howbeit the most High does not live in temples made with hands”. This is Stephen’s way of saying that the temple had become an idol (like the golden calf). They had become murders (killing the prophets and saints), sorcerers (like Jezebel), fornicators (like Solomon) and thieves (turning the temple into a house of merchandise).

To summarise: The spirits “like frogs” are based on the frog plague of Egypt. They have associations with rebirth and the underworld in ancient Greece and Egypt. They have connections with ritual impurity (unclean) and idol worship (devils or demons). They seduce and represent something that has come back (like a zombie) from the dead. In the past wars and crusades were fought to liberate the “holy places” of Jerusalem from the hands of the “infidel”. It seems that such a call (to liberate Jerusalem) issues from these seducing spirits – a historical analogy would be Parthia/Babylon supporting the Bar Kochba rebellion to liberate Jerusalem and reinstitute temple worship.
However, the “frogs” do not come from the Nile but from the marshes of the Euphrates because it is “dried up” by the vial angel (on the request of the witnesses cf. Rev 11.6). Babylon was located on the alluvial plain drained by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, watered by an amazing system of canals built by the Babylonians - boasting probably the most fertile soil in the world, covered by rich crops and other vegetation and the famous Babylonian hanging gardens. The punishment of drought called down on the “seat of the beast” by the witnesses and implemented by the vial angel (of the waters) is anticipated by the prophet Jeremiah; “A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols” (Jer 50.38). It is the worship of idols, particularly the “image of the beast” (v.2) that invokes such drastic punishments. When Babylon is destroyed the angel declares “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!”

Therefore Babylon becomes a “dry place” or wilderness – the place where the “scapegoat” was sent (where the Jews were exiled) and alluded to by Jesus in Luke 11.24-26. Casting the demons out of Legion enacted this principle. The scapegoat was sent to Azazel (Lev 16), which is no doubt a corruption introduced from pseudo-graphic and rabbinical writings in an attempt to clarify the term. Therefore later Jewish literature interpreted Azazel as a “demon king”, an angel that had rebelled against God.

On the Day of Atonement the priest cast lots to determine the sacrificial goat “for Yahweh” and the other lot for the scapegoat (Lev.16.8). The Hebrew for scapegoat פיל is treated as a proper name; the goat for “Azazel” and various solutions have been proposed but as the NetBible admits, “Perhaps a play on words between the proper name and the term for “goat” has occurred so that the etymology has become obscure”. Pinker suggests that the term פיל was originally the homophone, פיל “Powerful God” and Jacqueline C.R. De Roo also understands the etymology as denoting strength. According to the Syriac Peshitta Version, azazel is rendered Za-za-e'il (the strong one against/of God), as in Qumran fragment 4Q180. Jesus was certainly referencing the meaning strong. However, multiple word-play-associations are possible in the Hebrew. In later apocrypha (Enochic literature; an obvious corruption of Genesis 6 combined with the atonement ritual) Azazel (Asael) becomes a leader of rebellious angels who is chained in a place called Dudael (ddl) a probable cipher for Babel (bbl).
If this is indeed correct, then even Jewish mythical apocryphal writings recognisee Babylon (Babel) as the “cage/prison/hold/abyss” for rebellious Azazel, the very place where the rebellious and unclean Jewish nation (scapegoat) was sent for exile!
Summary of first six plagues

The Jews had been exiled to Egypt and to Babylon and both locations form a complex matrix of allusions throughout the Apocalypse and particularly in Rev 16. Each time they emerged from exile they built a temple. The first temple (temple of Solomon) was desired by David (with the best of intentions) but it was not God’s will. Although the temple builder Solomon began his reign as a righteous king he apostatized, practiced syncretism and fornication and built an empire for his own glory. The building of the second temple, after the Babylonian exile was blessed by God (it was almost not built because of the corruption of the priesthood and resistance from the Samaritans), it was defiled by Antiochus and rededicated by the Maccabee priests and renovated (almost a complete rebuild) by Herod the Great. Since the time of the Babylonian exile it no longer contained the Ark, instead the “immovable rock” stood there (which came to represent Christ – the stone of stumbling and rock of offence, currently housed in the Islamic shrine the “Dome of the Rock”). Under Herod the Great the temple reached new heights of corruption and commercialism and Babylonian Jewry and pharisaic rabbinism commenced a long journey away from God in the land of Shinar. The temple was again destroyed (as predicted by Christ) in 70 CE and another attempt to rebuild was made by Bar Kochba which ended in failure in 135 CE. At that point Jerusalem officially became a “Gentile city”. The Jews have once again emerged from the “Babylonian” wilderness (Day of Atonement) just as they did from Egypt (Passover) all the while still rejecting the true temple – Jesus Christ. The beast, false prophet and image of the beast are therefore a corruption of the principle of the temple – representing empire, propagandists for false religion and a corrupted temple (image) – the desire to become “like God” (self-determination and self-divinization). However, the “spirit” that they represent is like a frog from the primordial darkness (underworld) – the people are ritually unclean and no longer worship God but Babylonian “demons”. Like the serpent this frog seduces with its ancient message, the message itself is the plague because it gathers the whole world to confront Christ at Armageddon.
The Euphrates is “dried up” and the “frog message” goes forth to prepare the kings of the east. Abraham sent his sons by Keturah (the concubine) “eastward, unto the east country” (Gen.25.6). He also gave them gifts as a substitute for the inheritance that was reserved for Isaac. In Matthew’s gospel wise men appear from the east bearing gifts for Christ (Matt. 2.2, 11). The kings of the east are therefore Semitic peoples, sons of Abraham, who were sent away (like Ishmael) because of their hatred toward their brother. The names of the twelve sons of Keturah carry meanings that suggest contention and strife. However, the eventual call to battle is universal (the whole world v.14). The drying of the Euphrates may refer to a natural or a political event or perhaps a combination. It does not refer to the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1922 as some of the events portrayed in the Rev.16 are concurrent with the witnessing (three-and-one-half-years) with the vials probably stretching a full seven years (week). Both the witnessing and the vials end on a similar note (Rev 16.18 cf. Rev 11.19). In the second century the Euphrates formed the border between the Roman and Parthian Empires. The miracle or “sign” that resulted in the call to war was the reestablishment of temple Judaism and an independent Jewish state under Bar Kochba (clandestinely supported by Parthia/Babylon). On that occasion the “four angels bound in the great river Euphrates” were unleashed (Rev 9.14-15) but there they only killed a third of mankind. Rev 16 seems like an action –replay of that trumpet, howbeit with universal and more devastating consequences that are described in the next plague (and elaborated on in Rev 19).
Sequence of events

At this point it is germane to interrupt the exegesis to discuss the sequence of events. The plague-vials are linked by their inter-texts with Exodus plagues and the Day of Atonement. However, no Passover deliverance or Day of Atonement forgiveness is forthcoming – only wrath. We are constantly informed that there is no repentance only blasphemy and an outpouring of wrath follows. In Rev 15 we encounter the saints in heaven celebrating as thought the victory was already finalized –presumably these saints are martyred because they refused the mark of the beast. Not only does the vision of Rev 15 look backwards at past victories over the beast it also anticipates the final victory through the praises of the conquerors who have paid the ultimate price. However, not all believers die during this period as Christ issues a warning concerning preparedness during the sixth plague-vial and therefore we can presume that there are still some believers alive at this time. The witnessing of Rev 11 occurred in the past (first and second centuries) but scripture suggests a repeat pattern during the final reincarnation of the beast. The call to the witnesses to “come up hither” and ascend to heaven need not indicate a literal ascension but rather vindication and justification by God. In other words, their prophetic testimony is proven undeniably true (think here of the testimony of Jesus concerning the destruction of the temple).

Resseguie comments; “Few structural breaks slow down the rapid-fire pace of one disaster after another. With the end around the corner the narrative speed quickens to a breathless pace. Unlike the seals and trumpets, which have embedded narratives between the penultimate and ultimate events in their respective series, the bowls lack intercalations to slow the narrative pace. The expectation of delay is in the distant past (6:11), and the strong angel’s promise of no more delay is now a reality (10:6)”.

An alternating sequence of punishments can be discerned, switching between the Jewish nation and the world as Jerusalem becomes a cup of trembling and a burdensome stone (Dome of the rock) for the whole world (Zech 12.2-3). Each outpouring of wrath against the Jewish nation is counterbalanced with a universal out-poring that punishes the whole world and further undermines the support system that keeps the beast alive.
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A1 (1) Earth (Babylon) - Worshipers punished
B1 (2) Sea (Universal) – Economic support system destroyed
A2 (3) Fountains (Babylon) - Source (temple) destroyed (Rev 17-18; Whore burnt)
B2 (4) Sun (Universal) – Natural support system destroyed - no repentance
A3 (5) Seat of the Beast (Babylon) – Source of political power darkened- no repentance
B3 (6) Euphrates (Universal) - frogs gather nations/Armageddon (Rev 19; Great Supper)
A4 (7a) Air (Babylon) - Babylon falls
B4 (7b) Air (Universal) - Cities of the nations fall

It becomes clear from Rev 16 that “Babylon” is both a local and a universal phenomenon. The focal point or “source” is A2 and A3 but the poison has spread globally and therefore the punishments alternate between local and universal consequences. The source of the infection is attacked as well as the sources “support systems” – this is not just a punishment “of the Jews” as the whole world has effectively become Babel –unified in opposition to God as can be seen in the rush to globalism with negative financial and environmental consequences.

In the third plague-vial (A2) it was noted that the “angel of the waters” was probably the same vial angel that showed John the fate of the harlot (who sits on many waters in Rev 17). Therefore it is probably during the third plague-vial that the whore is burnt. Working backwards it is sometime before these events that ten kings cede power to the whore. It must be during this period of cooperation and mutual agreement that image-worship (a temple) is established and image worship commences. If the destruction of the whore occurs in the third plague-vial that does not necessarily constitute the final punishment for Israel. For example, if the burning of the whore in the third plague-vial relates to the capture of the temple mount and abolishment of a false religious system established there, then the next plague-vial to strike the “source” (A3) may relate to the occupation of Israel leading to a period of “darkness” such as in the eight century where the people are described as “walking in darkness and the shadow of death” (Isa 9.2 cf. 60.2) or in the Babylonian destruction where Jeremiah describes the ensuing chaos as the reversal of creation “I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light” (Jer. 4.23). Of course, the “heavenly lights” were initially appointed to regulate the Jewish feasts (Gen 1.14) and therefore “darkness” may indicate that Judaism is banned in the land of Israel. The precedent here would be the banning of circumcision and teaching of the Law by the Emperor Hadrian, or, it could refer to a natural phenomenon (as discussed previously) or perhaps a combination of both literal and metaphorical “darkness” – whatever it represents it causes the worshippers to bite their tongues in agony (cf. Ps 12.4).
We note that neither the universal punishment (B²) of excessive light (scorching) nor the local punishment of darkness (A³) produce repentance. Despite the expression of divine wrath the Jews and the world generally hardened their heart and probably seek alternative theories to explain away their predicament (like pharaoh did). The sixth plague (B³) has been designated as “universal” because although originating at the Euphrates the “frogs” spread throughout the world to gather all nations to battle. We would expect the “seat of the beast” (throne) to be situated on the Euphrates because that was the original location of Babylon. Obviously, an attack on the “seat of the beast” is an attack on the heart of the Empire’s political power but if the “seat” is Babylon then how can the dual location of Babylon/Jerusalem be explained?

The precedent in the second century was the conquest of the Parthian Empire (Babylon) by Trajan which resulted in the Parthian “frogs of war” (sic) calling for rebellion and for the reestablishment of temple worship in Judea. A rebellion ensued in the Jewish Diaspora of the Roman Empire (Kitos war) followed by the Bar Kochba revolt.

The large Jewish communities of Parthia were wealthy and politically important. However, even after the fall of the temple in 70 CE the Jews of Syria-Palestine remained “religiously” predominant. We can then speak of two important Jewish centres of power; Syria-Palestine and Parthia. We could say that the centre of Jewish religious power was Syria-Palestine and the centre of Jewish political power was Parthia and this held true until the failure of the Bar Kochba revolt after which Jewish religious and political power shifted to Parthia (Babylon).

The Jews are a remarkable people; “a peculiar treasure unto me above all people” (Exod 19.5) but Yahweh adds the caveat “if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant”. The chosen race has always had their hands on the levers of power. Joseph was second to Pharaoh, Daniel, Nehemiah, Esther and Mordecai are the faithful found in the royal courts of Babylon and Persia. In Roman and Parthian times there were many influential Jews (think here of Josephus in the court of Titus) but they were not always faithful. Although the Jews are less than 0.2% of the world population they are disproportionately represented in the corridors of power and have a huge influence in the world of politics, academia, business and media. About 6 million Jews live in Israel (44%) with roughly the same amount living in the USA (39.5%). If we had to choose a modern counterpart to Babylon then the USA would make a good candidate as a centre of Zionist political and financial support. Just as in the past, the Jews have a large presence inside and outside the land and the “frogs” represent a call to liberate the “holy places”.
The Seventh plague- Armageddon (Rev 16.15-21)

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.”

Unlike the seals and trumpets the plague-vials have no narrative interruptions of the plot with the exception of the warning and blessing in v.16. The warning relates to the faithful keeping their garments and this is an allusion to the parable of the king who invited guests to the wedding feast of his son who found some of the guests without a wedding garment. This left the king speechless as it was a sign of disrespect to turn up unprepared (Matt 22.1-14). The garment is an obvious reference to baptism which covers the nakedness (vulnerability) of sin—something that the fig leaf in Eden could not do (because the fig tree represented Judaism). 54

There are a total of seven beatitudes in the Apocalypse and they appear at critical junctures to encourage and comfort the faithful:

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Revelation 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.
Revelation 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Revelation 19:9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Revelation 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

The first blessing anticipates the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE and the second the fall in 135 CE: the third anticipates the return of Christ and Armageddon the fourth blessing rests on those who are at Armageddon the fifth blesses those who will live and reign with Christ during the millennium the sixth blesses those who “keep the words” (remain faithful) because the judgements of Christ will soon become apparent (70 CE) and the last blesses those who keep his commandments (cf. Rev 12.17) which refers to the breaking of bread—“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread” (1 Cor. 11.23). Without baptism and the “agapae feast” believers are naked.

The next phrase that draws our attention is “it is done” which also occurs at critical points of redemptive history. This will be discussed in more depth in Rev 19, for now we turn to Armageddon.
The battle of that great day of God Almighty (Rev 16.14)

The Greek verb gather (συνάγω, sunago) in v.16 obviously refers to the kings that are gathered by the “frog spirits” in v.14 where the same verb is employed and the modern translations supply the ellipses which is not present in the Greek; “Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon” (v.14 NIV) as opposed to the older literal translations that simply have “And he gathered them together”. In Rev 19 it is noted that the word “gather” is used throughout the NT to denote opposition to the gospel and it is demonstrated that the verb is connected with the land covenant given to Abraham in Gen 15. For now we note that not one but two assemblies occur simultaneously, namely those that oppose Christ are “gathered” and at the same time the saints are “collected” because they are present at the marriage supper in Rev 19. Christ makes it clear that Armageddon is not just a battle but also a marriage supper. A marriage supper requires guests that will participate in the ceremony – it is fitting that Jesus began his ministry with a wedding feast and ends the age with a wedding banquet.

This answers the question posed by the disciples in Luke 17.37; “Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles/vultures be gathered (συνάγω, sunago) together”. It has already been demonstrated that this saying is connected with the land covenant made with Abraham in Gen 15 and Rev 19 (see there) describes the out working where the “fowls” (birds of prey) are called to feast on the dead bodies of Christ’s enemies. It seems that these two events are closely related, namely (1) the death and exposure of the witnesses bodies (2) the death and exposure of the bodies of the witnesses enemies. In between these two events the witnesses are vindicated (Come up hither) and a remnant repented (gave glory to God).

Osborne comments, “This is the first time the earthquake is called “great,” though the hailstorm was also called “great” in 11:19. The description of it as greater than any that had ever happened “since people were on the earth” is reminiscent of the Olivet discourse, where Jesus spoke of the “days of tribulation” as “unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world” (Mark 13:19 par.). Both go back to Dan. 12:1 (LXX but especially close to Theodotion’s wording), which describes “a tribulation such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then” (cf. Exod.9: 18, where the hailstorm was “the worst that had ever happened in Egypt form the day it was created until then”). In Dan. 12:1-2 a contrast is established between the people of God who will be delivered “to everlasting life” and the many who will awake “to shame and everlasting contempt.”

n55
Indeed, if we compare the last trump at the end of Rev 11 and Armageddon in Rev 16 it becomes apparent that the witnessing immediately precedes the resurrection and the judgement of the nations showing that these two events happen almost simultaneously:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revelation 11</th>
<th>Revelation 16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>shall make war against them (the witnesses), and shall overcome them, and kill them (v.7)</td>
<td>For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy (v.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a great earthquake (v.13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven (v.13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Trump</th>
<th>Seventh plague-vial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come (v.18)</td>
<td>which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them them (v.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth (v.18)</td>
<td>the battle of that great day of God Almighty (v.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned (v.17)</td>
<td>And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done (v.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward (v.18)</td>
<td>Behold, I come as a thief (v.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake (v.19)</td>
<td>And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake (v.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and great hail (v.19)</td>
<td>because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great (v.21)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vial-plagues are obviously associated with the witnessing as the witnesses are able “to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will” (Rev 11.6). Therefore the angels that pour out the plague-vials do so in response to a request from the witnesses. From Rev 11 we can surmise that there will be repentance and a “great earthquake” before the seventh trump is sounded. This seems to be a different earthquake from the one described in Rev 16 which is an order of magnitude greater (if that is even possible) than the “great quake” of Rev 11. Rev 11 is a repeat of the witnessing patterns of the first and second centuries and the “great quake” in 70CE and 135 CE was the fall of Jerusalem as predicted by the witnesses, therefore, the “come up hither” of Rev 11.12 can be understood as vindication of Christ and his witnesses.
In the case of Jesus a literal ascension followed his martyrdom (witnessing). However, in 70 CE and 135 CE repentance did not follow – the reverse was true – and therefore the last trump was not sounded.

The exegesis presented here argues for a repeat of the trumpets (i.e., “whenever they sound”) but this time they actually conclude (they are not cut short by the times of the Gentiles) and therefore they are completely executed including the plague-vials. If that is the case we can expect a measure of repentance by a remnant (which is caused by the death and vindication of the witnesses) after which the temple is closed. At that point (Rev 16) there is no more access to forgiveness….but it is not needed anyway because there is no more repentance. The moral of the story is to pray to God in a time when he can still be found……because the time will come when that is no longer possible. Well might the prophet declare; “Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light” (Amos 5.18). “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10.31).

It is suggested that the first “great earthquake” (Rev 11.13) which vindicates the witnesses is related to the temple mount. The Lord predicted that “There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matt 24.2) but the Jews still worship at the “Wailing Wall” the outer stone wall that supported the temple platform has become a “holy place”. When Joshua sounded the seventh trumpet the walls of Jericho fell down with a “great shout”. (Josh. 6.20) Moreover, the east gate to Jerusalem known as the “gate of mercy” was bricked up by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent to prevent a Jewish messiah from entering. We can imagine then that the witnesses offer the destruction of the Wailing Wall and the opening of the eastern gate as a sign of the messiah’s imminent return. Their prediction is that an earthquake will destroy the wall and open the gate three-and-one half days after they have been executed. The accuracy of their prophecy also vindicates Christ who emphatically declared “not one stone” which means that it is still unfulfilled prophecy. God will be vindicated even after 2,000 years!

The destruction of the temple platform and opening of the “Gate of Mercy” are signs that work repentance among the Jews. They now know that Jesus is the messiah and that he is coming soon….very soon. They display godly fear and give glory to Yahweh. But they are only a remnant. The majority ascribe it to “coincidence”, natural phenomenon etc…people always justify their ignorance…if one rose from the dead they would not believe him. The apostle Paul has the following to say about this event;
1 Thessalonians 4:14-18  For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.
Osborne describes Armageddon as follows:

“The articular τὸν πόλεμον concretizes this to mean “the war” namely Armageddon (16:16). This end-of-the-world battle was predicted in the OT (Ezek. 38-39; Zech. 12-14; Joel 2:11; 3:2), early Jewish literature (1 Enoch 56.7-8; 90.15-19; 94.9-11; T. Dan 5.10-11; 2 Esdr. [4 Ezra] 13:33-39), and the NT (2 Thess. 2:8), so in a sense the use of the definite article points back to the final battle predicted by the prophets. The battle itself is described further as “the great day of God Almighty”, similar to Rev. 6:17, where it is depicted as “the great day of their [God’s and the Lamb’s] wrath.” It is a “great day” because it culminates the plan of God that existed “from before the creation of the world” (Matt. 25:34; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3; Rev. 13:8; 17:8”).

This is indeed the day that all the prophets speak of. Every other occasion that Yahweh has intervened in history is but a foretaste of this world shattering event, even so each past occasion forms a pattern or type — that is how scripture works — recurrent patterns that build to a climax.

One of the commentaries states that there are as many as fifty interpretations of Armageddon and that is very likely because it is a Hebrew word that has been Grecized — the text tells us this “in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon” but the word is not Hebrew it is in the Greek: Ἀρμαγεδῶν and it only occurs in Rev 16.16.

Therefore, it is something that sounds like Armageddon in the Hebrew and many commentators opt for “Har-Megiddo” or the “mountain of Megiddo” as many critical battles were fought at Megiddo. However, the problem is that Megiddo is a city situated in a valley between mountains. It was suitable for ancient chariot battles because of its vast plain. For this reason many commentators reject that location (as does this exegesis).

Before we proceed it is important to note that this is no ordinary “war” between nation states Dalrymple analyses the term “war” in the Apocalypse and comes to the conclusion that “the focus of this war is actually the people of God” and that it is “the work of the devil… that which Satan has always waged, and still does, against the people of God”. In this he is essentially correct as for example in Rev 12 where the “devil” is cast out of heaven and makes “war” with the remnant of the woman’s seed (or the beast that makes “war” with the saints). The “frogs” also send out the spirits of “devils” (demons).
We need not think here of a supernatural adversary but the principle is ancient (old Serpent) and Satanic (in opposition to God) and embodied in human opposition of the religious and Imperial kind. This is a kind of “Jihad” (holy war) against Christ and his saints – it is not a tank battle. The suggestion is that the preceding events (witnessing, earthquake etc) point to the imminent return of Christ and the “frogs” put forth the idea that the antichrist is about to appear.

From the east came the “wise men” to herald the birth of the messiah now the way of “eastern kings” is prepared by unclean frog spirits to oppose the return of Christ. For example, in Islamic eschatology the Mahdi (the redeemer of Islam) will be sent and with the help of Jesus (the Messiah in Islam who will become the ruler of the world and abolish all religions but Islam), will battle Masih ad-Dajjal (Antichrist in Islam). That does not mean that we are promoting that particular scenario but it is obvious that there is opportunity for chaos, misunderstanding and manipulation amongst adherents of Islam as well as Christians (to be discussed in a separate chapter). Even modern sci-fi mythology depicts mankind having to fend off some type of “alien” takeover by malevolent forces intent on enslaving mankind and taking away our “freedom”. The will to self-determination is so strong in human nature and in all cultures that we cannot see that the enemy is us.

Returning to the term “Armageddon” which in the English is rendered with a double d but only has one “d” in the Greek (Armagedon). Reproduced below are some relevant commentary by Michael Barber and James E. Smith, after which follows a short discussion. First we turn to Barber (footnotes not included) with the exception of footnote 14 which is relevant and placed in the main body as indicated:

“By adding the image of a battle on a mountain, he evokes passages from the prophets which spoke of final devastation. Isaiah prophesied that Babylon’s destruction would occur on the mount of assembly” (Is. 14:13). Ezekiel predicted thy apocalyptic battle would occur on the “mountains of Israel,” where Gods enemies would be crushed once and for all (Ezek. 39:4). The term “Armageddon” thus symbolizes that Jerusalem is the New Babylon, receiving its final catastrophic judgment. Here the enemies of Gods people will be defeated.

Zechariah links Megiddo with an apocalyptic battle in which the enemies of Jerusalem will be destroyed (Zech. 12:9-1). It is clear that John is thinking of this passage, since Revelation 16 has many parallels with the final prophecies in Zechariah:
—Both speak of the nations being gathered for battle against the city of Jerusalem (Zech. 12:3; 14:2; Rev. 16:14)

—Both speak of an earthquake and the splitting of the city (Zech. 14:4-5; Rev. 16:18-19)

—Both speak of false prophets and evil spirits (Zech. 13:2; Rev. 16:13)

—Both describe the Lord sending “plagues” (Zech. 14:12; cf. parallels of Rev. 16:1-2 and the plagues of Egypt)

Footnote 14:

Day further strengthens the case that Zech. 12 is the source for “Armageddon” by pointing out that it is the only place in the Hebrew Bible where Megiddo is referred to as megiddon rather than megiddo. Though the term megiddon appears in several places in the Greek Old Testament, this fact is significant because John asserts that “Armageddon” is derived from a Hebrew word (i.e. “at the place which is called in Hebrew...”). See J. Day, “Origin of Armageddon: Revelation 6:16 as an Interpretation of Zechariah 12:11,” Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder, Stanley Porter, et al., eds. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 315-26”.

The following is a contribution by James E. Smith:

“A case can be made for tracing magedōn to the Hebrew mō ‘ēd (assembly). So Har-magedon means “Mount of Assembly/Gathering.” John hints that we are to look for the meaning of the disputed term in the Hebrew. Five other times in his writings John identifies transliterated Hebrew words. In each case John offers an accompanying clue as to the explanation of the transliteration. The present v is no exception to the pattern. The verb gathered (synagō) in effect translates the noun magedōn. So God gathered the nations to the Mount of Gathering. In Isa 14:13 the Mountain of Gathering in the heights of Zaphon” (NRSV) is heaven, the abode of God Ps 48:2 regards Zion /Jerusalem, the earthly counterpart of God’s heavenly dwelling, as being “in the heights of Zaphon.” Through these two passages we can establish that the Mountain of Gathering= heights of Zaphon –Zion/Jerusalem, Ps 48 goes on to relate how rebellious kings gathered at Zion, Yahweh shattered these kings and secured peace for his people”.

Both commentaries reach the same conclusion via slightly different routes – the location is Jerusalem. The prophet Zechariah does mention Megiddon but only for comparative purposes and Joel also alludes to the same historical defeat for the same reason. Apparently the Aramaic harma-geddon means “the destruction of their army”. Removing the letter h in accordance with the current Greek orthographic practice arrives at “Armageddon” without any vowel changes. It seems to me that we are dealing with multiple layers of meaning.
Of course, that may seem like a lazy way to approach what is posed as an etymological problem but John is deliberately enigmatic in order to force the reader to search the scriptures. To this end we can add one more possible derivation without feeling the necessity to pin down one particular definition as they are all relevant.

The place of destruction is also the place where the saints are gathered, that much is made clear by the “bird logion”; “Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles (vultures) be gathered together” (Lk 17.37//Matt 24.28). The place where the saints are collected is the same place where the “kings” are gathered. As observed earlier Rev 16.14 refers to “them” being gathered to Armageddon with the obvious reference being the “kings” of the previous verse but the ambiguous phrasing may well be intended to allow a dual reference to the saints. If that is the case then magedôn might be derived from meged (Strong’s 4022) found in Deu 33.13-16 and Song of Sol 4.13, 16; 7.13 variously translated in those passages as the “precious [things]”, “precious [fruits]”, “pleasant [fruits]”, “choice [fruits]”, “choicest [fruits]”. The passage in Deuteronomy is concerned with the messianic blessing poured out on Joseph and Song of Solomon is concerned with the beloved bride.

Therefore Har-magedôn may mean the “mount of precious things/fruit” (denoting the “harvesting” of the saints) or it may mean “mount of assembly” or it may mean “the destruction of their army” as there are associations with all those themes. Whatever the meaning, the location is clearly Jerusalem and not Megiddo, although the “mourning” and blow to national pride will be similar to that event. This will be like the multitudes in the “valley of decision” (Joel 3:12, valley of Jehosaphat i.e. Megiddo) a reference to the Assyrian invasion which was a “holy war” (jihad) – “Proclaim ye this among nations, Sanctify a war, stir up the mighty ones, Come nigh, come up, let all the men of war” (Joel 3.9 YLT). The saints are not gathered to Sinai, nor are they gathered to Megiddo – they are gathered to Jerusalem, or rather to the heavenly Mount Zion where the Lamb stands (Rev 14.1) for, “The L ORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the L ORD will be the hope of his people, (the faithful remnant as in the days of Hezekiah) and the strength of the children of Israel” (Joel 3.16).
The aftermath of Holy War

The battle is fought on unequal terms and the aftermath is devastating as indicated by the superlatives; “so mighty” and “such as was not since men were upon the earth” and “so great” and “exceeding great”. The earthquake is followed by hail as big as stones. The saints are uninjured but the adversary is completely annihilated and thrown into the “lake of fire”. There is every reason to believe that this describes a natural phenomenon such as a gigantic earthquake.

The Great Rift Valley is a name given to the continuous geographic trench, approximately 6,000 kilometres (3,700 mi) in length that runs from Lebanon’s Beqaa Valley in Asia to Mozambique in South Eastern Africa. The fault-line runs through the Jordan valley and no doubt a minor quake destroyed Jericho and blocked the Jordan River allowing the Israelites to enter the land. The dividing of the Red Sea may also have been caused by such a quake. A devastating quake occurred in the days of Uzziah (when he entered unsolicited into the most holy place) and that is used by the prophet Zechariah (14.5) as an example of the “end time” earthquake.

Suffice to say that this is an order of magnitude greater than anything seen in civilized history—a catastrophic event which opens up a “lake of magma” such as seen on Hawaii where the molten rock breaches the surface. The text speaks about “every island fleeing away” and this indicates huge plate movements. The point being made here is that the only stability is to be found in God, who is our “rock”…even the ground under our feet is unreliable and can be made to move like a wave on the sea.

The destruction of the adversary has overtones of the punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram who challenged the authority of Moses because “the whole congregation is holy” they were subsequently swallowed whole by the earth. On that occasion both fire and plague were used; “And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun” (Num 16.46). Zechariah also describes a plague that consumes peoples flesh, eyes and tongues (Zech 14.12), elements in opposition to God—the flesh of the beast, the eyes of the worshippers and the tongue of the false prophet. The “plague” is sometimes described as a “nuclear war” but that is not the case—it is the glory of Christ that consumes them with eyes like a flame of fire, (Rev 19.12), a tongue like a sword (Rev 19.15) and on his flesh written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19.16).
Babylon is divided into three parts just as she was divided in the days of Peleg (Gen 10.25); Christ has “scattered” the builders of the “tower of Babel” a global enterprise to “make a name for ourselves” to become self-determining…to unify peoples nations and tongues in world-wide-wickedness (www). Every false shrine will fall in Jerusalem, whether it is a church, a mosque, a synagogue or a Jewish temple. The tripartite division of Babylon denotes the punishment of the “unholy trinity” of beast, image worshippers and false prophet but besides Jerusalem (that burdensome stone) the nations are also punished as the cities of the nations fall. Everything man held dear is swept away to make room for a new city –

Revelation 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
Appendix on Psalm 79

“For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy”. (Revelation 16:6)

“Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them”. (Psalm 79:3)

It is always good practice to establish the setting (context) of the allusion as we can be sure that the writer has not randomly chosen to introduce snippets of the Old Testament into his vision without reason. It is not coincidental that the nations of Psalm 79 are promised sevenfold judgment (v.12) mirroring the seven vial-plagues of Revelation 16. This Asaph Psalm is a lament over the destruction of Jerusalem and is often placed in 586 BC when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem. The city is in ruins and the temple defiled (v1), many are dead (vv 2-3) and the land has been laid waste (v7) vv 6-7 of this psalm match Jeremiah 10.25 and this is often offered as supporting evidence that Psalm 79 should be placed in BCE 586. However, the psalm itself uses the older word for kingdom, “mamlakah” in v.6 and that suggests that Jeremiah is quoting the psalm. The objection to this would be that the temple (and city) was never destroyed in earlier history therefore it can only be applicable to 586. This ignores the fact that partial desecration of the temple (and invasion of the land) occurred during the reign of Hezekiah when the city was saved. Jeremiah is known to be a prophet that extensively quoted and alluded to earlier scriptures. Davis observes; “Jer.26:18 is an unusual case where one prophetic book explicitly cites another by name. In this verse, Micah of Moresheth is named when Mic.3:12 is quoted. Micah was written 80-100 years before this event (editor: in the Hezekiah era)….Jeremiah 50-51 is dependent on Isaiah 13-14. Although the Jeremiah 50-51 passage is not clearly dated, Isaiah was born a little less than 100 years before Jeremiah, and the two passages are probably separated by nearly that amount of time. One verse in this passage, Jer. 51:58, shows further the influence of Hab2:13…”

On Jeremiah (c. 627-586 BCE) using the Psalms Holladay comments as follows: “…If the prophet really cites a given psalm, then of course the psalm must predate the prophet; but the problem obviously is to be sure that the borrowing is not the other way around—that the psalmist is not quoting the prophet—or that both texts are not simply conventional language. The matter is best dealt with by examples.
There are two such parallels in the book of Jeremiah to Psalm 1, namely, Jer.12: b-2 and 17:5-8; and in each of them Psalm 1 is deformed in a different way. If both the passages in Jeremiah are genuine to the prophet (and I have become convinced that they are), then the psalm must be prior. Similarly, both Amos 9:2-3 and Jer. 23:23-24 draw on Ps. 139:7-12, and Amos in particular uses the material ironically the psalm must be prior. Even if to a psalm passage there is only a single prophetic parallel, if the prophet (Jeremiah) uses the phraseology ironically, then the psalm is surely prior, irony is not a characteristic of the psalms. Thus Jer. 10:2 5 cites Ps. 79:6-7. The two verses just before the Jeremiah verse in question similarly offer an expansion of Prov. 16:9 and 20:24 and an expansion of Ps. 6:2 (1) or 38:2 (1). These citations, I am convinced, are genuine to Jeremiah: he is citing passages that are repeated by people who are unwilling to accept any covenant responsibility. The psalms in question are therefore prior....In this way I have concluded that sixteen psalms—namely, Psalms 1, 2, 6, 7, 9—10, 22, 35, 38, 63, 64, 78, 79, 83, 84, 122, and 139—are older than Jeremiah.” 72

The setting of Psalm 79 tells us something about Revelation 16 but the reverse is also true. In Rev. 16.15 the saints are gathered (Behold, I come as a thief) avenged and the enemy is destroyed (described in Rev 19) and this approximates the Hezekiah scenario of partial destruction of the land before divine intervention. Thematically Psalm 79 represents a blasphemous challenge issued by Sennacherib and his god (Asshur) against Yahweh (2 Kgs.19.3, Isa.37.3); “Wherefore should the heathen say, ‘Where is their God?’” (Ps.79.10; cf., blasphemed the name of God in Rev 16.9) and is correlated with the challenge in Rev 13.4: “Who is able to make war with him?” This was Sennacherib’s boast --- no other nations “gods” were able to prevent defeat against the all powerful Asshur and his mouthpiece (false prophet) Sennacherib/Rabshakeh (2 Kgs.18.33-35). We have then two texts (Exodus 12-24 and Psalm 79) related to theomachy --- a contest between Yahweh and his true witnesses against the beast (“gods”) and his witnesses (the false prophet). It should come as no surprise then that the chapter concerned with witnessing (Rev. 11) also extensively alludes to Psalm 79.
Old Testament and Extrabiblical Literature

The table below contains more allusions and verbal parallels in the Old Testament and extrabiblical Literature but it is not exhaustive. It does not contain links within Revelation or within the wider NT and no doubt misses other OT links.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rev</th>
<th>Old Testament and Extrabiblical Literature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16:6</td>
<td>Ps. 79:3; Isa. 49:26</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:7</td>
<td>Ps.19:9; 119:137; Amos 3:13 LXX; 4:13 LXX</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:10</td>
<td>Exod.10:21; Isa.8:22</td>
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<td>16:12</td>
<td>Isa.11:15; 44:27; Jer.50:38; 51:36</td>
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<td>16:16</td>
<td>Judg.5:19; 2 Kings 9:27; 23:29; Zech.12:11</td>
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<td>16:17</td>
<td>Isa.66:6</td>
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<td>16:18</td>
<td>Exod.19:16–19; Esther 1:1d LXX; Dan.12:1</td>
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<td>16:19</td>
<td>Ps.75:8; Isa.51:17,22; Jer. 25:15</td>
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<td>16:21</td>
<td>Exod. 9:24</td>
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</table>
1 So Aune, *Ibid., Rev* 6-16,p.868
2 Identical and equal are very often used synonymously. However, sometimes identical is meant to say that the two things are not just equal, but actually are syntactically equal. Equivalence is a strictly weaker notion than equality. It can be formalized in many different ways (for instance, as an equivalence relation). The identity relation is always an equivalence relation, but not the other way around. Isomorphism is a specific term from category theory. Two objects are isomorphic if there exists an invertible morphism between them. Informally, two isomorphic objects are identical for the purposes of answering any question about them in their category.
3 Ambiguity and repetitive action implies isomorphism see Rev 17 page 365 [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/html/ch17.html"]
4 Think here of the last section of an instrumental musical composition i.e., a symphony with four movements: an allegro, which by this point was in what is called sonata form, complete with exposition, development, and recapitulation that reaches a crescendo (with God as the conductor).
5 There is a last challenge at the end of the 1,000 years but the wicked are consumed and the rebellion is cut short -- the “end of history” (as we know it) occurs before the start of the millennium.
6 The retribution is first against Israel then against the Gentiles: “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate” (Dan 9:27). Ray observes; “The choice of ‘is poured out’ (קִטְקָא [qitaq], a Qal imperfect) as the verb reminds the reader of ‘flood’ in v. 26. It can be used figuratively (Job 10:10) or literally (Ex. 9:33)”. Ray, Charles H., “A Study of Daniel 9:24-17, Part II” in the Conservative Theological Journal, vol. 5 no. 16 (Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Theological Seminary, December 2001), 212. Now the Gentiles are punished: “Pour out Your fury on the Gentiles, who do not know you, and on the families who do not call on your name; for they have eaten up Jacob, devoured him and consumed him, and made his dwelling place desolate” (Jer. 10:25).
7 See the excurses on Psalm 79 at the end of this article and the comparison between Psalm 79 and Rev 11 in Chapter 11 page 208 [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/html/ch11.html"]
8 A play on the name of Michael--- Who is like God?
9 Yahweh “has no god with him” but the reincarnated beast has the false prophet (lamb with two horns)
10 For other allusions see; *Old Testament and Extrabiblical Literature* at the end of this chapter.
13 Note the previous occasion when a similar event occurred: *Genesis 12:17* “And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram’s wife”.
14 The “life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev. 17:11).
16 *Matthew 13:6* “And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away”.
17 However, according to Mills, “This plague will apparently affect the whole of mankind, including the saints alive at the time (Rev. 7.16).”—Monty S. Mills, *Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John* (Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries, 1987), Rev. 16.8.
18 Ha Young Son, *Praising God beside the Sea: An Intertextual Study of Revelation 15 and Exodus 15*, (Wipf and Stock, 2017),74 including footnotes below.
20 Ford, *Revelation*, 274 Beale also clearly mentioned that these references are all “in descriptions of the exodus plague”. Beale, *Revelation*, 832.
22 Beckwith argued the reference to frogs is taken from some mythological tradition (e.g., Persian mythology) rather than from the Egyptian plague tradition. He said, “The loathsome appearance of the frog makes the representation appropriate; possibly it is suggested by the Egyptian plague, Ex. 8,6, but this seems remote. It is more likely that the idea is taken from some mythological tradition. The frog figures in Persian mythology (Volter *Offinb. 114*).” Beckwith, *Apocalypsis*, 683-84. However, his argument loses persuasion when considering the usages of “frogs” in the OT and in the Jewish literature (as Beale and Ford argued) and considering the whole context of the trumpet and bowl judgments (as Beale argued). Beckwith suggested another allusive source of Rev 16:13. Although the features that came out of the mouth of a beast are different from frogs, “A certain parallel to this passage is found in Hermas V.6. IV. 1, 6, where fiery locusts are seen coming out of the mouth of a fabulous beast” Beckwith, *Apocalypsis*, 684; cf. Aune, *Revelation* 6-16,894.
Coincidently (sic) in Rev 17.11 the Scarlet beast is represented as an “eighth” using exactly the same Greek word ὃδεος (ogoos).


Acheron was the god of the underworld river and lake of pain. The daimon Kharon (Charon) ferried the souls of the dead across its dark waters in his skiff.


For the idea that swans sing just before death, cp. Plato Phædo 85b; cp. Aristophanes Birds 769-784; Euripides IT 1104.

cp. Moorton on the liminality of frogs: “Aristophanes’ amphibians incorporate a duality that embraces both life and death and the ridiculous and the sublime, situated as they are on the dividing line between them. Likewise, the identification of the frogs with swans, which in popular belief sing only at the moment of death, is particularly appropriate to the frogs, singing eternally on the threshold of death.” (Moorton, 1989, p. 313.)

The KJV frequently renders the word as “devils” but it should be “demons”.

Some of the inter-texts that Perry employs to establish the case: Destroy us (Deut 1.27, Luke 4.34), Leave us alone (Luke 4.34, Exod 14.12), Hold your peace (Luke 4.35, Exod 14.14), Nations/Crowd amazed (Luke 4.36, Exod 15.21), (2) It was accused of or planning to destroy the temple (Matt 26.61) and the Jews maintained they had never been in bondage (John 8.33). See Andrew Perry, Demons Magic and Medicine, (Willow Publications, 1999),91-105

Ibid, Aune, Revelation 6:16-6:195

Although stone appears in Gen 35.14 (וקְנָא) it is in the feminine form (describes Jacob’s pillar) however the second occurrence in Exod 24.12 is the adjective accusative neuter plural, similar to Rev 9.20.

The context of ritual cleanliness suggests temple vessels

Solomon the temple builder loved many women i.e., entered into covenant agreements and was led astray cf. the great whore committing fornication with the kings of the earth.

In the book of Daniel (located in Babylon), Nebuchadnezzar makes an image which he commands everyone to worship. Nebuchadnezzar himself is transformed into a beast. See, P. Wynn, God is Judge, (Biblaridion Media, 2011) Chapter 5 page 75 {HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/daniel/danhtml/dch5.html"}

BibleWorks NT (NA27) has the Greek word for animal or beast instead of bird the same Greek word (beast) is used in the LXX of Dan 4.16 and in Dan 7.19 (x2), v.23

Isa.13.19-22. Babylon would become a place for “wild beasts of the desert” note especially the “satyr” which can denote a “hairy goat” or a “goat-demon” (Lev.17.7) possibly connected with the scapegoat carrying national sin.

Jesus alludes to the feast of unleavened bread when it was customary to sweep the house clean of leaven (spring clean): see Exod 12.15 (Jesus swept the money changers out the temple before Passover) and the Day of Atonement when the scapegoat was sent into the wilderness (The “dry place” being Babylonian exile).

For an analysis of Legion typology see chapter 11 page 227 {HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/html/ch11.html"}

Older translations have “scapegoat” but modern translations render the term as a proper noun “Azazel”.

NetBible Lev.18.6: The meaning of the Hebrew term יְרֵצֵי (aza‘el, four times in the OT, all of them in this chapter; vv. 8, 10 [2 times], and 26) is much debated. There are three or perhaps four major views (see the summaries and literatures cited in J. Milgrom, Leviticus [AB], 1:1020-21; B. A. Levine, Leviticus [JPSTC], 102; J. E. Hartley, Leviticus [WBC], 237-38; D. P. Wright, The Disposal of Impurity [SBLDS], 21-25; M. V. Van Pelt and W. C. Kaiser, NIDOTTE 3:362-63; and M. S. Moore, NIDOTTE 4:421-22). (1) Some derive the term from a combination of the Hebrew word יְעַז (ez, “goat”; i.e., the word for “goats” in v. 5) and יְרֵצֵי (aza‘el, “to go away”), meaning “the goat that departs” or “scapegoat” (cf., e.g., the LXX and KJV, NASB, NIV, NLT). This meaning suits the ritual practice of sending the so-called “scapegoat” away into the wilderness (vv. 10, 21-22, 26). Similarly, some derive the term from Arabic ‘azala (“to banish, remove”), meaning “entire removal” as an abstract concept (see BDB 736 s.v. יָרְצוֹן). (2) Some see the term as a description of the wilderness area to which the goat was dispatched, deriving it somewhat from Arabic ‘azuu (“rough ground”) or perhaps IFU, “aza‘az, “to be strong, fierce”).

The most common view among scholars today is that it is the proper name of a particular demon (perhaps even the Devil himself) associated with the wilderness desert regions. Levine has proposed that it may perhaps derive from a reduplication of the ת (zayin) in IFU combined with יְרֵצ (el, “mighty”), meaning “mighty goat.” The final consonantal form of יְרֵצֵי would have resulted from the inversion of the כ (aleph) with the second ת. He makes the point that the close association between IFU and דָּרֶנָשִׁים (shy‘irim), which seems to refer to “goat-demons” of the desert in Lev 17:7 (cf. Isa 13:21, etc.), should not be ignored in the derivation of Azazel, although the term ultimately became the name of “the demonic ruler of the wilderness.” The latter view is supported by the parallel between the one goat “for (א, lamed preposition) the Lord” and the one “for (א) Azazel” here in v. 8. The rendering as a proper name has been tentatively accepted here (cf. ASV, NAB, NRSV, TEV, CEV). Perhaps a play on words between the proper name and the term for “goat” has occurred so that the etymology has become obscure.
Even if a demon or the demonic realm is the source for the name, however, there is no intention here of appeasing the demons. The goal is to remove the impurity and iniquity from the community in order to avoid offending the Lord and the repercussions of such (see esp. vv. 21-22 and cf. Lev 15:31).


44 “The spelling נזאועז occurs in the Samaritan Pentateuch and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The most basic meaning of the word נֶזֶעַ and its synonym נֶזֶעַת is ‘strength, fierceness’, which, in particular contexts, becomes an expression to describe God’s powerful wrath as a retribution for sin (Ps 66,3; 90,11; Isa 42,25; Ezra 8,22),” Jacqueline C.R. De Roo, Was the Goat for Azazel Destined for the Wrath of God? (Biblica 81 2000), 233-242 [HYPERLINK “https://www.bsw.org/biblica/vol-81-2000-was-the-goat-for-azazel-destined-for-the-wrath-of-god/286/”] The name in Leviticus is נזאועז in b.Yoma 67b נזאועז and נזאועז in 4QEnc it is נזאוע in the Greek Gizeh text it is Aseal; Syneculus has Azazel; the Ethiopic Enoch has Aseal at 6.7 but Azazel in the Similitudes at 69.2; 4QEnGiants has נזאועז the same form as Leviticus, whereas 4Q 180 has נזאועז.

45 D.J. Stökl in Sacrifice in religious experience ed. Albert I. Baumgarten p. 218

46 See the parable told by Jesus (Luke 11:21-26 // Mk.3:29-30 // Mt.12:22-37) where he specifically refers to a strong (the word man is in italics and is therefore not present in the original Greek).

47 Several distinguished students of the apocalyptic traditions have previously discerned that some details of Assael’s punishment are reminiscent of the scapegoat ritual. Later rabbinic materials also link the sacrificial animal known from the scapegoat ritual to the story of the angelic rebels. Lester Grabbe points to another important piece of evidence – a fragmentary text from the Book of Giants found at Qumran (4Q203). In this document the punishment for all the sins of the fallen angels is placed on Azazel. Daniel Stökl also observes that “the punishment of the demon resembles the treatment of the goat in aspects of geography, action, time and purpose. Andrei Orlov, Azazel as the Celestial Scapegoat an excerpt from A. Orlov “The Eschatological Yom Kippur in the Apocalypse of Abraham: Part I: The Scapegoat Ritual,” in: Symbola Caelestis. Le symbolisme liturgique et paraliturgique dans le monde Chrétien (Scrinium, 5; eds. A. Orlov and B. Lourié; Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2009) 79-111.

48 Kelley Cobbentz Bautch admits that, “The location and even the identity of Dudael are enigmatic” Kelley Cobbentz Bautch, A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17-19: No One Has Seen What I Have Seen, (Brill, 2003), 138. Dudael is sometimes referred to by other names. Yoma 6:8 of the Mishnah refers to the place as Beth Hadudo (בֵית הָהָדוּד) which literally means ‘house of his piercing.’ The second word comes from the root hadud (חְדוּד Strongs 2300), meaning ‘to be sharp’. Beth Hadud is probably based on some clever Hebrew wordplay, for in Enoch 10.5 Azazel is tossed upon rough and jagged rocks, and the root hadud sounds similar to dadud. In later times the scapegoat ritual was corrupted and the goat was cast of a cliff probably because the Jews wanted to prevent the goat (bearing the nation’s sins) returning to the temple. The scapegoat was not meant to be killed but merely exiled as it represented the nation and the nation could return if it repented. Rabbinic literature states; “So would the crowd, called Babylonians or Alexandrians, pull the goat’s hair to make it hasten forth, carrying the burden of sins away with it (Yoma vi. 4, 666); “Epistle of Barnabas,” vii.), and the arrival of the shattered animal at the bottom of the valley of the rock of Bet Hadudo, twelve miles away from the city, was signalized by the waving of shawls on the hills” (Yoma vi. 6, 8; Ta’an. iv. 8). It is interesting that in Daniel 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threecubes cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. This reminds us of the “image” of the “beast” (Nebuchadnezzar was transformed into a beast) and it had dimensions of 60x60 cubits (reminiscence of 666). It is possible that the writers of the apocrypha based Dudael on Dura. The Hebrew letters ד (ט) and ט (ט) are very similar and are often confused and Dura in Babylon (ד[ע]ר[א]ב) could easily be transformed into dd[ל[כ]][ל] thus the dd[ל] cryptically referencing bbl (ב[ל]ל[כ][ל]). Opposite placed Dura to the Southeast of Babylon, near a small river and mounds bearing the name of Douair or Duair, where, also, was what seemed to be the base of a great statue (Exped. scientifique en Mesopotamie, 1, 238). Others have believed the name to indicate a portion of the actual site of Babylon within the great wall of the city-perhaps the rampart designated Dur Su-anna, “the rampart (of the city) Lofty-defence,” a name of Babylon. Therefore the plain of Dura in the province or district of Babylon (בֵּית הָהָדוּד), was most likely in the vicinity of the city and “dura” as in “the plain of the dur” or “rampart” points to a place within the city or possibly to the historical location of the earlier tower of Babel. In their depiction of the banishment of Azazel the apocryphal writers may have been influenced by the mythical Sumerian gods. The main temple to Enki (whose chief symbol is a goat) is called E-abzu, meaning “abzu temple” (“house of the abyss” i.e., the subterranean waters), depicted by a zigzag temple surrounded by Euphrates marshlands near the ancient Persian Gulf coastline at Eridu. In the later Babylonian epic (Enûma Eliš), Enki puts a spell on Abzu (the “begetter of the gods”) thereby confining him deep underground. Enki subsequently sets up his home “in the depths of the Abzu.”


50 James L. Resseguie, The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary, (Baker Academic), 209
51 Although a natural rock formation it is called the foundation stone by the Jews.

52 Mounce, [ibid, Revelation, 297 fn.36] notes: Kiddle interprets the darkness as “the darkness of civil strife 321), while Caird understands it as the total eclipse of the monster’s imperial power” (204). He goes on to call the last three plagues a “triumph of political disaster” — internal anarchy, invasion, and irreparable collapse (204). As the first three plagues fell on the elements of nature, the last three are “directed against the forces of deception and persecution” (Sweet, 246).

53 Barker offers a completely preterist interpretation of the plague—vials and refers to Josephus and extra biblical literature. Although our interpretation of the plague—vials lies in the future the past pattern is important for establishing precedents. Barker says; “The fifth plague was the destruction of the temple, which was no longer the place of the heavenly throne (cf. Ps. 11.4) but had become the throne of ‘the Angel of Darkness’ (1QS III), of Satan, ‘the Angel of Malevolence who rules in darkness’ (1QM Xlii), and so of his earthly manifestation, the beast. The temple became a place of darkness, not light. Men gnawed their tongues in anguish (16.10). Josephus described how the famine was at its most acute in the days immediately before the temple was burned: ‘Necessity drove the victims to gnaw anything and objects which even the filthiest of brute beasts would reject they condescended to collect and eat: thus in the day they abstained not from belts and shoes and stripped off and chewed the very leather of their bucklers. Others devoured tufts of withered grass’ (War 6.197—98). One woman ate her own child” Margaret Barker, Revelation of Jesus Christ: Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place (A&C Black, 2000), 270.

54 As some point out (Mounce 1998: 300, from Bruce 1969: 657), a member of the temple police caught asleep had his clothes stripped and burned, and he was sent off naked and in disgrace.


56 Osborne [p.578] comments: “The “loud voice” is then heard in Revelation (1:10; 5:2, 12; 6:10; 7:2, 10; 8:13; 10:3; 11:12,15; 12:10; 14:7,9, 15, 18; 19:17; 21:3); and while it sometimes speaks “from heaven” (11:12, 15; 12:10; 14:2, 13), the only times it speaks “from the temple” are here and in 16:17, undoubtedly due to the temple scene in 15:5–8. Many (Beckwith, Beasley-Murray, Prigent, Mounce, Wall, Beale, Aune) believe that this is the voice of God and that there is an echo of Isa. 66:6 LXX, in which Isaiah tells the righteous remnant among the nation to “hear the voice from the temple, a voice from the Lord repaving his enemies all they deserve.” Since only God is in the temple (15:8), it must he who speaks”.


58 Ibid, Osborne, 592

59 To make Greek; give a Greek form to; Hellenize

60 Rob Dalrymple, Understanding Eschatology: Why it Matters, 159


62 Walt Kelly, “We have met the enemy and he is us”.

63 Michael Barber, Coming Soon: Unlocking the Book of Revelation and Applying Its Lessons Today, (Emmaus Road Publishing, 2006), 202-203 including footnote 14

64 James E. Smith, Ph.D., Dictionary of Figures in the Book of Revelation, (Lulu, 2011), 14

65 Zechariah 12:11: In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.

66 The word mgd has no entry in NIDOTTE. BibleWorks has the Origin coming from an unused root probably meaning to be eminent; TWOT - 1144a; n m. Gesenius remarks that the Hebrew letters m and n are often interchangeable and suggests that the unused root mgd (4021) is related to ngid (5057) for prince, therefore denoting something that is chief or noble, hence mgd 4022 something very precious or noble. Without later vowel pointing the form can be found in m.mgd (Deut 33.13), u.m.mgd (Deut 33.14), u.m.mgd (Deut 33.16), m.mgd (Song 4.13), mgdi.u (Song 4.16), mgd (Song 7.13[14]). Grateful acknowledgment to Robin Bell for this insight.

67 Deuteronomy 33:15a: And for the chief things (mged) of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills


69 Evidence for this earthquake has been uncovered by the archaeologists spade throughout Israel and Jordan. Graphic evidence can be seen at Hazor and Ein Hazeva (Biblical Tamar). The earthquake measured an 8.2 on the Richter scale and the location was the Beka Valley, in present day Lebanon. Steven A. Austin, Gordon W. Franz, and Eric G. Frost, “Amos’s Earthquake: An Extraordinary Middle East Seismic Event of 750 B.C.” International Geology Review 42 (2000) 657-671. Yadin and Finkelstein date the earthquake level at Hazor to 760 BC (plus or minus 25 years) based on stratigraphic analysis of the destruction debris (Y. Yadin, Hazor, the Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible (New York: Random House, 1975). I. Finkelstein, “Hazor and the North in the Iron Age: A Low Chronology Perspective,” Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research 314
Both are cited in Austin et al., “Amos’s Earthquake,” 658. Similarly, Ussishkin dated the “sudden destruction” level at Lachish to approximately 760 BC. (D. Ussishkin, “Lachish” in E. Stern, ed., The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993) vol. 1, 338-342, cited in Austin et al., “Amos’s Earthquake,” 660). This article employs the date 750BC, however, any suggested dates for the earthquake draw on a combination of historical, biblical and archaeoseismological evidence and therefore precision is difficult and we should probably speak of a dating range around the mid 8th century. See, David Danzig, A Contextual Investigation of Archaeological and Textual Evidence for a Purported mid-8th Century BCE Levantine Earthquake, 2011 in which he offers a fair minded critique of the methodology of archaeoseismology as related to the book of Amos. Interestingly he lists 40 references or allusions to the earthquake in the book of Amos. Danzig distinguishes theophanic, phenomenological and literal language. The epicentre seems to have been near the temple (the Beth-el sanctuary?), contra Zechariah seems to draw on the effects that it had on Jerusalem during Uzziah’s reign. Danzig finds the biblical evidence strong but the archaeoseismological evidence inconclusive.

On this see: P. Wyns, The Problem of the Destruction of the Temple page 521 in the addendum to God is Judge {HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/daniel/danhtml/addendum.html"}


Chapter 17

The mother of harlots

More than any other chapter Revelation 17 has been used to support the interpretation that the Apocalypse is about the apostate Christian church. The interpretive crux is Rev 17.9 where the woman is depicted as sitting on seven Mountains as this is usually understood as referring to the city of Rome located on seven hills. However, this neglects the fact that she also sits on a seven headed beast, on many waters and is also found in the wilderness. Moreover, it fails to explain John’s amazement at the fact that the beast had at some past stage been wounded to death and consigned to the abyss. The dead beast miraculously reappeared.

Of course, it is pointed out that the Roman Empire disintegrated and was replaced by the Holy Roman Empire with Papal Rome exercising control over Europe. But nowhere in history has a nation disappeared and re-emerged more than once. The Jews returned from the Babylonian abyss in the sixth century BCE and re-established temple worship. The nation was again consigned to the abyss in the first and early second century CE when it attempted to establish temple worship under the false messiah (Bar Kochba). Rather than repentance, Judaism underwent a renaissance --- rabbinic apostasy reached new heights in Babylon with the writing of the Babylonian Talmud a development that continued unabated for centuries. And now, once again, the dead nation has emerged from the wilderness of the peoples. This is a recurring pattern. Are we about to see the harlot riding on the beast?
The structure of Revelation 17

An overview of the structure of Rev 17 is helpful for determining interpretive focal points and many commentaries offer structural analysis of varying benefit, usually concentrating on micro-chiasms to the detriment of the “big picture” macro-chiasm. An example of one such micro-chiasm is Rev 17.3-6:

A I saw a woman seated on a scarlet beast (17.3) (ἐἶδον γυναῖκα)
B that was covered with blasphemous names (17.3) (ὀνόματα)
B' On her forehead was written a name, which is a mystery (17.5) (ὄνομα)
A' When I saw her I was greatly amazed.(17.6) (ἐἶδον τὴν γυναῖκα)

Rev 17 has a number of micro-chiasms but a macro-chiasm is more informative, with the spiral or concentric structure allowing an outline of the nature of the narrative. The following macro-chiasm is (as far as I am aware) not to be found in the commentaries and consists of primary and secondary concentric patterns (no doubt encapsulating other micro-chiasms as per the example above). The chiasm has been constructed thematically, without attention to the underlying Greek.

Revelation 17 Macro Chiasm

A Great Harlot (17.1)
  (a) Sits on many waters (17.1)
B Fornicates with kings (17.2)
  (b) Drunk with wine (17.2)
     (a') Sits on scarlet beast (17.3)
C Names of blasphemy (17.3, 5)
D Martyrs of Jesus (17.6)
     (b') Drunk with blood (17.6)
E Beast was, and is not (17.8) = 7 kings v.10 (First century)
E' Beast was, and is not (17.11) = eight head v.11-13 (Future)
D' Lamb overcomes (17.14)
C' King of Kings (17.14)
  (a) The waters=nations (17.15)
B' Destroyed by Kings (17.16)
A' Great City (17.18)
The pattern allows us a good oversight of this complex chapter with the spiral concentrating a focal point on the beast (E E'), with either side (D D') the beast overcoming the martyrs corresponding with the Lamb overcoming the beast and (C C') the names of blasphemy matched with the name of Christ who is Lord of Lords and King of Kings. The secondary chiasm has the structure a b a' b' a –

\[
\begin{align*}
  a & \text{ Sits on may waters (17.1)} \\
  b & \text{ Drunk with wine (17.2)} \\
  a' & \text{ Sits on Scarlet beast (17.3)} \\
  b' & \text{ Drunk with blood (17.6)} \\
  a & \text{ The waters=nations (17.15)}
\end{align*}
\]

Notably missing from this chiasm is \textbf{Sits on Mountains (17.9)} which would alter the chiasm into a b a' b' a' a –

\[
\begin{align*}
  a & \text{ Sits on may waters (17.1)} \\
  b & \text{ Drunk with wine (17.2)} \\
  a' & \text{ Sits on Scarlet beast (17.3)} \\
  b' & \text{ Drunk with blood (17.6)} \\
  a'^{} & \text{ Sits on Mountains (17.9)} \\
  a & \text{ The waters=nations (17.15)}
\end{align*}
\]

The resulting chiasm is not as elegant; with (17.9) more of an after-thought disrupting the balanced \textbf{ababa} pattern.

Aune suggests\textsuperscript{1} that the “seven heads and ten horns” of 17.3 was employed as an interpolation to describe the dragon of 12.3 and although we disagree with that proposal his observations promote further useful investigation into the links between Rev 12 and Rev17:
“Since the dragon is described using imagery that is not further exploited or even referred to in the rest of this vision [Rev 12], it appears to be a redactional interpolation from 17:3 (note this clause can be omitted without disrupting the sequence of thought), for only in that context are the seven heads and ten horns actually interpreted (17:9-14). Seven heads and ten horns are also attributed to the beast mentioned in 13:1 (here θηρίον, “beast”, is anarthrous even though he has already been mentioned in 11:7), but this figure is clearly differentiated from the dragon to whom he is subordinate (13:3). A beast with seven heads and ten heads is again mentioned in 17:3, but since the term for θηρίον in 17:3 is anarthrous, it appears clear that either two different beasts are in view or the author did not successfully conceal his sources. Here [Rev 12] the dragon has seven heads and ten horns, with seven diadems on his heads (i.e., the conclusion is inescapable that each of the diadem heads must, at least originally, have symbolized a ruler, while in 13:1 the beast has ten horns and seven heads with ten diadems on his horns. The reference to ten horns is an allusion to Dan 7:7, 20, 24, where they are interpreted to mean ten kings.”

Aune notes that in 13.1 “beast” is anarthrous (literally reads: “out-of-the-sea beast up-stepping) because “beast” has already been mentioned in 11.7 (literally reads: the beast the one-up-stepping out of the abyss), Rev 17.3 is also anarthrous (literally reads: woman sitting-on beast scarlet). Aune is correct in suggesting that two different beasts are in view, namely, the sea beast of 13.1 is not the scarlet beast of 17.3. Turning to his hypothesis regarding interpolation we can perform a transposition and perhaps offer an explanation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revelation 12</th>
<th>Revelation 17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.</td>
<td>3-7 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev 17.9-10 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short time.</td>
<td>8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-11 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born...</td>
<td>Rev 17.9-10 interpolated in Rev 12 (see opposite)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.</td>
<td>11 And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness</td>
<td>12 The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.</td>
<td>13 These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aune presents an argument that the “seven heads and ten horns” in 12.3 are a redactional interpolation from 17.3 because it is only in 17.9-10 that we are given the explanation. In fact, the opposite is true because when verses 9-10 from chapter 17 are interpolated between verse 3 and 4 of Rev 12, then both Rev 12 and Rev 17 are improved. Moreover, the secondary chiasm discovered in Rev 17 above (a b a' b' a) achieves harmony with the focal point of the concentric spiral becoming the woman on the scarlet beast (17.3). That said, the fact that we have no textual variants that attest to such a redaction or dislocation suggests that we are dealing with a parenthetical analepsis. To summarise – the dragon of 12.3 and the beast of 17.3 are two different beasts but they are in some ways similar (red/scarlet). The dragon transfers its authority to the sea-beast in Rev 13 and in Rev 17 the kings transfer their authority to the harlot. John is both confused and amazed because the dragon was thrown out of heaven and the sea-beast was judged in Rev 14 leading to the victory song of Rev 15. However, in the wilderness vision John sees another beast emerging from the same place where the “woman” was nourished in 12.14. It is clear then that Rev.17.9-10 functions as a parenthetical “flashback” to Rev 12 so that John (and his readers) can orient themselves within vision-space-time.
Seven Kings (Rev 17.10a)

“There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is…”

A chronological placer is given— the one that is — (who is the sixth king) but we are directed away from thinking of the seven contemporary rulers who were present when Christ appeared (Idumans, High Priests and Romans) who are enumerated in Luke 3.1-2 (the seven crowns of the dragon) and are being told to focus solely on the related Roman (seven Mountains) aspect of the dragon, unlike Luke these are not contemporary rulers but a succession (five fallen) of Roman Caesars. The one that is — is John’s immediate concern because the one that is would launch a vicious persecution and the one that is was to all intents and purposes still cooperating with (and part of) the dragon system and under the same influences as previous first century Roman authorities who were manipulated by the hierocratic and aristocratic elites of Judea to exercise power on their behalf (more on this anon).

The count of successive kings is therefore commenced from the first Caesar⁶ making the sixth emperor Nero Caesar (54–68 CE). Nero was last of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Coincidently (sic), the count from the first Herod makes Herod Agrippa II (48–c. 92 CE) the sixth (and last Herod). And if the count only tallies the direct descendants of the sacerdotal family of Ananus⁷ (also mentioned in Luke 3.1-2) then the sixth (and last of this dynasty) is Ananus ben Ananus (in 63 CE).⁸ The sixth dynastic or political successor whether they are of priestly, Roman or Idumean descent overlap in the chronological range of 54-63 CE which is before the fall of the temple.

Moreover, the sixth Caesar Nero (54 - 68 CE) coincides with the sequence of seals that commence at the crucifixion (with the fifth seal showing the slain under the altar, crying out, How long?) supports a Nero date during, or just before the great persecution. With each of the seals representing a seven year period the fifth seal commences⁹ in 59 CE and ends in 66 CE, covering the Neronian ¹⁰ Christian persecution and the start of the Jewish Roman War that saw the fall of the Jerusalem temple.
The Other King (Rev 17.10b)

“……the other has not yet come.
And when he comes, he must continue a short time”

The phrasing is deliberately vague. The “other” is not necessarily the next sequential Roman Caesar as the Greek ὅταν ἔλθῃ (hotan elthE) literally reads, “whenever he may be coming” which implies ambiguity and repetitive action as we saw at the beginning of the trumpet section, “whenever (hotan) he opened” (8.1) and even the witnessing, “whenever (hotan) they finish their testimony” (11.7). In fact the “other” is not necessarily even a Roman Caesar, although the other is a future aspect of the dragon-system seen in Rev 12. How do we know this? Because the parenthesis in Rev 17 directs us back to Rev 12 and the dragon who is cast out of heaven transfers his authority to the sea-beast and the inhabitants of the earth and sea are warned (Woe, Rev 12.12) because the dragon, in the guise of his proxy (the sea beast) only has a short time:

…because he knoweth that he hath but a short time (12.12)

....to continue forty and two months (13.5)

....he must continue a short time (17.10)

The revolt of Bar Kochba and his attempt to restore temple worship lasted 3½ years and during this period Jewish Christians were persecuted. The transition from a sequence of six Roman Emperors to a false Jewish messiah (the other) some sixty odd years after Nero does seem rather strange but this is because the polyvalence of the symbology causes exegetical confusion. If the symbology only refers to Rome, why would it require special wisdom? Verse 9 tells us that we need wisdom to interpret this passage. However, Johnson states, “Any Roman soldier who knew Greek could figure out that the seven hills referred to Rome. But whenever divine wisdom is called for, the description requires theological and symbolical discernment, not mere geographical or numerical insight.” 11 Perhaps more than one meaning is possible?
Polyvalent Symbols

Osborne writes, “At the outset, the angel identifies the seven heads with “seven mountains,” a phrase often used for Rome in the ancient world because it was built on seven hills (see Cicero, *Att. 6.5*; Pliny, *Nat. Hist. 3.66–67*; et al). The city began with an amalgamation of groups living on the seven hills (Aventine, Caelian, Capitoline, Equiline, Palatine, Quirinal, Viminal), and during Domitian’s reign a festival (the *Septimontium*) celebrated it.” Robert Mounce writes, “There is little doubt that a first-century reader would understand this reference in any way other than as a reference to Rome, the city built upon seven hills.”

However, the obvious reference to Rome is after further examination not as clear cut as some would wish. Rome is built on seven hills not on seven mountains. Johnson writes, “In the seven other instances of the word *orē* in Revelation, it is always rendered ‘mountain,’ except here in 17:9, where it is translated ‘hills.’ Is this a case where previous exegesis has influenced even the best translations?”

(NASB) The seven heads are *seven mountains* on which the woman sits.

(ESV) The seven heads are *seven mountains* on which the woman is seated.

(NIV) The seven heads are *seven hills* on which the woman sits.

(NLT) The seven heads of the beast represent the *seven hills* where the woman rules.

The different versions are not always consistent, for example ὀροὺς (orous) is rendered “hill” in nearly all the translations of Matt 5.14 with the exception of the YLT (Mount) and the CLV (Mountain). The saying in Matt 5.14 is clearly a reference to Mount Zion and should not be rendered hill. However, the occasions where this occurs are rare and usually the context shows whether “hill” or “mountain” is appropriate. It is true that ancient Roman historians refer to the “seven hills of Rome” but their works are recorded in Latin. Where we have comparative Greek texts the seven hills describing Rome becomes ἑπτὰ-λόφος (epta lofos) as compared with ἑπτὰ ὀρη (epta orē) in Rev 17.3.
The noun λοφος does not even occur in the Bible and it is not as though the NT or the Greek LXX cannot distinguish between hills and mountains; “Then shall they begin to say to the mountains (ὀρεσιν) oaks, Fall on us; and to the hills (βουνοῖς) mountains, Cover us” (Luke 23.30). We would expect ἑπτὰ βουνοῖς for seven hills not ἑπτὰ ὄρη.17 On the other hand “mountain” is well know biblical idiom for a Kingdom or Empire (Ps 30.7, Zech 4.7, Dan 2.35) and of particular interest is a reference to Babylon:

“Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, who destroys the whole earth,” declares the Lord, “And I will stretch out My hand against you, and roll you down from the crags, and I will make you a burnt out mountain”. (Jer 51.25)

Jeremiah is also used as inter-text for the second trumpet of Rev 8.8 as “the great mountain burning with fire cast into the sea” which forms a doublet with the third trumpet (burning star falling onto waters etc). It was concluded in the exposition of the second and third trumpets that they represented a judgement of the Jews in Babylonia and on their lucrative trade. Babylon actually fell during this trumpet period (101-116 CE) and this spurred on revolts throughout the Diaspora. Towards the end of his ministry Jesus compared the nation to a barren fig tree that he had cursed and exhorted the disciples that with faith they could remove the temple Mount (70CE) and cast it into the sea (Matt 21.21). Therefore the “sixth seal” (fig tree + mountains) concerning the fall of Jerusalem (70CE) and the doublet of the second and third trumpets (which describe the economic and literal fall of Babylon ending in 116CE) establishes a thematic link (mountain/sea) between Jerusalem and Babylon. This should not surprise us there are historical and religious reasons why Jerusalem and Babylon are two sides of the same coin.

It is often pointed out that Mesopotamia is an alluvial and sedimentary plain and therefore the metaphor of “sitting on mountains” is geographically unsuited to such level terrain but this ignores the fact that the region was known for its Sacred Mountains in the form of Ziggurats such as the tower of Babel. Wightman states that; “Ziqqurats were, quite literally, the ‘high temples’ of Mesopotamia. The name derives from the Akkadian word zaqaru, meaning ‘highly built’. The ziqqurat was a sacred mountain [emphasis mine]. Mesopotamian texts speak of ziqqurats in precisely these terms. The sanctuary of Enlil at Nippur, for example, was called house of the mountain’ (E-dur) or ‘mountain of the storm’, while its ziqqurat was called Dur-anki, ‘mountain [between] heaven and earth’”.18
There were at least 25 of these “Mountains” throughout Mesopotamia, especially in important cities like Babylon, Nineveh and Ur so it is not difficult to find seven “mountains” that represent the kingdoms of Babylonia especially as the term Babylon captured all other cities, becoming virtually synonymous with Nineveh, Eridu… etc. Sayce notes that, “An Assyrian king, however powerful he might be, could not claim the imperial title until he had ‘taken the hands of Bel’ and thereby been adopted as a son by the god of Babylon. Indeed it was only in this way that usurpers like Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon obtained any recognition of their legitimate right to the throne. The sanction of religion remained with Babylon, though the sword had passed to Assyria”. Moreover, the Euphrates was called Pura-nun, or ‘great water,’ in Sumerian, and was frequently known as simply the Pura or ‘Water’….and… the whole country was intersected by canals, and carefully irrigated by means of machines. The canals thus regulated the supply of water and enabled it to be carried beyond the reach of the rivers. The two principal canals were called the Nahar-Malcha or Royal River and the Pallacopas (Pallukat in the inscriptions)….and….the spirit of the water, who had been its special object of adoration, became the culture-god Ea, the lord of the abyss, who is called Oannes in the Greek history of Bêrôssos and was believed to have been the author of Babylonian culture” (Op., cit).

So, the woman who sits on “many waters” and on “seven mountains” (seven heads or kingdoms) and who has been identified as Mystery Babylon the Great could well literally be the city of Babylon, which represented the Levant (the satrapies of Parthia in the first century). If this is the case we have a duality of interpretation – the surface meaning points to Rome (seven kings) and the deeper meaning to Babylonian Jewry (i.e., the Jews of Parthia). Why was Babylon chosen? Previously, it was pointed out that the nation (like the scapegoat) had been sent into the wilderness (dry places Matt 12.43//Lk 11.24) and it was in Shinar (Gen 10.10, Zech 5.11) that they established false religion (pharisaic rabbanism) that they continued to practice for 2,000 years. It was the Jews of Parthia that supported the false messiah and the re-establishment of temple worship under Bar Kochba. The image of a harlot sitting upon seven sacred mountains (Babylonian temples), surrounded by “waters” is one of a drunken high priestess (cf. Jezebel who painted her face) who persecutes Christians. Jewish rulers (Jerusalem) sat behind all the persecutions of first and second century Jewish-Christians, whether that is the crucifixion of Christ, the death of the apostles and their fellow Christians by Nero, or the Bar Kochba revolt.
The Jews manipulated both the Romans and the Parthians to do their will ---they rode the beast---whether it was a Roman beast or a Babylonian (Parthian) beast and they are still masters of manipulation, exerting control over the political, media and financial landscape of the global Babel that this world has become. There is much written about the “seven heads” with commentators sometimes starting the count with either the Egyptian or Assyrian Empires, often ignoring the fact that the seven headed beast is a composite drawn from Daniel and therefore starts with Babylon. **At some point all these Empires had Jerusalem as a possession.** Based on 1 Enoch 18.8 Barker suggests that the central mountain which reached to God was the one on which God’s throne is placed. On its right and left side were three mountains each. “The harlot was enthroned in the temple, presumably sharing the heavenly throne as the consort of the base, just as Wisdom had shared the throne of the LORD (Wisd. 9.4)”\(^{21}\)

Moreover, just as five successive kings had “fallen” so also, five of Daniels’ beast Empires no longer existed independently. By the end of the first century the neo-Babylonian and Medo-Persian Kingdoms had disappeared and three of the Grecian Leopard heads\(^{22}\) were under Roman dominion, in other words, five of the “heads” had disappeared into history but the sixth remained independent of Rome and this “head” had over a million Jews still living in the territories of ancient Babylon and exercising control at a distance over Jewish affairs in Syria-Palestine and in the Diaspora despite the fact of Roman occupation. Of course, five fallen kings (βασιλεύς) refers to five successive rulers not five successive kingdoms but we cannot ignore the fact that the five fallen kings parallel the five fallen empires (heads) with the one that is (still remaining from Daniel’s vision) represents Babylonia in the form of Parthia – and that a large Jewish community still dwelt in Parthia/Babylon and were actively seeking political independence for Judea. Any who opposed this ideal (messianism and temple worship under Bar Kochba) were ruthlessly persecuted because they were viewed as Roman traitors. It is for this reason that the conquering Jesus assumes a Babylonian-Persian-Parthian titular epithet; “Lord of Lords and King of Kings” when he defeats the enemy (Note that Jesus is not called Pontifex Maximums or Caesar). However, the first- and- second century Parthian (Babylonian) “head” is typical—as the eschatological enemy will have similar characteristics (more on this anon).
Therefore Rev 17.9-10 contains a polyvalent matrix of allusions. Perhaps an analogy with a journey on the London tube is helpful. After a slight concussion (bumped your head) during your journey you disembark at a station completely disoriented. You don’t know where you are or where you are going and are even confused as to where you actually embarked. Then you spot a map of the underground with a big arrow declaring “you are here” at the junction of a number of tube lines. Looking at the map and tracing it backwards you know (because you found your address in your wallet) that two possible equally valid routes lead to the intersection where you now stand. Looking forwards from the intersection there are also two routes that diverge to other destinations but ultimately reconverge and end up at the same “end of the line” station.

This may (or may not) be a good analogy but that is the idea behind this section. None of the routes are of themselves wrong as they begin and end at the same places --- but only an overview can show you all the possibilities. Of course, we can’t travel two routes simultaneously---but **John could.** John was transported “in the Spirit” onto a different route and with the aid of his “map” he could see how he got there and where he had come from. He could also compare his journey to his “map” (the one that is) with previous landmarks (not possible on a tube) and this caused utter amazement (marvel) because the route to the final destination looked so similar to what he had already travelled. I am sure I already passed that beast on the way here and it was destroyed but here comes another one….and yet another one???

The Angelic interpreter explains to John that the seven headed beast that he saw, was constantly (repeatedly) emerging and disappearing and will again appear as an “eighth” (head) that belongs with the seven (heads) and this reincarnation will also be condemned to disappear into the abyss. At this point a schematic overview is a helpful way of examining the polyvalent matrix:
The eighth (Rev 17.11)

“And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition”.

The NIV and the NIB supply the Ellipsis “is an eighth king” other versions simply have “is an eighth” the Companion Bible has the marginal note “eighth head” though Aune argues for a reference to an eighth king: “The masculine singular pronoun αὐτὸς, “he,” is used with the neuter noun θηρίον, “beast”, since it symbolizes a male person (Mussies, Morphology, 138; cf. the same grammatical phenomenon in 5:6, 12: 9:5; 13:8,14; 17:3,16).”23 The CLV is neutral; “And the wild beast which was, and is not, it also is the eighth and is from among the seven, and is going away into destruction”.24

According to ISA25 αὐτὸς is translated in Lk 5.37 and John 12.24 in the same manner: “it (the wine) will be spilled” (Luke 5.37) and “it (the kernel of the grain) is remaining alone” (John 12.24). However, the subject of verse 11 is “the beast” which John saw in v.8 not the parenthetical explanation concerning seven kings that is given previously in v.10 this is confirmed by v.12 where the ten horns that John saw are described as ten future kings (have received no kingdom as yet) contextually it makes no sense to understand the eighth as yet another king. So the beast that vanished and now has reappeared as a seven headed scarlet beast so that it can be identified with those bygone kingdoms (beast-heads) is actually an eighth kingdom (head). It is both the same and yet different to those bygone beasts. Although the eighth head does not (cannot) inherit the succession/territory from those previous empires (because they no longer exist) it in some way resembles them. It is the apogee of all that proceeds and in that sense it is the erecting of Daniel’s image. Nichol, 7:856, suggests: “Absence in the Greek of the definite article before the word ‘eighth’ suggests that the beast itself was the real authority back of the seven heads, and that it is therefore more than merely another head, the eighth in a series. It is their summation and climax—the beast itself.”26
Just as the dragon gave power to the sea-beast so also the **eighth head** will (in the future) receive authority from the ten kings to act on their behalf. This is a description of pooled sovereignty, where the harlot is elected “King of Kings and Lord of Lords”. That this “eighth” (head) is still future is clear because this beast-kingdom is defeated by the Lord himself and in Rev 16-19 (which includes Armageddon) describes this. So, John is taken back in his vision-space and placed **in his present** (one that is) and given to understand that the red dragon (with which John is already familiar) will soon be “cast out” (70CE temple destroyed) but that will only lead to a further reincarnation (the sea-beast, Bar Kochba, temple worship), which in turn leads to yet another reincarnation with the seemingly immortal beast now reaching the pinnacle of arrogance, false religion and persecution. This beast can only appear when Israel has once again emerged from the wilderness of the people and **that has already happened** (in 1948).
Phases of the Beast

The beast of Rev 17 is Scarlet and not Red like the Dragon seen in the heavens of Rev 12. Moreover, the scarlet beast (Rev 17) emerges from the abyss (shall ascend out of the bottomless pit: Rev 17.8) and the beast of Rev 13 emerges from the sea (Sea-beast) which is not necessarily the same as the abyss (although there is some correspondence between the terms).

All the beasts have seven heads and ten horns. The beast of Rev 13 was at some stage wounded to death and had recovered and this fits with the description of the beast in Rev 17 who has a phase when he “is not” (17.8, 10, 11) a description repeatedly used to describe Joseph when he was sold into Egypt and thought by his father to be dead (Gen 37.30 and, “one is not” Gen 42.13, 32). We can then sum up the phrase “is not” as --- missing presumed dead. John is looking backwards to the stage before the Sea-Beast which is the point when the Red Dragon was “cast out of heaven”, unleashing a short reign of terror culminating in the first Jewish war and the fall of the temple. It was during this period that the Nero persecution commenced. After 3½ years of war the temple was destroyed. The obliteration of the second temple should have been a mortal wound for Judaism (when temple Judaism is not) but amazingly pharisaic (rabbinic) Judaism emerged from the Persian Gulf to support the earth-beast in the land of Israel (Lamb with two horns).

This was the insurrection of the false messiah, Bar Kochba that also lasted 3½ years and restored temple worship (the image of the beast). Whether an actual temple was built or not is a moot point – perhaps sacrifices were offered on the temple mount but in any case coins were struck with the star of Bar Kochba depicted as elevated above the Ark of the Covenant in the temple. Jewish-Christians who did not support the messianic rebellion were persecuted. So, the Sea-beast who gains his authority from the Dragon is depicted as having a “mortal wound” that has healed. It is a picture of the destruction and resurrection of second temple Judaism supported by Parthia (Babylon). However, the dragon appears again in Rev 16 and also just before the millennium. How possible is a reappearance of the dragon if it is destroyed in the first century? Comparing the term “dragon” in the Apocalypse is useful:
### Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Translit</th>
<th>Revelation</th>
<th>Tot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Red Dragon</td>
<td>μέγας πυρρὸς δράκων</td>
<td>megas purros drakOn</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the dragon</td>
<td>ὁ δράκων</td>
<td>ho drakOn</td>
<td>12.4,7, 13,16,17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the dragon</td>
<td>τοῦ δράκοντος</td>
<td>tou drakontos</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the great Dragon</td>
<td>ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας, ὁ ὁphis</td>
<td>ho drakOn ho megas</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=old serpent</td>
<td></td>
<td>ho ophis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the dragon</td>
<td>ὁ δράκων</td>
<td>ho drakOn</td>
<td>13.2,11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to-the dragon</td>
<td>τῷ δράκοντι</td>
<td>tO drakonti</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of-the dragon</td>
<td>τοῦ δράκοντος</td>
<td>tou drakontos</td>
<td>16.13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the dragon</td>
<td>τὸν δράκοντα, τὸν ὁphis³⁰</td>
<td>ton drakonta ton ophin</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=old serpent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dragon** occurs thirteen times in the Apocalypse, a number associated with rebellion and persecution in Scriptures (cf. Esther 9.1). The dragon is twice called the “ancient serpent” and this highlights the cosmic, universal aspect of the struggle. A literal rendering of these two verses (ISA) drives home the point:


The only place (Rev 12.3) where the Dragon is a corporal being is in the first century where it possessed both a body and a colour (red), elsewhere it is referred to as “the dragon” until it reaches its apogee in Rev 12.9 and Rev 20.2 where its’ essential character is revealed as “the serpent”. These climaxes are reached in the first century (where the Christ event heralds the in breaking of the kingdom) and at the commencement of the millennial reign of Christ. This demonstrates that the dragon has a physical and a spiritual presence.
In the first century the physical presence was embodied by the colour (red) denoting the Idumean Herod dynasty and their priestly and Roman allies. Herod was the temple builder *par excellence* and the serpent is an apt metaphor for establishing the link between the temple-and-the-Eden-sanctuary and the underlying theme of wanting *to be like God.* (Who is like the beast/God?) The two-horned Lamb is a parody of Christ and the “was-is not-will be” beast is a parody of God himself. Similarly, the whore, who is the “mother of harlots” is a parody of Eve, “the mother of the living” --- the Old Testament Covenant church that gave birth to the messiah and his New Covenant church. It is notable that exposure (revelation) of the true personality of the dragon is a precursor to its imminent demise. In the first century the serpent-motif was exposed at the trial of Christ who was accused of wanting to be like God when in actuality it was second temple Judaism and pharisaic rabbinism that was exposed as the “ancient serpent” and the accuser was cast out of heaven with the physical temple destroyed and replaced with the true temple, the “body of Christ”. The serpent was “cursed above every beast” (Gen 3.14) because it is the beguiler. When Adam grasps at divinity he denies the true image and worships himself. Instead of bearing the God image, he is self-made in the image of the serpent (beast). Adam’s sanctuary (temple) becomes the image of a beast that reflects its own glory. The dragon is still present during the plague-vials (Rev 16.13), later the dragon is incarcerated in the abyss (Rev 20.2) but it is not the same dragon as Rev 12.3 although it is the same serpent. The Great Red Dragon is only found in the first century when it is embodied by Herod et al and by the second century it has already succeeded power to the Sea-beast and its allies. However, the dragon is also a contemporary of the Scarlet-beast in the sense that its spirit lives on. In the same manner we have the term “false prophet” also first appearing during the last plague-vials of Rev 16.13 an obvious allusion to the two horns (two false prophets) of the second century false messiah (Lamb that speaks like a dragon).

The dragon and the false prophet of the plague-vials are therefore a different historical manifestation of the same principle found in the first and second centuries. Although the Great Red Dragon and the Sea-beast and allies no longer historically exist (is not) their unclean spirit lives on and gathers the kings to Armageddon and therefore the unclean spirit of the past still animates the whore who receives power from that same decuplet of kings who destroy her and are in turn themselves destroyed. We are dealing with recurrent patterns. The Scarlet beast is described as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8.a</th>
<th>ἦν</th>
<th>καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν</th>
<th>καὶ μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου</th>
<th>καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>en</td>
<td>kai ouk estin</td>
<td>mellei anabainein ek teS abussou</td>
<td>kai eis apOLEian hupagein</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAS</td>
<td>AND NOT -IS-BEING</td>
<td>is-being-about TO-BE-UP-STEPPING OUT OF-THE abyss</td>
<td>AND INTO DESTRUCTION TO-BE-UNDER-LEADING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLV</td>
<td>WAS</td>
<td>AND IS NOT</td>
<td>And is about to be ascending out of the submerged chaos</td>
<td>And to be going away into destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.c</td>
<td>ὅτι ἦν</td>
<td>καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν</td>
<td>καὶ παρέσται</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hoti en</td>
<td>kai ouk estin</td>
<td>kai parestai</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>that it-WAS</td>
<td>AND NOT -IS-BEING</td>
<td>AND SHALL-BE-BESIDE-BEING</td>
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<td>CLV</td>
<td>IT WAS</td>
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<td>11.a</td>
<td>ὃ ἦν</td>
<td>καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν</td>
<td>καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ γηθοῦς ἔστιν καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐπτά ἔστιν</td>
<td>καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει</td>
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<td>ho En</td>
<td>kai ouk estin</td>
<td>kai autos ogdoos estin kai ek tOn hepta estin</td>
<td>kai eis apOLEian hupagei</td>
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<td>WHICH -WAS</td>
<td>AND NOT -IS-BEING</td>
<td>AND it EIGHTH -IS-BEING AND OUT OF-THE SEVEN -IS-BEING</td>
<td>AND INTO destruction -IS-UNDER-LEADING</td>
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<td>CLV</td>
<td>WHICH WAS</td>
<td>AND IS NOT</td>
<td>It also is the eighth and is from among the seven</td>
<td>And is going away into destruction</td>
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Some Preterist expositors identify the “is not” stage of the beast with Nero as a number of imposters arose after his death leading to the Nero Redivivus myth (Nero returns). He became a sort of indestructible “bogeyman” in the first century. However, first century Nero imposters do not fit the criteria of the beast with the deadly wound of Rev 13—they had little historical impact and the imposters certainly did not deceive the world or demand worship.

If an early date for the Apocalypse is accepted then a more likely explanation is that Nero imposters were inspired by the Christian writing as many Christians who survived the persecution undoubtedly identified Nero with the beast (or as a type of the beast). The fact that we have textual variants that alter 666 to 616 testifies to the need to establish more firmly that Nero was 666. It is of course no coincidence that the gematria of Nero Caesar is the number of the beast but Nero only represents the beast’s persecuting aspect.

The fact is that temple Judaism had already been “wounded to death” and recovered more than once; “And thou, O deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day is come, in the time of the iniquity of the end.” (Ezek.21: 25 ASV). This was in fulfilment of the Song of Witness (Deut 31.21), where God says, “I kill, and I make alive, I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand” (Deut 32.39). Yahweh “killed” and then resurrected the nation in 539 BCE.

However, the recovery of the mortally wounded beast in Rev 13 is almost miraculous and in god-like fashion the beast gives life to the image (Rev 13.5). This mimics God breathing life into his image (the second Adam=Christ). This is a description of temple worship. The “mortal wound” of 70 CE when the temple was removed (yet once more) was reversed with the rebellion of Bar Kochba whose epithet also adds to 666, giving us a second aspect of the Scarlet beast, namely, false religion. The dragon of chapter 12, the sea beast of chapter 13, and the scarlet beast of chapter 17 manifest three different aspects of one and the same beast but they are separated by periods where they no longer historically exist (AND IS NOT) and this ipso facto rules out the Papacy as the different stages of the Roman Empire do not reflect the absolute obliteration of a nation of people in covenant relationship with God, a people who constantly emerged from the “wilderness” in an attempt to re-establish temple worship—a people who rejected their messiah and therefore rejected their God.
The Roman Empire was pagan for the first three centuries CE and therefore Rev 12 and Rev 13 have no application whatsoever to this period of Roman history--any revelation given to servants who expected imminent action (that much is clear from the NT), and that left a three century lacunae in which Jewish-Christianity was persecuted into non-existence is frankly untenable.

The “is not” phase of the beast can only reflect those periods of Jewish history where the temple was removed. This corresponds with the findings in God is Judge, a commentary on Daniel that demonstrates that a major thematic running through all the Daniel narratives is temple destruction and restoration and national atonement.

The point made in that exposition was that the messiah would replace the Jerusalem temple and achieve atonement. Jesus Christ was the temple that Daniel waited for. Daniel’s time periods are connected with the birth of Christ (the new temple) and the destruction of the old temple (70 years later) after 3½ years of tribulation leaving a last 3½ years as yet unrealized. Daniel forms one of the most important inter-texts in the Apocalypse and his time periods are recycled because they are pertinent to temple restoration and the Jewish nation. Jewish-Christians were also concerned with temple restoration ---but their temple was not “made with hands” – as the Apocalypse makes abundantly clear: “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Rev 21.22).

Neither Daniel, nor Revelation has anything to do with the history of Rome, whether Pagan or apostate Christianity because unfaithful Jews are the Mother of Harlots, at the same time faithful Jews are the Mother of the Living. The intertextual connections between the Jerusalem temple in Ezekiel 16 and Rev 17-18 is as obvious as a flashing neon sign outside of a brothel ---and that is exactly how God wants us to think of it ---the faithful temple city had become a harlot: “How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers” (Isa.1.21).
Prostitution is obviously used as a metaphor because it involves being unfaithful and making financial gains (more on this in Rev 18). Unfaithfulness is related to the covenant relationship with God who was the “husband”. The accoutrements of the whore in Ezekiel 16 are all related to the wilderness tabernacle. God clothed the nation with badger skins (Ezek 16.10, Exod 25.5) a beautiful priestly crown with the words “Holiness to the Lord” was placed upon the forehead of Aaron (Ezek 28.36-38, 16.12). The linen curtains of the tabernacle were embroidered with blue, purple and scarlet (Ex.26.1), the linen priestly garments, “for glory and beauty” were also embroidered with gold, blue, purple and scarlet (Exod 28.2-5; Ezek 16.13). The priests were “decked with ornaments” (the breastplate Exod 28.15-29, Ezek 16.11).

In turn the tabernacle formed the template for the sanctuary built by Solomon at Jerusalem. Jerusalem became therefore a priestly city, the dwelling place of God. In the past she was burnt with fire (Ezek 16.41) in the future she will again be burnt by her lovers (Rev 17.16). This is appropriate, for burning (not the common punishment of stoning) was the fate of a priest’s daughter who committed harlotry (Lev 21.9).
Ezekiel chapter 16, the basis of John’s vision has the greatest concentration of the word “harlot” than any other chapter in the Old Testament. In the same chapter the word “covenant” occurs six times, which is appropriate to the marriage metaphor here being employed by Ezekiel, and the literal event at Sinai. In other passages besides, the concept of harlotry is associated with the transgressing of the covenant (Jud. 2.17-20, Hos.6.7-10 cp. Prov. 2.17). Thus when applied to God’s covenant people “harlotry” denotes apostasy such as at the very beginning when they worshipped the creature rather than the creator (the image of the golden calf a copy of the cherubim ox head).

Jerusalem was lost and recaptured during the Crusades and had enormous importance attached to it by Christians, as well as the great controversies among the European powers over the holy places in Jerusalem during the late Ottoman period. By now the Islamic sanctity of Jerusalem, whatever its origin, is firmly established. The city of Jerusalem is therefore a “holy city” for three monotheistic religions. She has indeed become a prostitute over the centuries, lending legitimacy to false religions and offering her cup of filth to all nations.

Like its predecessor Babylon, Jerusalem controls nations, but it does so in a different way. It is famous, or rather infamous, for its compromising relationship with political powers. It both depends upon them, and directs them as a rider depends upon and directs the movements of his beast.

Yet the scene in Revelation is not the dignified relationship of a wise and intelligent rider and his strong obedient horse. The scene here is bizarre and offensive. Babylon (Jerusalem) is depicted as a wicked, gaudily attired woman, enthroned on a vicious, hideous monster. Supported, elevated and borne along by this hybrid creature, she manages in a precarious way, to direct its movements. She plays a dubious, dishonourable role that involves selling herself for political advantage.

In her hand she holds a golden cup, filled with abominations and the impurities of her fornication. This is in part an illusion to LXX Jer. 28. 7 (MT 51.7), though there the golden cup is a metaphor for Babylon itself: “Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, making all the nations drunken; the nations drank of her wine; therefore the nations went mad.” However, in the Targum of Jer. 51. 7, the cup is turned into a metaphor for the sin of Babylon, which is precisely the symbolism of the cup in Rev 17.4, “Behold the cup of gold which was precious amongst all the vessels, so is the sin of Babylon exalted!!”
The golden cup held by the woman is described as filled with two ingredients: “what is detestable (abomination)” and “the impurities of her fornication.” This is a reference to idolatry (image of the beast) and the associated pagan sexual rites (the “sons of God” joining themselves to “the daughters of men” see Num.25.1-3). In the context of Revelation this is symbolic for political alliances and the setting up of false religion. She is the mother of whores, the term “mother,” is a figurative extension that means something like “archetype,” i.e., “anticipating a later reality and suggesting a derivative relationship,” or that indicates the source or origin of some activity or quality. In Hos.2.2-5 (cp. Isa.50.1), Israel is personified as a “mother” who has played the whore and has bastard children. The word “abomination” again is a detail which, when researched, is found to relate solely to Jerusalem of the three cities mentioned. Surprisingly, in spite of the length of the oracles uttered by Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel against Babylon and Tyre, not once is the word used. In sharp contrast to this there exists some sixty occurrences of “abomination” with reference to the deeds of the Israelites, with Ezekiel 16 once more having more than any other chapter. It is true to say, therefore, that, when speaking of cities, Jerusalem is the only one to which “abomination” may be scripturally applied. It appears mainly with reference to idolatry and false sacrifice (Deut.7.25, Isa 1.13, Jer. 44.22, Ezek 7.20).
The Harlot and Jezebel

- Jezebel was accused of “harlotry” (2 Kgs.9.22) she was the “mother of harlots” for her daughter Athaliah was of a similar character.

- She incited the king and all Israel to act “abominably” in worshipping idols (1 Kgs.21.25)

- Jezebel (1 Kgs.18.4), Athaliah (2 Kgs.11.1) and the harlot of Revelation (17. 6, 18. 20, 19. 2) all attempted to destroy the godly seed.

- Athaliah reigned for “six years” (2 Kgs.11.3), then was slain, and the righteous king Jehoash took the throne in the “seventh year” (11.4) being seven years old.

- Following the death of Athaliah, the new king was able to restore the temple in Jerusalem for pure worship (2 Kgs.12.4). Similarly, in the Apocalypse, once the harlot is destroyed, the New Jerusalem is established.

It is perhaps due to such correspondences that the perverse individual at Thyatira could be dubbed “Jezebel” (Rev 2. 20), which can hardly have been her true name. In Ezek 20.30 the ideas of idolatry and harlotry are found side by side. The “mother of harlots” is obviously a contrast with the “New Jerusalem.”

**Revelation 17**
- And there came one of the seven angels who had the vials, and talked with me. (v.1)
- Come, I will show you the judgment of…
- the great harlot (v. 1)
- he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness… (v. 3)
- the great city (v. 18)

**Revelation 21**
- And there came one of the seven angels who had the vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me. (v. 9)
- Come, I will show you the bride, the….
- wife of the Lamb (v. 9)
- he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain… (v. 10)
- the holy city (v. 10)
I wondered with great admiration (Rev 17.6)

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration”.

Why did John wonder with great wonder (RV – same word thaumazo)? The language is reflective of the reaction of the people at the appearance of the beast in Rev 13.3: “The whole world wondered (thaumazo) after the beast.” The same formula is applied in Rev 17.8: “They that dwell on the earth shall wonder (thaumazo) whose names were not written in the book of life.” It is implied therefore that wonder or amazement is tantamount to worship. Christ warned that if it were possible the very elect would be deceived (Matt 24.24) however, John was not deceived but perplexed (cp. Dan 8.15). How was it possible that the harlot could once again exercise power over the saints and even murder them?
The Ten Kings (Rev 17.12-13)

“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast”.

The eighth head supports the ten horns, for the eighth head is the latter day incarnation of the seven-headed monster. The harlot-cities relationship with the kings of the earth is interesting. She rules over kings (Rev 17.18); her relationship with kings is one of wanton wickedness (Rev 18. 3); she is destroyed by kings (Rev 17.16); and other kings lament her destruction (Rev 18. 9).

These ten kings cede power to the monster – they do not act individually but are united in purpose. These have one mind, this is a reflection of Gen.11.1: “the whole earth was of one language and one speech”, when mankind united to build the tower of Babel. This is a parody of the attitude of the saints who are encouraged to be of [1] the same mind (1 Cor. 1.10) [2] the same judgment (1 Cor.1.10) [3] one heart (Acts 4.23) [4] one mind (Acts 4.23; Phil 1.27) [5] one spirit (2 Cor.12.18) [6] having the same attitude (Phil.2.20) [7] harmonious, one mind (Phil.2.2)

When the heads wore seven crowns such as with the Great Red Dragon the powers are depicted as universal. The Idumean’s (Herod the Great) were Roman client kings and the Jewish priests had no kingdom as such. Where the horns wear the crowns, the beast is represented by individual rulers, who in Rev 13.1 (ten crowns on ten horns) represent Jewish Parthian rulers and in Rev 17.10 where no crowns are mentioned but they are specifically called “seven kings” because they represented the imperial dynastic rule of Rome under its first seven emperors during the time of Christ and his apostles. But they also hark back to the dynastic progenitors (the roots) of the opposition originally encountered by Christ and his church (the Herod dynasty, the Priestly dynasty etc) as expressed in Rev 12.3 and in Lk 3.1-2 where they are given a particular “face” (i.e., Herod tetrarch of Galilee) rather than a succession of kings (crows) thus reducing the “crowns/kings” back to their historical roots. Now, when the beast is shown without any crowns, it is because the ten kings have destroyed the harlot-city that exercised control over them and pooled their sovereignty. The sum of the parts has become larger than the individual rulers – it is the beast-empire.
These ten kings “have received no kingdom as yet.” In other words, in John’s day they were not identifiable. Nor are they identifiable, so the prophecy implies, until the exciting events of the Last Days are already in train, for “they receive power as kings one hour with the beast.” To attempt to turn this “one hour” into a significant time period is to manufacture difficulties. The fairly obvious intention behind the expression is to emphasise that this build up of hostility to “Babylon” is the divinely decreed counterpart to the hour of shame and suffering which Jesus suffered there. John’s gospel uses the term frequently in order to express the shame and tribulation of Christ. Its fourfold use (one hour) about the downfall of Babylon adds one more to the long list of correspondences between Christ and antiChrist. Although not identifiable the “ten kings” reflect the extent of the land promised to Abraham, from the river Nile to the Euphrates at the time possessed by ten nations (Gen.15.18-21). Therefore they represent Greater Israel as proposed by the Zionist “Oded Yinon Plan” for the Middle East.32
War with the Lamb (Rev 17.14)

“These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful”.

One way in which earthly kings can wage war on the Lamb is through his followers. The war is therefore yet another reference to the great persecution. Earlier John has described the victory of the Lamb from the point of view of the martyrs, whose conquest is already implicit in his representative triumph: “they have conquered him (Satan) by the life-blood of the Lamb and by the testimony they bore; no love of life caused them to shrink from death” (12.11). Here he describes the victory of the conquerors from the point of view of the Lamb, who is still the agent of victory: he will conquer them, not only because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, but also because his companions are called and chosen and faithful. He is Lord of lords and King of kings in virtue of the victory secured once for all on Calvary. But that is not enough to make the final victory complete. It must be re-enacted again and again in his companions, the picked and faithful soldiers of the cross. Whichever way we look at it, final victory depends on the inaugural victory of the Lamb together with the victory that he makes possible for the whole vast throng of martyrs.

The initial victory achieved by martyrdom (the 144,000 who followed him withersoever he goeth) is reinforced by a military victory. The vision is expanded in 19.14-16 where the martyrs are represented by armies mounted on white horses who follow the King of kings and Lord of lords into battle.33
The Harlot Destroyed (Rev 17.15-18)

“And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth”.

The “ten kings” have “one mind” but despite their free choice they are actually fulfilling the purpose of God, who has put it in their hearts to do his mind (RV). God’s purpose is the destruction of the harlot, no doubt retributive justice for the maltreatment of his martyr-witnesses. Every power that sets itself up against God shall in the end break itself on the cross of his Son and the martyr-witness of his saints.

Jerusalem will be made naked and desolate they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. This is an allusion to Ezek.23.26-29, where Jerusalem is compared to a woman stripped naked, and to Ezek.23.25, where survivors of Jerusalem will be burned with fire. Several OT prophets also threaten the harlot Judah with being stripped naked (Jer.13.26-27; Ezek.16.37-38; 23.10, 29; Hos. 2.5, 12).

The phrase “they shall devour her flesh” is clearly a metaphor. In the ancient world one would expect dogs to devour unburied corpses in cities and birds in the country (1 Kgs 14.11; 16.4). This phrase is probably an allusion to the fate of Jezebel, who was reportedly thrown from a window and eaten by wild dogs in the street (1 Kgs 21.23-24; 2Kgs 9.10, 36-37). One might expect “dogs” to be the subject of “devour”, implying the figurative use of dog, in a manner similar to 22.15 compare the figurative use of “dog” to describe people opposed to the gospel (Matt 7.6), Paul’s Judaizing opponents (Phil 3.2), and heretics (2 Pet 2.22).
Conclusion

“You trusted in your beauty and played the harlot.” (Ezek.16.15)

While Babylon and subsequently Rome are types of the “harlot” we have encountered sound scriptural and historical evidence that demonstrate that only Jerusalem fulfils all the qualifications. Any extrapolation of these prophecies to the EEC and the Catholic Church goes against the grain of history and sound exegesis.

“One is left guessing as to how the Babylonian harlot riding the Beast and then ravaged by the ten kings can represent the Papacy controlling the Roman church and then destroyed by those who are themselves subject to it. Indeed, how harlot and beast can both be identified with the apostasy of Rome deserves the name Mystery nearly as much as the woman in the vision.” 34
End Notes Chapter 17 Pages 359-389

1 See; Biography of the beast: An Appendix at the end of this chapter that compares the beasts throughout Revelation [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/PDF/Aune_beasts_comparison.pdf"]

2 Anarthrous (an) refers to a word or group of words which appear without a definite article (ho, he, to’ [3588], the). Greek has no indefinite article, “a” or “an” in English. Sometimes it is best to translate an anarthrous word by supplying “a” or “an” before it.


4 τὸ ὅριστον

5 This song (of the Sea) functions as both a prolepsis and an analepsis: It looks back to the victory over the sea-beast and forwards to the victory over the one who sits on many waters.

6 Duncan W. McKenzie states: [p23-24]...many modern historians argue that Julius Caesar was a dictator, not an emperor; thus they say Augustus was the first emperor. While this may be technically correct, many ancients did not make this distinction. Starting the count of the rulers of Rome with Julius Caesar is well attested to in first and second-century writings. Suetonius (c. AD 70-160) in his Lives of the Caesars starts with Julius. Dio Cassius (c. AD 150-235) in his Roman History also begins the count of the emperors with Julius. Josephus (AD 37-101) referred to Augustus as the “second emperor” (thus counting Julius as the first emperor). Josephus’ testimony is especially significant because he was Jewish and a contemporary of John. Aune writes the following about how ancient authors reckoned the count of the Roman emperors. One matter of importance is the way in which the ancient Greeks and Romans themselves enumerated the Roman emperors. Some considered Julius Caesar the first of the Roman emperors, while others regarded Augustus as the first. In the enumeration of nineteen emperors through the numerical value of their name in Sibylline Oracles 5.1 2-51, the list begins with Julius Caesar and concludes with Marcus Aurelius. Since the generic term Caesar was derived from the name of Julius Caesar, it was natural for ancients to consider him the first Roman emperor. Suetonius (born ca. A.D. 70; died after 122) began his Lives of the Caesars with the biography of Julius Caesar. Dio Chrysostom (ca. 40-after 112) refers in Orationes. 34.7 to Augustus as... “the second Caesar” (G. Mussies, Dio Chrysostom and the New Testament, Leiden: Brill. 1972), 253) just as Josephus referred to Augustus as... “the second emperor of the Romans” [(Antiquities of the Jews] 18.32), both clearly implying that Julius Caesar was the first emperor. On the other hand, Suetonius reports that Claudius wrote a history of Rome that began with the death of Julius Caesar (Claud.41; see [A. Momigliano, Claudius: The Emperor and His Achievements, Westport: Greenwood. 1981], 6-7), suggesting that he regarded Augustus as the first emperor. Similarly, Tacitus began his Annals with Augustus, whom he considered the first emperor. While one can make a case for starting the count of the Caesars with either Julius or Augustus, the weight of ancient authority comes down on the side of starting with Julius. Duncan W. McKenzie, The Antichrist and the Second Coming: A Proterist Examination, (Xulon Press, 2012) Op., cit. for references.

7 The family of Annas was representative of everything that was wrong with the priesthood of this period. Josephus says; “It is said that the elder Ananus was extremely fortunate. For he had five sons, all of whom, after he himself had previously enjoyed the office for a very long period, became high priests of God - a thing that had never happened to any other of our high priests”. (Jos., Antiq., 20, 9.1). Annas, with his five sons and son-in-law Caiaphas makes a total of seven priests from the same family. Note: Acts 19:14-16 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded”. Note also that the involvement of the family of Annas may be implied in the plot to kill Lazarus of Bethany in John 12:10. Annas. (2017, March 31). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 04:48, May 1, 2017, from [HYPERLINK "https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/index.php?title=Annas&amp;oldid=773155119"]

8 See the digression on the dynastic reigns of the High Priests, Herod and the Caesars: [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/Digressions/dynasty.pdf"]

9 This is calculated as follows; Crucifixion in 31 CE + (4 x 7) =59CE+7=66CE

10 This explains why 666 is applied to Nero - who was only a partial fulfilment as was Bar Kochba who was also only a partial fulfilment of the gamatria.


17 Compare the LXX Prayer of Azariah 1:53 “Ο γε μountains and little hills.”’ (Qqø ναι βουνοι)


22 Alexanders Empire split into four after he died in Babylonia. After Alexander's death his Empire was divided among his four generals (known in Latin as the Diadochi, the name by which they are still referenced, from the Greek, Diadochos, meaning “successors”). The beasts of Daniel: LION-HEAD (FALLEN): The Neo-Babylonian Empire lasted from the rise of power of Nabopolassar in 626 BCE to the invasions by Persia in 539 BCE. So, the Chaldean Dynasty lasted roughly 80 years. BEAR-HEAD (FALLEN): The Median Empire was found around 625 BCE when Cyaxares succeeded in uniting all the Median tribes under his rule. The empire lasted until 559 BCE when Cyrus the Great succeeded in conquering the Median Empire. Alexanders generals; Lysimachus (challenged by Antigond Dynasty), Cassander, Ptolemy and Seleucus split the conquests of Alexander. Lysimachus took Thrace and much of Asia Minor; Cassander, Macedonia and Greece; Ptolemy seized Egypt, Palestine, Cilicia, Petra, and Cyprus (thus beginning the Ptolemaic Dynasty in Egypt which lasted until the death of Cleopatra VII in 30 BCE) while Seleucus took control of the rest of Asia (so founding the Seleucid Empire which was comprised of Syria, Babylon, Persia, and India).GREEK ASIAN-LEOPARD-HEAD (FALLEN): The Hellenistic period begins with the death of Alexander the Great. During this time Greece was ruled by the Antigond Dynasty started by Antigonus I "the One-Eye" who was one of Alexander the Great's generals. The period lasts until the Battle of Pydna in 146 BCE when the Roman Republic decisively defeats the forces of the Antigond Kingdom. So, it lasted roughly 180 years. BECOMES ROMAN GREEK EGYPTIAN-LEOPARD-HEAD (FALLEN): Ptolemaic Egypt lasted from 332 BCE to 30 BCE. It begins when Ptolemy I, a general under Alexander the Great, declared himself Pharaoh and ends with Queen Cleopatra during the Roman Invasion. So, it lasted roughly 300 years. BECOMES ROMAN GREEK SYRIAN-LEOPARD-HEAD (FALLEN): Seleucid I was a general under Alexander the Great. When Alexander died, Seleucid established his empire in Persia around 312 BCE Over time, the empire began to decline. In 83 BCE, Tigranes the Great, King of Armenia, invaded Syria. In 63 BCE, they were conquered by Rome. BECOMES ROMAN GREEK PARTHIAN-LEOPARD-HEAD (REMAINING IN FIRST CENTURY): Parthian Empire (Iran), Around 245 BCE, Adragorus, a satrap under the Seleucid rule was able to declare his independence. Although he was killed in 238 BCE by a political rival, the Parthian Empire continued. The empire eventually fell in 224 CE to the Sassanian Empire. The Parthian Empire (under Mithridates II 123-88 BCE) had a territory of 2.84 million km² compared with 0.5 million km² for Neo-Babylonia and the Roman Empire at its greatest extent (under Trajan) with 5.7 million km². Parthia was a formidable opponent that Rome never fully conquered; Hadrian (Trajan's successor) gave back the territories that Trajan had briefly held.

23 Ibid, p.950


25 Interlinear Scripture Analyzer basic 3.0.2 [HYPERLINK "http://www.scripture4all.org"]


27 Scarlet dyes were first mentioned in 8th century BC, under the name Armenian Red, (Armenia was originally a Persian satrap) and they were described in Persian and Assyrian writings. The Latin term for scarlet used in the Bible comes from coccus, a “tiny grain”. The finest scarlets in ancient times were made from the tiny scale insect called kermes, which fed on certain oak trees in Turkey, Persia, Armenia and other parts of the Middle East. Scarlet (color). (2017, April 5). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 13:44, April 21, 2017, {HYPERLINK "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Scarlet_(color)&oldid=773926344"}

28 Peter depicts Nero as a roaring lion (Christians thrown to the lions) and compares him to the devil: 1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Revelation 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan... Rev 12 alludes to Babylon: Revelation 12:16 the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. Jeremiah 51: 34 Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon. In its persecuting aspect the Red Dragon has elements of Babylon (Pharisac), Rome (Nero) and Edom (Herod).

29 This is the genitive masculine singular common form of the noun: Probably from an alternate form of δησενομα δerkomai (to look); a fabulous kind of serpent (perhaps as supposed to fascinate): - dragon.
ISA the GNT etc has ὁ ὄφις (ho ophis). Dragon is in the accusative masculine singular common form of the noun whereas in 12.9 it is the nominative masculine singular form.

The expression “abominations of the heathen” occurs a number of times (eg, 2Kgs.21: 2), but only in the context of Israelites practising these things. That is to say it is declared to be an abomination for God’s chosen people to act this way not for the ignorant heathen. While the latter must still be offensive to God, it is not this that constitutes an “abomination” before God, but the fact that his people, called out idolatry to pure worship, have been specifically commanded not to do such things.

[The Yinon plan] is an Israeli strategic plan to ensure Israeli regional superiority. It insists and stipulates that Israel must reconfigure its geo-political environment through the balkanization of the surrounding Arab states into smaller and weaker states. For the strategic plan see: “Greater Israel”: The Zionist Plan for the Middle East” Israel Shahak, Global Research, April, 2017 (first published by Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 2013) [HYPERLINK “http://www.globalresearch.ca/greater-israel-the-zionist-plan-for-the-middle-east/5324815”] [Accessed May 2017]

Much of the general commentary in this section is taken from a previous exposition of Revelation and these sections were originally based on the excellent work done by G. B. Caird which is more akin to a “spiritual reading”. However, as his earlier work was not correctly referenced or annotated or even the edition noted (very remiss of me) this reference must suffice (hopefully this expression of gratitude will protect me from the charge of plagiarism). Caird demonstrated understanding of the symbolic imagery of the Apocalypse showing the intertextual roots in the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism and intertestamental literature, and in imperial iconography. He does all this without losing the big picture. The “Theology of Revelation”, given at the close of Caird’s book, is a helpful summary of the overarching themes. G. B. Caird, A commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine, (Rev. ed. London: Adam & Charles Black, - Black's New Testament commentaries, 1984).

These words were written in 1973 and the identity of the whore is still confused. H. A. Whittaker, Revelation : A Biblical Approach – page 206
Chapter 18
The lament for Babylon

As with other Revelation chapters a complex matrix of OT allusions and echoes are interwoven in the form of a lament. A central theme that emerges is that of materialism, the loss of riches and trade that causes the merchants to weep. They watch at a distance with utter dismay and shock because the basis of their economy has literally gone up in smoke. As readers we want to identify the city associated with Babylon. Is a literal Babylon intended or is Babylon a metaphor for another city or cities (plural)? The lament itself is a pastiche of allusions to Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre and Jerusalem (more on this anon) and therefore in a sense it transcends any particular city and becomes supra-historical and global. However, the lament obviously refers to the harlot city (Mystery Babylon) of the previous chapter which points to a specific city (singular). Babylon is simultaneously a universal and localized phenomenon but this dichotomy need not cause problems as “she” becomes a caricature of global mammon worship. After all, a whore prostitutes herself for monetary gain.

In 70 CE the city of Jerusalem fell and the temple was destroyed but can that be metaphorically equated with the fall of Babylon? In 69 CE Rome fell when it was devastated by a civil war and internecine fighting. In 116 CE Babylon literally fell to Trajan and his conquest disrupted Parthian trade to the dismay of Jewish merchants who trafficked as far as China for luxury silks. All these cities had in their time been persecutors of God’s people but the fall of these cities is only a partial realization of the lament, because together they depict a composite judgement of the “great city” which finds its counterpart in the “heavenly Jerusalem”. Therefore the great city encapsulates all the cities of the earth, for the fall of Babylon precipitates the fall of the cities of the nations (16.19). The “great city” is therefore representative of all cities and at the same time specific to the city of Jerusalem the only city in covenant relationship because God had his dwelling place there.
The meaning of the city

The Meaning of the City is a Christian classic written by Jacques Ellul and the following transcript is a compilation of some of the most important passages in his book.¹

The city represents man’s ultimate rejection of God. It demonstrates man’s creativity and independence. Rather than rely on God, Cain built a city in order to provide protection and security for himself (Gen.4: 17) and cities quickly became the focus of primitive industrialisation (Gen.4: 22). Gods dwelling place was never in the city, for it was David who wished to build God a house in the city. “Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?” (2 Samuel 7:6-7)

This is a kind of refusal to enter the city, to make a home there. And all of Jerusalem’s destiny is included, then, in this opposition emphasised by God: “You David, want to build me a house, and put me in a city. But in fact, it is I, the Lord, who will build you up a house.” And the Lord then grants David’s immediate posterity the permission to build the Temple, but it is nothing more than accepting David’s wish. Jerusalem’s destiny is henceforth unique and ambiguous, that of being one of man’s cities chosen by God. Jerusalem is a holy city. But she is still a city. She carries man’s mark, even in her election, even in her adoption by God. She never escapes from all the characteristics of the city, as is indicated by the accusations constantly aimed at her, aimed at the sins she never ceases falling into anew. Her sins are those of other cities: she acts like them and is condemned like them.

Moreover, Jerusalem fulfilled by Christ’s death what had ever been announced; namely that she would play a unique role in the history of salvation. And how earnestly did she seek out that role. This obviously emphasises Jerusalem’s ambiguity. She is, in spite of her sanctification and adoption, the city seeking to combat God, to destroy his action. But all she does by this is to continue accomplishing God's will, and not only his general will, but his particular will for her.
God’s revelations instruct us of the unparalleled truth that by Jesus Christ’s death, Jerusalem literally becomes Babylon. During the period of time between Christ’s ascension and his return there is a confusion of the formerly holy city and the city of demons, Babylon. Jerusalem here is called the great city and this term is, as we know, characteristic of Babylon. Moreover, the text as a whole confirms our identification. Jerusalem here plays a part which should be that only of Babylon. She is the defiled place where all nations of the earth gather to revel drunkenly and make merry over the death of God’s prophets. She is celebrating therefore, the victory of the Beast, and becomes the city of the nations.

Moreover in John’s portrayal there is much food for reflection, if only from the historical standpoint, for those who consider Revelation only as a political writing turned against Rome. (Ellul was a reformed sociologist, historian and lawyer and had every reason to be critical of Rome, yet did not fall into the trap of so many of his contemporaries) Jerusalem – ever controlled by the Goyim and unable to attain spiritual liberation in the Christian faith. Neither Jewish nor Christian, but always torn apart, going from one persecution to another, from siege to destruction, with no durable period of domination, no settled condition, no possible restoration under Arab domination. Even today’s Jewish domination is but one more sign of the underlying contradiction. A wandering city, defiled, condemned. A deserted city in the midst of its swarming peoples and confused races. A deserted city because she did not recognise her Lord: “Your house is desolate, for you will not see me again.” He alone could have populated her; he alone could adequately take the place of the Temple and was waiting to do so. A city of which not one spiritual stone was left upon another, full of horrible tourist churches and monuments raised by every sect and every religion, the symbol of division and spiritual falsehood, the symbol of satanic spirituality, a subject of mocking for the Holy Spirit.

Jacques Ellul concludes that the city is essentially a metaphor for mans work, it is God’s pardon that will transform it; This pardon teaches us, much better than any historical considerations, the vanity and relativity of man’s work, since everything depends on forgiveness. God’s pardon will make the city of man into a New Jerusalem; that is, its precise goal is to keep her disappearing into nothingness. So not only man’s spiritual destiny is connected with God’s forgiveness, but also the destiny of his work and the very materiality of history, which rests exclusively on this act of God – rests on the infinitely thin line, that razor blade which separates decisively between the work destined to vanish and the work that will be transformed into a creation of God for all eternity.
Mammon

An examination of the connection between religion and mammon is beneficial to understanding the background of Rev 18. There has always been a relationship between false religion and making money and it should therefore not come as a surprise that the first temples were banks. This may seem like a digression but it is extremely relevant to grasping the intent of Rev 18, so here follows a short excursus on banking before delving into an analysis of the chapter. Wikipedia states, “The history [of banking] begins with the first prototype banks of merchants of the ancient world, which made grain loans to farmers and traders who carried goods between cities. This began around 2000 BC in Assyria and Babylonia. Later, in ancient Greece and during the Roman Empire, lenders based in temples made loans and added two important innovations: they accepted deposits and changed money”.

Bamber notes that, “In early civilizations a temple is considered the safest refuge; it is a solid building, constantly attended, with a sacred character which itself may deter thieves. In Egypt and Mesopotamia gold is deposited in temples for safe-keeping. But it lies idle there, while others in the trading community or in government have desperate need of it. In Babylon at the time of Hammurabi, in the 18th century BC, there are records of loans made by the priests of the temple. The concept of banking has arrived”.

Bromberg explains as follows, “The economic importance of the sanctuaries of antiquity has long been recognized. The Babylonian shrines were no exceptions; not only were the chief Mesopotamian temples religious centres, law courts, schools, and archive depositories, but they were also banks and mercantile establishments. Indeed, as fiscal institutions of the Babylonian economy, the importance of the sanctuaries cannot be overemphasized: “In financial or monetary transactions the position of the Babylonian temples was not unlike that of national banks; they carried on their business with all the added weight of official authority.”

In a further article Bromberg says, “Banking is one of the oldest institutions known man. Its history is lost somewhere in remote antiquity. But this much is definitely known: banking was born in the temples consecrated to the gods and goddesses of mythology in the Mesopotamian area thousands of years before the rise of Christianity”.
The picture emerges that banking and Babylon are virtually synonymous as are banking and temples and this leads us to attempt to understand the Jerusalem temple from the perspective of finance and economic power. The Jerusalem temple was the nation’s Central Bank; “If one was a pilgrim coming to Jerusalem, one would probably first go to the bank to change money as the coins of the realm, engraved with the head of Caesar were unacceptable for use in the Temple. The central “bank” in Jerusalem and some of the Law courts could be found on the Temple mount platform in a building called the royal portico or stoa”.

Ritmeyer notes, “Ancient historian Josephus calls Annas the high priest “a great hoarder up of money.” The sons of Annas had bazaars (known in the Talmud as the hanayot bney hanan) set up in the Court of the Gentiles for the purpose of money changing and the purchase of sacrificial animals. It was the combination of their greed, the fact that they brought in foreign coins, and that they carried out these activities in a sacred area that aroused the zeal of Jesus. This background can help us better understand why Jesus drove out these money changers and why the priests, especially those of the high house of Annas, were so opposed to his teachings”. The following excerpt is from Stan Duncan:

“According to John, Jesus found two things: those who were “selling” and those who were “changing.” The sellers sold things like cattle, sheep, and doves for the offerings, and the changers changed money from international currency to local currency so that it could be used in the Temple. Both were corrupt, and both were central to the economic idolatry that sustained the nation as a whole.

The sellers (tous pōlountai) were those who sold animals for the offerings made at the temple (sorry, but that was the tradition; they would probably think that I-pads and high heels were immoral too). People were required to make sacrifices for a variety of festivals and rites. If you were wealthy you gave a large animal, like a cow or ox. If you were poor you gave doves or pigeons. However, to ensure “unblemished” animals, you were required to purchase your animals at the gate of the temple where the prices were higher than the country-side. And, as with any regressive tax or price system, the costs tended to be felt more by the poor than the wealthy. To purchase one pair of doves at the temple was the equivalent of two days’ wages. But the doves had to be inspected for quality control just inside the temple, and if your recently purchased unblemished animals were found to be in fact blemished, then you had to buy two more doves for the equivalent of 40 days’ wages!

Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells a story of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamaliel (son of Gamaliel, Paul’s personal spiritual trainer), who went on a campaign against price gouging. But unfortunately stories of someone trying to protect the poor from the practice are rare. More common was the reference in the Jewish Mishna that the costs of birds rose so fast in Jesus’ time that women began lying or aborting their babies to avoid the required and punitive fees.
The changers (κερματίσται) were needed because neither the animal offerings nor the temple tax could be paid with the Roman currency in use for most of the national commerce, because it had pictures (read “graven images”) of the Roman Emperor on them who claimed to be a god. So, the money had to be changed into usable local currency.

The money changers sat outside of the temple proper, in the “court of the gentiles.” They bought and sold money as a part of the functioning of the general economy. Jerusalem, in fact, required a money changing industry because it was an international city that dealt in a number of currencies and people had to have a system by which they could buy and sell them. They used the money changers both for basic commerce and also for currency speculation. Insider traders could make fortunes when a new Roman battalion came to town carrying a glut of new coins which depressed the value of the local currencies. Ched Myers calls the money changers “street level representatives of banking interests of considerable power.” Indeed, because there was no one else to perform the function, the money changers were the banks in first century Palestine.

However, the Money Changers were also corrupt. They would not only exaggerate the fees they had to charge for the transactions, they would also inflate the exchange rate. The result was that for a poor person, the Money Changer’s share of the temple tax was about one day’s wages and his share of the transaction from international to local currency was about a half-day’s wages. And that was before they purchased their unblemished animals for sacrifice and then had to buy them again (at an enhanced price) because the inspector found a blemish or otherwise inadequate for the offering.

All tolled, a one day stay in Jerusalem during one of the three major festivals could cost between $3,000 and $4,000 dollars in contemporary value, and Jews were required to attend at least one of them each year. Josephus estimated that up to 2.25 million people visited Jerusalem during Passover, which would generate the equivalent of hundreds of millions of dollars. The money-changers opened their stalls in the country towns a month before the feast and then moved them to the temple by the time of the first arrivals. While all of this may appear immoral, none of it was illegal. They were business men operating within the law. But it took Jesus and a few radical rabbis to point out that the law itself was unjust.

Two last notes on the tables used by the money changers. First, it’s interesting to note that the word, “table” trapezes, had just two usages, one was for reclined eating and the other was for conducting financial transactions. It functioned like a loan office where people invested and borrowed money, and was sometimes translated simply as “Bank” (cf. Luke 19:23). The second thing is that in Isaiah 65:11 God condemns those tables. He says that people who forget God and God’s holy mountain are like those who set up “tables” to “Gad,” the name for the God of wealth.

So, what was Jesus’ response to the situation he found in Jerusalem? He made a whip, drove out the money changers, poured out their coins, turned over their tables and demanded that they “Stop making the realm of God into a realm of commerce.” It’s interesting to note that he doesn’t say “stop abusing a good system,” but simply “stop the system.”
To this short excurses we must add further citations from two scholars and encourage readers to peruse these short papers in full as they give a sense of the importance of the Jerusalem temple as a financial and economic institution and that in regard to pilgrimages. A good modern day analogy is the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca; “The annual occasion has become a lucrative business in recent years, proving a great financial asset to the economy of the oil-rich kingdom...Last year, the 10-day event generated some $10bn (£6.2bn), according to the Chamber of Commerce in Mecca”

Magen Broshi has the following observations:

Undoubtedly, many pilgrims brought not only cash with them to cover expenses, but also merchandise which they could sell or barter. This must have made Jerusalem an important commercial centre [p.34].

Recently Y. Meshorer has shown that after 19 B.C.E., when Tyre ceased to mint its own coins, all the Tyrian drachmas were produced in Jerusalem, most probably by the Temple authorities and possibly by Herod himself. The minting of the coins in Jerusalem must have accounted for a significant amount of income for the local economy [p.35].

The half-shekel due was raised from every Jewish male beyond the age of thirteen, and not from the age of twenty as appears in the Pentateuch. The Mishna makes a clear distinction between a minor and one who has to raise the due: if the father had begun to pay the Shekel on behalf of (his son that was a minor) he may never again cease to pay it (Mishna Shekalim 1. 3). According to the Mishna the money was used for Temple expenses and the city’s expenses in general. The dues could be spent on the (upkeep of the aqueduct, the city wall and its towers, and all the needs of the city. Hence it is apparent that those large sums of money made a great impact on economic life in the development of trade and industry in Jerusalem and on the employment situation there and in neighbouring settlements [p.35].

In addition to the half-shekel dues, the temple and its functionaries—the priests and Levites—received donations and gifts, some discretionary and some obligatory, which must have amounted to very high sums as well [p.36]

Thus the Temple, both as a focus of pilgrimage and a recipient of dues and donations, played a most important part in the country’s economy, and if we add to its revenues the regular sources of income already enumerated here we can see how Herod was able to finance his grand designs [p.36]
Martin Goodman\textsuperscript{12} also adds pertinent observations:

It is clear that, despite social tensions engendered by the inequitable distribution of wealth, this was an exceptionally prosperous society [p. 69].

The wealth of Jerusalem derived in one form or another from its Sanctity. It is a truism that without its religious role Jerusalem would never have become a major city; specifically, although by the end of the Second Temple period the city may have attracted wealthy visitors to study or to settle in an exciting international atmosphere, the main cause of prosperity was the presence of the Temple [p. 69]

As Philo remarked with pride, these pilgrims came from all over the Jewish world: they were thousands of men from thousands of cities” (\textit{Special Laws} 1,69). Such mass international pilgrimage is not attested for any other cult in the Roman empire, for the simple reason that only Jews insisted (at least in theory) both that only one Temple was a valid place for sacrifices and that all adult male devotees of the cult were duty bound to make regular obeisance there [p.70].

It seems clear that mass international pilgrimage was a feature of Judaism which distinguished it from other religions, thus explaining the nervousness of the Roman authorities at the potentiality for political unrest among such huge crowds [p.71].

Both Jewish and non-Jewish writers referred quite frequently to the transfer of money from the Diaspora to the Temple. This was the theme of Cicero (\textit{On Behalf of Flaccus} 28), Josephus described it as an ancient custom (\textit{Ant.} 14, 185—267; 16, 160—78), and according to \textit{Bar.} 1: 10—14 Babylonian Jews sent money (rather than themselves) to Jerusalem for offerings and prayers to be made on their behalf in the holy city on the feast days. None of these sources, however, refers to Diaspora pilgrimage. It seems likely that the pilgrimage feasts before Herod’s time involved essentially only local Jews from the land of Israel; the vastly expanded Temple court which Herod was to build would eventually be filled to overflowing, but no source suggests a problem with lack of space in the Temple before then [p.71].

But it seems to me more likely that the prime motivator was Herod himself. Herod was a remarkable businessman, speculator, and entrepreneur, and had initiated numerous complex financial schemes [p.71].

The Babylonian community remained under Parthian rule at this time, but trading contacts between the empires multiplied, as is evident from the sudden prosperity of the caravan city of Palmyra, which facilitated communications of other kinds. In any event, the brief episode of Parthian control over Judaea in 40—37 B.C.E. initiated far closer relations between Palestinian and Babylonian Jews than had been known for many centuries [p.72]
The economic advantages brought by such pilgrims were multifarious. Pilgrims helped to protect delivery of the offerings sent to the Temple, even by those who did not themselves go up to worship (cf. Ant 17. 312—13, on the caravans which came from Babylon); according to T Sheqalim 2:3, which may or may not be based on anything more than speculation, the offerings from emote lands were a rich source of Temple income. Jews from the Mediterranean Diaspora seem to have picked up from their gentile compatriots the practice of euergetism, apparently uncommon among Judaean Jews outside the Herodian family. Thus, the gates of the Temple were plated with gold by Alexander the Alabarch, who came from Alexandria (War 5, 201—206), and there are other examples of such conspicuous expenditure by individuals in search of prestige. Visitors were bound to spend money on the purchase of souvenirs, and although it is impossible to tell precisely when the non-biblical requirement to spend all second tithe money in Jerusalem became current, it is probable that it was in operation in Herod’s time [p.72-73].

Among more blatant moves was the appointment of high priests from the principal Diaspora communities, such as the Babylonian Hananel, and Jesus b. Phiabi and Boethus, both from Egypt. This preference for non Judaean priests as incumbents of the highest office has often been discussed as part of the suppression of the local Jewish elite, but it is reasonable also to emphasize its effect in raising the profile of Diaspora Jews in Jerusalem [p.73].

Summary: Goodman argues that although before Herod’s time there may have been pilgrimages it is only with the arrival of Herod that it becomes a full on commercial activity. This explains why he expanded the Temple, built a harbour in Caesarea and erected forts along the caravan routes. It also explains why he appointed Babylonian priests etc – to curry favour with the Jewish Diaspora. He was very cunning – cunning like a fox (as Jesus would say of his descendants) but he was also a money grubbing psychopath (like many modern bankers nowadays). Therefore, Jerusalem and the Temple became a money making machine and the priests were the bankers. They had become merchants (Canaanites) and this enraged Jesus. The poor were oppressed while corrupt priests drowned in luxury. To Sum up the status of the temple:

- It was a Central Bank
- It became a royal mint for other countries
- It practiced usury and inflated exchange rates
- It was a commercial hub at the centre of the Jewish Diaspora
- It was extremely wealthy
- It was politically important to Rome and Parthia
If this is not the picture of a beautiful woman who has become a whore then I don’t know what is. In other words, Jerusalem had become like pagan Babylon and their “banker temples”. As an aside, where did Mohamed get the clever idea to start a pilgrimage to Mecca? The Jews of Mecca are excoriated as hypocrites in the Koran and many were killed but it is a known fact that much of the Koran and Hadith rests on rabbinical writings. One clear way to unite fractured Arab tribes and create political stability and enormous wealth is (you guessed it) religion and pilgrimage. Of course, it is difficult to substantiate historically, but Mohammed is known to have been an illiterate merchant who obviously came into regular contact with Jewish traders. Who wrote down the “vision” that he received in a cave? It is unlikely that he relied on pagan Arab scribes (if there were any) to do this and literate and multilingual Jews had for centuries run law schools and study centres in these regions. It is notable that Muslims are also obsessed with Law and subsequently established law schools. Whether or not Jewish influence can be established beyond doubt it cannot be dismissed as a historical coincidence (sic). Our argument is that Jews contributed largely to Islam and also to the rise of apostate Christianity (through sabotage) and Babylon became the “Mother of harlots” with all her daughters dwelling in (and arguing about) Jerusalem –the holiest place for Judaism, Islam and Christianity. False religion has always been a happy bedfellow of mammon and political power, it was ever so.

Before we progress, we need to remind ourselves that Rev 18 is not all related to 70 CE (in the past) it establishes a pattern that bursts onto the scene to reveal its “full glory” right at the end (this will be discussed in a separate chapter but signs are already emerging for those willing to see). Having gained an impression of the commercial and economic importance of the temple we can now commence the exegesis.


The structure of Revelation 18

Revelation 18 continues the same subject matter as the previous chapter – the fall of Babylon. The reason for placing the chapter division between the two is doubtless the completely different approach that each has to the same event. While Rev 17 is a purely narrative account, Rev 18 waxes eloquent in offering us an almost poetic appraisal, from both a divine and worldly perspective, of the loss of this great city. The description is much more vivid, image after image is knit together to form the most brilliant patchwork of Old Testament texts. The text has a definite inverted structure, marked by the change in speaker:

A. Mighty angel (v.2f)

B. Heavenly voice (vv.4-8)

C. Kings (v.9f)

D. Merchants (vv.11-17)

C. Mariners (vv.17-19)

B. Heavenly voice (v.20)

A. Mighty angel (vv.21-24)

Closer examination reveals that each parallel element has certain features in common. Thus the first and second A's possess a threefold structure consisting of the following:

(a) A declaration of the destruction of Babylon (v.2, 21)
(b) A description concerning its future state (v.2, 22f)
(c) Three reasons for its fall – “for… and… and…” (v.9, 23f)
The B elements, uttered by some unidentified voice from heaven, both address the saints as “you” (v.4, 20). The middle CDC section, containing mourning for Babylon by three different categories of people, each begins the lament with the words, “Alas, alas, that great city!” (v.10, 16 and 19) Between these first and last lines, words are found which relate to the category of people speaking. Thus the kings focus upon the might of the city (v. 10), the merchants upon its fine garments and jewels (v. 16), and the mariners upon those “who had ships at sea” (v. 19). Such parallels and refrains are typical of Hebrew poetic style.

Some commentators are of the opinion that the theme of Rev 18 spills over into the following chapter, for the judgment of the harlot is again mentioned in 19.2f. Yet at the beginning of Rev 19 we notice the start of a new structure based upon the repetition of the word “Hallelujah” (19.1, 3, 4, and 6). This and the perfect balance of the content of Rev18 suggest that the chapter division has, in fact, been appropriately located. The picture of the harlot has been drawn from three distinct sources, i.e., those prophetic texts relating to Jerusalem, Tyre and, instead of Nineveh, yet hardly different in its significance, Babylon. In some cases the quotation is almost verbatim.
Allusions to ancient cities

References to ancient Babylon

Babylon is fallen, is fallen  
Is become the habitation of devils and the hold of every foul spirit  
All nations drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication  
Come out of her my people…  
Her sins have reached unto heaven  
Reward her even as she rewarded you  
I sit a queen and am no widow…  
Therefore shall her plagues come in one day  
Rejoice over her, thou heaven  
A stone….cast into the sea  
Thus shall that great city, Babylon, be thrown down  
All that were slain upon the earth

References to Tyre

Kings of the earth committed fornication with her  
The kings of the earth shall wail and lament her  
Gold, precious stones, spices…etc  
Bodies and souls of men  
Merchants weeping and lamenting  
Every shipmaster and all company of ships..  
And they cried out, What city is like unto this great city  
They cast dust on their heads, weeping and wailing  
The voice of harpers heard no more at all in thee  
Thy merchants were the great men of the earth

References to Jerusalem

Double unto her double  
The sound of the millstone… light of a candle shall shine no more in thee  
The voice of the bridegroom…  
In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints…
Scholars such as Provan understand Rev 18 as simply reflecting the familiar OT lament song patterns echoing God’s past judgment on pagan peoples rather than a description of economic details; “Does this list signify economic critique of Rome as such, or is it there simply because it is the sort of thing that one finds in biblical laments and dirges?”\textsuperscript{13} The demise of “Babylon” is based on the lament song of Tyre (Ezek.26-28); the lament of the merchants (Rev 18.11-16), and of the shipmasters (Rev 18.17-19) which is purely out of self interest, motivated by the loss of their trading partner.

The choice of lament song is significant as Tyre supplied much of the materials and labour for the building of the first temple (1 Kings5-9), moreover, Jerusalem under Solomon received abundance of spices etc (from Sheba)….gold from Ophir and precious stones (from the navy of Hiram)….Solomon constructed his own fleet to import gold, silver and ivory, apes and peacocks; “So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches” (1 Kings 10.23).\textsuperscript{14} The kingdom apostatised under Solomon with his penchant for foreign alliances and syncretism, so it is hardly coincidence that it is recorded that the weight of Solomon’s annual revenue of gold was 666 talents (1 Kings 10.14) the same number that identifies the beast (Rev.13.18). The image of “Babylon” is therefore a picture of Jerusalem at the zenith of her power and prestige.

Provan has noted that the OT lament songs employed in Rev 18 are deliberately altered in order to emphasise their rhetorical intent. For example, the addition of chariots to Ezekiel’s cargo list (compare 1 Kings 4.26, were Solomon ignored the command in Deut 17.16 not to accumulate horses and chariots)\textsuperscript{15} and the addition of ἐκολάθησαν to the Babylonian oracle of Rev 18.5. The Tyre lament is complemented (interrupted) by an oracle against Judah and Jerusalem in verses 23–24\textsuperscript{17} and the double recompense (in the Old Testament, only ever used against Israel) warning of verse 2 in the middle of Babylon allusions, and a number of echoes of passages from Lamentations reflecting on Jerusalem’s destruction (Provan suggests at least six such allusions). Therefore the original OT lament songs have been creatively adapted to point to Jerusalem. It is significant that Jesus states that both Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba would condemn that generation for not repenting.
Jerusalem is the harlot city of the OT because she was the place God chose to dwell.\textsuperscript{18} Chilton notes that the only two cities outside of Israel that are accused of harlotry are Tyre (Isa 23:16-17) and Nineveh (Nah 3.4). Yet, both had been in covenant with God (1 Kings 5.1-12; 9.13; Amos 1.9; Jonah 3.5-10).\textsuperscript{19} However, Chilton is incorrect as understanding this as equivalent to the covenant that God made directly with Israel at Sinai. In the first instance it was an agreement between Solomon and Tyre regarding supplying building materials for the temple. In Amos it references the “brotherly covenant” – i.e., a peace treaty between nations, and lastly the Jonah narrative is about the repentance of Nineveh – an agreement to abide by divine directives (soon forgotten). None of these are comparable to the covenant that God made with a nation chosen to be a kingdom of priests.

Significantly oracles against both these cities are altered to lament/condemn “Babylon” (Jerusalem) in Rev 18. A sexually lose daughter of a priest was subject to being ‘burned with fire’ (Lev 21.9; cf. Gen 38.24; Judg 15.6) because her uncleanness defiled her father. The city of Jerusalem suffered this fate twice in her history in 586 BCE (Jer 52.13) and in 70 CE (cf. Matt 22.17; 2 Pet 3:.0).\textsuperscript{20} The “harlot city” of Revelation will suffer the same fate (17.16; 18:8).
The Glory returns (Rev 18.1-2)

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird”.

When it says of the angel that the earth was lightened with his glory it is referring back to Ezekiel 43.1-7. In that passages Ezekiel refers to the return of glory to the temple via the east gate. The fall of Babylon (the false temple) is therefore the prelude to the establishment of the new temple – “descending out of heaven, having the glory of God” (Rev 21.10, 11). The same verses also condemn Jerusalem for whoredoms and for leaving the corpses of their king’s unburied (cf. the witnesses left unburied –the kings and priests of the future age). So the introduction to this chapter specifically chooses an inter-text from Ezekiel that deals with the temple signifying that the matter in hand concerns the renewal of the city of Jerusalem and of the temple (the return of the glory). However, the “new” cannot be revealed until the “old” is removed. This will not be the garish, pseudo-glory and fame of a city that has prostituted itself over the centuries and gone out of its way to fornicate with every passer-by. Yahweh declares that they are worse than a whore – at least a whore asks for money – but often they gave it away for free.

When Jesus Christ came to exorcise the unclean spirit from the nation (cf. Legion), he prophesied that the condition of the patient would deteriorate because of an obstinate refusal to replace the uncleanness with something wholesome. After wandering in the wilderness, the unclean spirit returned to his house making the final condition worse than it previously was (Matt.12.43-45). In fact it was seven times worse – complete madness! Jesus had declared their house unclean and prophesied that it would be desolated. Now, the woman after her initial wilderness wandering is encountered still in the wilderness, and with seven worse spirits in her bosom she has truly become an unclean harlot-city. In the repetition of the word unclean there is no doubt a contrast intended with the holy city, into which nothing unclean may enter (Rev 21.27).

Interestingly, in the Taylor Prism Sennacherib boasts that his siege resulted in Hezekiah being shut up in Jerusalem “like a caged bird”. This is another indication that we are dealing with Jerusalem. However, the inhabitants of Jerusalem in Rev 18.2 are not “doves” (Ps.55.6) like the suffering servant Hezekiah but rather “unclean and hateful birds” – carrion eaters (cf. Matt 24.8 eagles/vultures). It has become a cage for vultures picking away at the carcase of the nation in their avarice and littering the streets of the city with the corpses of the saints. To all intents and purposes it has become Babylon and is destined for the same fate as that pagan city.
Come out of her my people (Rev 18.3-4)

“For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues”.

Rev 18a has an intra-textual link with Rev 14.8; “And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication”. In the trumpets and in Rev 14 we established a dual context—a literal fall of Babylon followed by the fall of Jerusalem. Although these two events were separated by time they are cause and effect as the political threat to Babylon (Parthia) spurred the Kitos wars and the Bar Kochba rebellion. Notably, the rabbis described the fall of Jerusalem in 135 CE in similar terms to those found in Rev 14. However, the fall of Jerusalem in 70CE and again in 135CE is but a prelude, establishing a pattern that is repeated at the end. Trade is emphasised with mention of the merchants of the earth. The Hebrew for merchant is Canaanite, but mercantilism will have no place in the worship of the age to come; “In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts” (Zech 14.21) and this is because the whole city is transformed into a holy city with the LORD and his saints forming the temple.

They waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies στρηνους (strEnous), giving the idea of force or strength (cf. strenuous) translated by the CLV as “her power to indulge” and by the YLT as “from the power of her revel were made rich” the normative form στρηνιασαντες found in Rev 18.9 is again translated indulge/revel or lived luxuriously (NKJ), deliciously (KJV) or wantonly (ASV). The idea seems to be one of unrestrained (or strenuous) passion. The appeal to “come out of her” is an appeal to disassociate from “her temple” (which is her idol/image); “And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:15-17). The apostle based his exhortation on an allusion to Isa 52.11; “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing, go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD”.
That chapter tells of the New Zion (freshly delivered from Assyria) where Hezekiah had been “caged like a bird” and where now the “good tidings” (gospel) of salvation is preached to the city of Jerusalem and the priest return with the sacred vessels that had been paid to the Assyrians (2 Kings 18.16) as a down payment (done while Hezekiah was mortally sick) to secure a peace treaty which Sennacherib that he subsequently reneged on. Isaiah in turn bases his allusion on the Exodus (Exod.11.1-2) where the people were encouraged to depart from Egypt bearing gold and silver payments from their gentile neighbours that was afterwards used to build the furniture of the sanctuary. Gentile wealth built all the sanctuaries and was not of itself unclean, in fact the wealth of the Gentiles will flow to God according to the prophets (and this “wealth” includes Gentile converts).

However, the harlot had used Gentile wealth for her own aggrandizement and the enrichment of her trading partners. Future nations will bring their glory and honour to the New Jerusalem and the gates of the city are are left permanently open (no longer exclusively Jewish) but despite the open access no obscenity will find its way into this city (Rev 21-24-27). As always, scripture paints a cascading pattern of allusions form the Old to the New Testament as the people of God are encouraged to “come out of her”. Rev 18.4 ends with a reference to the vial-plagues; “that ye receive not of her plagues”, demonstrating that Rev 18 runs parallel with the last vial-plagues described in Rev 16. This is then an “end-time” picture, but it is based on the patterns revealed in the past (70CE/135CE). The question remains how do the saints “come out of her”? In the past it meant martyrdom as Christians who refuted the Sanhedrin or refused Bar Kochba were murdered.
I sit a queen, and am no widow (Rev 18.5-7)

“For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow”.

Like the tower of Babel the sin of the great city is so blatant that it reaches to heaven. It threatens the sovereignty of God himself, and is of such a magnitude that it can no longer be ignored. The longsuffering of God has been stretched beyond the limit and has finally expired, he will not be mocked. The man of sin has been revealed in all his glory, but though he exalted himself to heaven, he will be cast into the lowest part of hell. The time has arrived for just retribution. The expression double unto her can only be understood with respect to the Jerusalem background, since the expression has its origins within the law and covenant. In Deut.21.17 it states that the firstborn son should inherit a double portion from the father. Israel was God’s firstborn (Exod.4.22), and therefore if found wanting would receive a double punishment for his sins (as Isa.40.2). At this particular point, since Tyre and Babylon is in no sense firstborn, any application to these (or to Rome) is wholly excluded. The soliloquy in Rev 18.7 is based on Isa.47.8-9:

Isaiah 47:8-9 Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments.

Isaiah 47 relates to Assyria although many commentators contextualize it as an Oracle against Babylon. In the ancient world Nineveh and Babylon became virtually synonymous terms (scholarly confusion between Assyria and Babylon has been previously discussed). This explains the correspondence between Isaiah 47 and the oracle against Nineveh found in Nahum:
In Matt 12.41, it is the repentance of Nineveh that Jesus holds up as an example to the Jews of his day. In Isaiah it is the pagan city of Nineveh (Babylon) that is being condemned for sitting as a queen. In an act of self-divinization she boasts twice in chapter 47 --- “I am, and none else beside me “(vv.8, 10) which is a parody of, “I, even I am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour” (Isa 43.11). She appropriates divinity to herself and therefore robs God. In his Isaiah commentary H.A. Whittaker notes; “In recent years the easy assumption that the Babylon of Revelation is the Roman church has been seen to rest on precarious foundations. On the other hand copious Bible evidence has been adduced (“Rev”: ch.34) pointing to equation with apostate Jerusalem. At first sight any parallel (which is certainly reasonable to look for) with Assyria seems right out of the question. Yet the parallel is there. In the first century the great enemy of the gospel was not Rome but Judaism. The N.T. evidence for this is massive. Thus, just as Assyria sought to destroy Hezekiah and his faithful remnant but was itself destroyed, so also the bitter antagonism of Jewry to the cause of Christ led to the horrors of A.D. 70 and the end of the temple. Jerusalem the Queen city became a slave, and will yet again before Messiah’s coming. Self-confidence and false religion will alike be found futile. The supreme blasphemy of Jewry today is the claim that Israel is her own redeemer: “I am, and there is none beside me.” This pride will be rebuked, “I will take vengeance”.24
The hour of judgement (Rev 18.8-10)

“Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come”.

These verses describe the effects of the outpouring of the vial plagues (see Jer.18.21) and the burning of the city (Rev.17.16), a punishment solely reserved for a priest’s daughter who committed harlotry. Pestilence and famine were the common results of a prolonged siege, mourning is linked with the death of the inhabitants, and burning with fire is the final act of destruction by the conquerors. A fate Jerusalem has suffered twice before.

Heaven has lamented the idolatrous materialism that has led to Babylon’s fall. Now the voice from heaven goes on to tell how earth will join the lament, because the bottom has dropped out of the world market. The kings of the earth are said to mourn the mighty city, the merchants the wealthy city; but this is a distinction without a difference, for the kings have shared her fornication and luxury, i.e. their sovereignty has been based on the mercantile prosperity she provided. Three times we are told that the desolation is to be accomplished in one hour, and we are reminded of the one hour of the ten kings reign with the monster, during which they will wage war on the Lamb (17.12-14). The one hour of persecution is balanced by the one hour of retribution, because the blood of the martyrs is not only the seed of the New Jerusalem but the ruin of the great whore. The phrase standing afar off, is also repeated three times in this text unit (v.10, 15, 17) and characterises the stance of each of the three groups who witness the destruction of the archetypal Babylon; kings, merchants and the maritime professionals. This spatial separation not only expresses the horror they feel at its sudden and unexpected destruction; it also refers to their attempt to distance themselves from a judgment they deserve to share. We note how no one comes to her rescue – where are the merchant ships of Tarshish?

“Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out. There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up.” (Isa.51: 17-18)
The merchants weep (Rev 18.11-13)

“And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men”.

Most commentators understand the list of merchandise, particularly the mention of slavery (v.13) as indicative of the Roman markets with their unparalleled access to world trade. Later, this vast accumulation of worldly wealth and temporal power became a characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church. The author would not dispute that there is a universal element of truth in this perception, the Romish Church is a false religion and has done what false religions always do, self-aggrandisement. This assessment is however, an oversimplification and ignores important scriptural considerations:

1. The man of sin is only fully manifested at the end.
2. It only exists a short while.
3. It has Middle Eastern origins.
4. It is typified by Solomon’s kingdom.

Solomon was specifically condemned for three sins:

(a) Idolatry – image of the beast.
(b) Foreign marriages- fornication with the kings of the earth.
(c) Commerce- 666 talents of gold income per annum.

Commerce flourished in his kingdom and brought wealth; and voyages were successfully made to Ophir and traffic was conducted with India. For the protection and fostering of trade, he built store cities, among others Palmyra, in the desert midway between Damascus and the Euphrates. Many of the goods listed in Revelation bear correspondence with the materials stockpiled by David, for the building and ritual of the temple (2 Chron.2.4, 7, 8). This was innocent enough, and Solomon spent seven years building the temple, after which he devoted thirteen years to the building of his own palace (1 Kgs.7.1-12). This was completed with a magnificent throne approached by six steps and flanked by two gold lions.
The splendour of his court, the magnificence of his table, and his pomp when on excursions corresponds to his wealth and political power (1 Kgs.10.4, 5, 21). “And he reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt. And the king made silver in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar trees made he as the sycamore trees that are in the low plains in abundance.” (2 Chron.9. 26-27)

Although Solomon’s reign commenced with the best of motives, absolute power corrupts absolutely. His reign became a parody of the kingdom, and the gift of divine wisdom was transformed into man’s wisdom. Without a doubt, the picture in Revelation is based on Solomon’s corrupt kingdom. It serves as a salutary lesson in how easily divine principles can be corrupted. This is not, therefore a picture of the Roman Church, although she too will undoubtedly play her role, for all that is false will be cleansed by fire.

How do we understand the slaves (bodies) and souls of men in this light? Solomon raised a levy (tribute) of bondservants on the nations he conquered (1 Kgs.9.21). No doubt their labour contributed towards the building of his palace (and the temple?) and was also used for domestic service. We are told that he did not raise a levy (tribute) from among the children of Israel. Presumably, the 30,000 men required for cutting timber and mining stone in Lebanon were Gentile captives (1 Kgs.5.13-18). This is not completely clear, but we know that the common people resented Solomon’s harshness; “Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.” (1 Kgs.12.4) Serving the Lord should not be considered “grievous”, but it is not God that they were serving – they were serving the ambition of a King, who literally committed fornication with the women of the surrounding nations (made marriage alliances that led Israel astray). Parallels with 70CE (and 135 CE) are clear enough – the temple had become a mammon machine ---literally sucking up the riches of Babylon and beyond-- no doubt much of this ended up in the private coffers and residences of the priestly class ---silks from China and slaves from the empire, gifts to influence political favours and priestly blessings. Think here of the palatial residence of the high priest with its own courtyard/auditorium and bath. They had prostituted themselves to mammon and they were to be burnt with fire. 


The desire of your soul (Rev 18.14-16)

“And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing. And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!”

Here the phrase translated the ripe fruit you desired can be rendered more literally the ripe fruit of the desire of your soul. The children of Israel were commanded the following: “When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.” (Deut.12.20) It was not sinful for them to eat (clean) flesh “only, be sure thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh” (v. 23). The harlot has, however, developed a taste for blood, for she has no qualms in drinking the blood of the saints and the prophets. She also exercises her other lust, materialism: “For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.” (Ps.10: 3) But even more than the desire for temporal power is the desire to be like God: “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” (Gen.3.6)

The RV has the rendering woe instead of alas. This is repeated in v.10, 16 and 19. These three woes have already been encountered in the last three trumpets (8.13) also a judgment against Israel, and are now intensified in the judgment of the great city which happens in the vial section. We now have 2 x 3 Woes – render double unto her (v.6). At this point the words of the merchants echo the description given by the angel in 17: 4 – except for this one particular detail:
**Rev 17. 4 - angel says:**
clothed in purple and scarlet,
and decked with gold and
precious stones and pearls

**Rev 18.16 – merchants say:**
clothed in fine linen and
scarlet and decked with
precious stones and pearls.

While the minds of the merchants associate the harlot of being worthy to be clothed in fine linen, not so with the angel, who omits these words. The reason for this can be readily explained by reference to 19.8 where it states that the bride was attired in fine linen – for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. How unfitting it would have been to include this in 17.4. And how remarkably consistent is the scriptural use of imagery!
Such great riches come to nought (Rev 18.17-19)

“For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate”.

The shipmasters had every reason to lament for they were out of business. Consider the following:

2 Chronicles 9:20-22 - And all the drinking vessels of king Solomon were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold: none were of silver; it was not any thing accounted of in the days of Solomon. For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Huram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. And king Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.

1 Kings 9:26-28 - And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Eziongeber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon.

1 Kings 10:22-23 - For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.

Caird comments; “With exemplary restraint John never shows us the fall of Babylon. Just as earlier he declined to describe God and allowed us to see him through the hymns of the worshipping host of heaven, so now he allows us to see the fall of Babylon only through the laments of the heavenly and earthly spectators. But this is no mere literary or dramatic device. There is a sense in which the spectators speak for the author as well for themselves. He has had to be told not to stare in wonder at the great whore (17: 6-7), for he too was able to appreciate the glamour and brilliance, however deeply aware he might be of their dangers.
He was no ascetic, contemptuous of the beauties and amenities of the civilised world. The cry, “Was there ever a city like the great city?” is wrung from his own heart as he contemplates the obliteration of the grandeur of the city of Jerusalem. The proof of this is to be seen in the thoroughly material splendours of the holy city, into which “the treasures and wealth of the nations” are to be brought (21: 6). There was nothing sinful about the commodities that made up the luxury trade, until the great whore used them to seduce mankind into utter materialism. Every object of worth that seafaring man had ever carried to grace the life of the city, whether in its natural state or enhanced by the craftsmanship of man, belonged to the order of God’s creation which must be redeemed by the overthrow of Babylon, and would find its proper place in the New Jerusalem. In the meantime it is with infinite pathos that John surveys the loss of so much wealth.”
Rejoicing in heaven (Rev 18.20)

“Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her”.

This is very close to the LXX version of Deuteronomy 32.43 – the song of witness against the nation of Israel, a prophetic song, as the previous chapter (Deut.31) makes clear:

For when I shall have brought them into the land which I sware unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I sware. (Deut.31.20-21)

The rejoicing of the saints stands in sharp contrast to the mourning of the kings, merchants and seafarers. It is the heavenly voice that summons the saints to rejoice because God has avenged you on her. This verse is not easy to translate. Literally it reads: “God has judged your judgment from her.” This very difficult expression has given rise to many different interpretations. Some consider that it means, “God has judged her and vindicated you”; but it is not obvious how this can be gotten from the Greek. The RSV appears to take krima (judgment) as a cognate accusative and “your judgment” as the equivalent of “judgment in favour of you”: “God has given judgment for you against her.” The NEB takes krima as the equivalent of the Hebrew rib, which can either mean a lawsuit or the cause which a man submits to the arbitration of a judge: “in the judgment against her he has vindicated your cause.”

These renderings suffer the same two disabilities; they overload the final phrase, ex autes (from her), and they give to krima a meaning that it does not have anywhere else in Revelation, in the New Testament, or indeed even in the Septuagint. In the New Testament krima means one of three things (a) the right to act as a judge (Rev.20. 4); (b) the judicial act of passing sentence (John 9. 39; Rom. 20. 4; Acts 24. 25; 1 Pet.4.17); and most frequently (c) the sentence passed by a judge. It is not hard to see that only the third sense will fit the present context. “Your judgment”, then, must mean either “the sentence passed by you” or “the sentence passed on you”; and the first of them is inappropriate here because God is the judge.
The verse would then literally read; Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath sentenced or judged (instead of avenged) you on her.

Caird sums up as follows, “Thus your judgment must be the sentence passed on the martyrs in law court of “Babylon.” John has previously been invited to watch the passing of sentence on the great whore (17:1); now he hears that this consists in the reversal of the sentence she passed on you. The phrase *ex autes* is best explained by two Old Testament laws – the law of bloodshed and the law of malicious witness. The law of bloodshed declares: “I will require from a man the life of his fellow man. Whoever sheds a man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Gen. 9:5-6). The law of malicious witness adds: “If a malicious witness comes forward to accuse a man of crime, then both parties to dispute shall appear before the Lord…and if the witness is found guilty of perjury and has accused his fellow falsely, you shall do to him as he meant to do to his fellow” (Deut.19:16-19; cp.Rev.11:13). John has produced a portmanteau version of these two laws. God has imposed on her the sentence she passed on you. Babylon has brought a malicious accusation against the martyrs, which has resulted in their death. But the case has been carried “before the Lord”, to the court of final appeal, where judgments are true and just. There Babylon has been found guilty of perjury, and God has therefore required from her the life of her victims, exacting from her the penalty she extracted from them.

With this forensic setting so clearly before us, we can now the better appreciate why John has throughout called the victims of persecution witnesses (martyrs). The Greek word martyrs had not yet come to be a technical term, meaning a martyr. It still meant “one who gives evidence in a court of law.” It had, of course, been used metaphorically of the missionaries of the church, who were witnesses to the truth and power of the gospel (Acts 1:8). But John uses it more literally than this, with an eye to its legal origins. He knew from his own experiences that no Christian could be put to death for his faith without first being given the opportunity of testifying at his own trial before a Roman judge (cp. Lk.21:13). But he wishes to assure prospective martyrs that the evidence given in earthly law courts leading to a death sentence, is also evidence given in the heavenly court, leading to the condemnation of Babylon. This explains the lack of gloating in the song of triumph, since the martyrs can be vindicated only by the reversal of Babylon’s sentence, so that Babylon’s malicious witness recoils on her own head.”
Babylon to sink like a millstone (Rev 18.21)

“And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all”.

The mighty angel is the third to be given this appellation (Rev 5.2; 10. 1). Since the first was the angel of the great scroll, in which was written the redemptive purpose of God, and the second was the angel of the little scroll, which contained the witnesses part in that purpose, the third appearance of the mighty angel (Gabriel?) must mark the consummation of the contents of both scrolls. His symbolic act with the millstone and the words he speaks are reminiscent of both Jeremiah and Jesus. Jeremiah wrote his prophecies against Babylon in a scroll and was told to tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates, saying, “So shall Babylon sink, never to rise again” (Jer.51: 60-64). Jesus declared that the faithful man could have this mountain (Mt. Zion, with its temple and Judaism) removed and cast into the sea. Jesus also warned that it would be better for a man to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round his neck than to cause one of his disciples to stumble (Mtt.18: 6). With the hurling of the millstone it is as though a voice called, “Stop!” over all the activities of the great city.
No more at all (Rev 18.22-11)

“And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived”.

This whole section is a paraphrase of Jer.25.10 and refers to the ancient city of Jerusalem: “Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.” (Jer.25.10) The prophecy of Joshua ben Ananias (62 CE), which anticipated the destruction of Jerusalem, contains one line that reads “A voice against the bridegroom and the bride.” (Jos.J.W.6.301) Jeremiah had warned his contemporaries that the normal activities of the city of Jerusalem would cease. Jesus had also warned their descendants that the day of the Son of man would overtake them, like lightening out of a clear sky, amid all the pursuits of the city – trade, building and marriage (Lk.17: 24-30). The old Jerusalem will pass away as though she had never existed, she will be replaced with, and transformed into the New Jerusalem. “Thus saith the LORD; Again there shall be heard in this place, which ye say shall be desolate without man and without beast, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate, without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast, the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.” (Jer.33.10-11) The voice of gladness will be heard again, the voice of bride, the Lamb’s wife and voice of the bridegroom himself (Rev 21.9). “Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the West Country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.” (Zech.8.3-8)
Blood guilt (Rev 18.24)

“And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth”.

There is yet another echo of the teaching of Jesus in the last words of the angel. Jesus had warned his contemporaries that, unless they disassociated themselves from the past by an act of national repentance, their generation would “be held accountable for the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world.” (Lk.11.50). National Jewish history is a record of cumulative guilt. They were instructed to, “fill up the measure of their fathers”, and they did – by murdering the witnesses in Jerusalem (Rev 11.8). In fact this last verse is almost the exact equivalent of Lk.13.33, “It cannot be that a prophet shall perish out of Jerusalem.”
Conclusion

The demise of “Babylon” is based on the lament song of Tyre (Ezek.26-28); the lament of the merchants (18.11-16) and of the shipmasters (18.17-19) is purely out of self interest, motivated by the loss of their trading partner. One argument contra the use of Babylon as a metaphor for Jerusalem is that Jewish literature applies Babylon as a cipher for Rome. Although Jerusalem is called Egypt and Sodom, Beale notes that there is no example in Jewish literature of the use of the name Babylon for Jerusalem.27 It is true that both Babylon and Rome burnt the city of Jerusalem and therefore Babylon is more likely to be cast in the role of the enemy of Jerusalem, rather than as a metaphor for Jerusalem. However, Beale’s argument by omission is weak, for it is possible to understand the “Old Jerusalem” (Babylon) as the enemy of the “New Jerusalem” (the saints) and this is strengthened by the admonition to “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues” (18.4), which echoes the words of Christ spoken to Jerusalem and Judea to “flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart…” (Lk.21.21//Matt.24.16//Mk.13.14).

Moreover, the vision of the prophet Zechariah explicitly informs us that after the destruction of the temple (in 586 BCE) that “wickedness/lawlessness” (symbolised by a woman) would establish a base in Babylon.28 It was in Babylon that various Jewish academies were established, where a renaissance of Jewish interpretation occurred and where the Babylonian Talmud was compiled (after the destruction of the “house” in 70 CE). So, it is not so strange to find Jerusalem referred to as “Babylon” because that is where she came from (the exile) and that is where she established a base to justify her rejection of the Messiah and institute her own righteousness. In this sense Jerusalem = Babylon ; “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” (Gen.11.4 contrast Gen.12.2).

Jerusalem was chosen as the divine dwelling place (“city of the great king” – Ps.48.2 cf. Rev 1.5), established “in the midst of the nations” (Ezek.5.5) and destined to “reign over many nations” (Deut.15.2 cf. 28.1). Kraus argues that ancient Jews saw the world, even in times of oppression, as under the rulership of the Davidic dynasty, because God had chosen Israel and established Jerusalem as His world’s capital.29 It is against this background that Rev.17.2 (“reigns over the kings of the earth”) should be understood. Ford proposes that Rev 17.18 “is probably a similar hyperbole; cf. 4QLam which describes Jerusalem as ‘princess of all nations’.”30
The choice of lament song is significant as Tyre supplied much of the materials and labour for the building of the first temple (1 Kings 5-9), moreover, Jerusalem under Solomon received abundance of spices etc (from Sheba)....gold from Ophir and precious stones (from the navy of Hiram)....Solomon constructed his own fleet to import gold, silver and ivory, apes and peacocks; “So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches” (1 Kings 10.23).\textsuperscript{31}

The kingdom apostatised under Solomon with his penchant for foreign alliances and syncretism, so it is hardly coincidence that it is recorded that the weight of Solomon’s annual revenue of gold was 666 talents (1 Kings 10.14) the same number that identifies the beast (Rev 13.18). The image of “Babylon” is therefore a picture of Jerusalem at the zenith of her power and prestige.

The cities of Babylon and Nineveh were utterly destroyed and never rebuilt. Surely, the city of Jerusalem will not suffer the same fate? The short answer is yes, Jerusalem will suffer the same fate and “shall not be found anymore”. The “Old Jerusalem” will no longer exist. The “Old Jerusalem” was full of obscenities, fornication and murder – it resisted the prophets of old, the messiah and the witnesses. There is no place in the kingdom of God for that Jerusalem and for all that she represents; instead she is replaced by; “The holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”. (Rev 21.2) Of course, this does not mean that there will no longer be a physical city or a national presence; however, the “great city” will not resemble her old self. That city will be found “\textit{nevermore at all}” and will no longer exist as a place of rebellion against God. The new city will be built on different principles and sound foundations; she will become the dwelling place of Christ and his saints.
1 Summation from pages 94-97, 137, 140-144, 180
14 Compare Solomon’s use of forced labour (1 Kings 9:21) with “bodies and souls of men” (Rev.18:13) – returning to Judaism is likened by Peter to returning to slavery (2 Pet.2:19–22); the Sinai covenant was one of bondage (Gal.4:24).
15 Provan, “Foul Spirits, Fornication and Finance,” 88
16 See Provan, Ibid, 94. The term ἐκολλήθησαν (pile up to/reach) is the indicative aorist of the verb κολλάω (cling/stick) a term that has covenant implications in the LXX (forms of προσκόλλαν [προσκολλάω]; cleave to, stick to, cf. Deut.11:22; Ps.72:28; Jos.23:8) and therefore invokes negative associations in Rev.18:5 i.e., the apostates did not cleave/stick to God and therefore their sins have stuck together/piled up etc until they reach heaven (like the tower of Babel). 
17 Ibid
20 Josephus, War 7.1 indicates that Titus gave orders for “the whole city and the temple to be razed to the ground”; and in Josephus Ant 20,250, it is stated plainly that “Titus captured and set fire to the temple”.
21 The prophets were not prudes or squeamish when depicting this but translators often protect the readers sensibilities e.g., Ezek 23.20 in the KJV: For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh is like the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses in modern English would read something like, “hungr like a donkey and comes like horses” which would not go down very well when read from the platform. Nevertheless, there is no false modesty in Scripture and the prophets did not pull their punches.
22 See the resources page under the heading: {HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/html/resources.html"
23 Depicted on Vespasian’s coins
24 H.A. Whittaker, Isaiah,(Biblia, 2000 [reprint]),402
He [Leen] has tentatively identified the “Palatial Mansion” (or “Herodian Mansion”) as the place of residence for Annas the high priest. If this is correct, then this would be a “look inside” the first phase of Jesus’s Jewish trial. And it may explain things like where the courtyard was located and how Jesus could look at Peter though they were in two different locations (Jesus inside and Peter outside, warming himself by a charcoal fire). Leen Ritmeyer, The Palace of Annas the high priest (2012) [Accessed May 2017]

“In Revelation Rome, along with other kingdoms, is identified with Babylon, yet Jews never referred to Rome as Babylon until after the destruction of the temple in 70, comparing that destruction with the similar destruction carried out by the Babylonians many centuries before.” (page 4 of the [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/Beale.pdf"] or the book; G. K. Beale, The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 25.


Compare Solomon’s use of forced labour (1 Kings 9:21) with “bodies and souls of men” (Rev.18:13) – returning to Judaism is likened by Peter to returning to slavery (2 Pet.2:19-22); the Sinai covenant was one of bondage (Gal.4:24).
Chapter 19

Revelation 19 and Ezekiel

Any approach that failed to address the reuse of Ezekiel in the Apocalypse would be remiss as Ezekiel 38 and Ezekiel 39 are intertextually linked with Revelation 19 and 20. Of course the question must be asked why John splits 38 and 39 and reverses their chronological order, with Ezek. 39 forming the subtext for Rev. 19 and Ezek. 38 forming the subtext for Rev. 20. Critical scholars early in this century tended to explain inconsistencies by a two-source theory of Ezekiel and the NT-scholar Mealey (1992:131-132) went so far as to propose that Ezekiel 38 and 39 refer to two entirely different battles.

Bøe observes that;

From John’s perspective Ezekiel 38-39 probably appeared as an integrated unity held together by the uniform Yahweh speech and its consistent theme of Gog’s attack and defeat. He probably did not question its origin as a genuine Ezekielian prophecy, placed at this specific place among the many oracles of salvation for Israel. In spite of its penultimate place in the book of Ezekiel, it is not certain that it has been read as chronological information, like a timetable…¹

Stewart Crane, suggests that the chronological order found in Revelation reflects the chapter order in the version of Ezekiel preserved in Papyrus 967 -

Although Revelation is a Christian book, and therefore one step removed from the focus of our investigation, it nevertheless has a significant thematic layout possibly reflecting both P 967 and the received text’s chapter order. Lust (1980, p.180) proposes that John likely utilised Ezekiel when writing Revelation’s end time events (Rev. 18- 22), while observing a slightly different order of final events in Revelation than in the received text of Ezekiel. Of special interest is Rev. 20.11-15 that has a second resurrection after the battle with Gog and Magog (Rev. 20.7-10), therefore matching P 967 chapter order. It does raise the question of what may have inspired John to write of a second resurrection, if he was using Ezekiel’s order of events. ²
The fact that different versions have slightly different chapter alignments is interesting. However, statistical analysis indicates that chapter 38-39 form a unit within the restoration oracles. Moreover, although Crane argues for the last resurrection occurring after the second battle the text in Revelation 20 seems to suggest that the battle and second resurrection are almost simultaneous events or at the very least closely related.

Even a cursory reading makes it quite clear that John places Ezekiel 39 at the start of the thousand years and Ezekiel 38 at the end of the thousand years. Although John echoes the language of Ezekiel 39 he omits to mention Gog in Revelation 16 – the enemy in this chapter is the Beast, the Kings of the earth and the false prophet. At the end of the thousand years the enemy is named as Gog.

Ezekiel 39 relates to a cleansing procedure for removal of the dead bodies and the establishment of a memorial to the destruction of Gog --- these elements are not necessary or even possible at the end of the thousand years as God will be “all in all” and the earth will populated by immortals.

Moreover, the mention of sacrifice and birds in Ezekiel 39 is an echo of the land covenant established at Passover with Abraham. Finally, Gog is cast into the lake of fire where the beast, the kings of the earth and the false prophet already reside (for the past thousand years). Perhaps the best way to highlight the difference in Johannine usage is with a comparison table on the next page:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ezekiel 39</th>
<th>Revelation 19</th>
<th>Ezekiel 38</th>
<th>Revelation 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39.17 And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.</td>
<td>19.1 Whore judged</td>
<td>20.4 First resurrection start of the 1,000 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.7 Marriage of the Lamb</td>
<td>19.16 KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.</td>
<td>20.2 Satan bound for 1,000 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.17 saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;</td>
<td>19.19-20 The beast, and the kings of the earth false prophet cast in lake of fire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.8 After many days thou shalt be visited</td>
<td>Papyrus 96??</td>
<td>20.5 Second Resurrection at end of the 1,000 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.4 I will bring thee forth</td>
<td>20.7 Satan released at end of 1,000 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.2 Gog, the land of Magog</td>
<td>20.8 Gog and Magog</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.11 Land of unwalled villages...at rest, dwelling safely</td>
<td>20.9 Compassed the camp of the saints</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.22 Fire, and brimstone.</td>
<td>20.9 Consumed by fire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.</td>
<td>20.11-15 Second Resurrection described—wicked mortals condemned to death.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Decisive in this reading is the phrase “it is done” (Ezek.39.8) which links with “it is done” in Rev.16.17. Revelation 16 relates the battle of Armageddon, when Christ “returns as a thief” and the faithful are exhorted to keep their garments (16.15).
It is done (Ezek 39.8)

“Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this is the day whereof I have spoken”

The phrase “it is done” is used three times in the NT. The first occurrence is Lk 14.22 in the parable of the wedding feast (a certain man made a great supper, and bade many v.16) to demonstrate the unpreparedness of the guests (some attended without garments). The second occurrence is in Rev 16.15 in relation to the return of Christ and garments. The third occurrence is at the end of the thousand years when the heavenly Jerusalem is revealed (Rev 21.6). A fourth occurrence (but using a different Greek word) in John 19.30 describes Jesus’ last words as -- “It is finished”. It seems then that versions of this phase are used at pivotal points in divine history.

The phrase is not, however, used in Revelation 19 because that chapter is an expansion of the sixth vial (Rev.16) --- Rev.19 fills in the details of Rev.16. The Great Supper is the “messianic banquet” where the enemies of the Lord are depicted as sacrifices. Moreover, Psalm 22, which was recited by Jesus on the cross (and is connected with the sacrifice of Genesis 22)5 ends with similar phraseology, (literally): “he hath done” (Ps.22.31). It cannot be coincidental that Rev.19 echoes Psalm 22:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revelation 19</th>
<th>Psalm 22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. The four and twenty elders. And four living creatures.</td>
<td>22. In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. 21. Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns (the cherubim in the sanctuary).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.</td>
<td>23. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The voice of a great multitude.</td>
<td>25. My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows (marriage vows?) before them that fear him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Hallelujah, for the Lord God Almighty reigneth.</td>
<td>I will declare thy name unto my brethren.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,9. The marriage supper of the Lamb.</td>
<td>26. The meek shall eat and be satisfied...your heart shall live forever.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, Armageddon (Rev.16) and the Great Supper (Rev .19) describe the same event in the figure of an anti-type. The Lord was crucified and had a “last supper” now the beast is metaphorically crucified and becomes the ingredient (sacrifice) at the “great supper” (wedding feast). This occurs at the return of Christ. The next time the pivotal “it is done” phrase is introduced is at the end of the thousand years after the recent Gog invasion and the abolition of death.
The release of Satan at the end of the millennium is the precursor to the recrudescence of evil. This is symbolised by the invasion of Gog and Magog based on the Ezekiel prophecies. There has already been one fulfilment of this prophecy in the banquet of the birds at the start of the millennium, so why is there a second fulfilment at the end of the millennium?

This invasion is different from the earlier one, for although the language of Gog and Magog was employed, the nations were never referred to by name in Revelation chapter 19. Now “Gog of the land of Magog” from the prophecy of Ezekiel has become a pair of nations in chapter 20, Gog and Magog. Gog is therefore, being treated as a true myth, applicable to different historic situations. No longer does the attack come from the uttermost parts of the north (Ezek.39.2), or even from the east (16.12), but from the four corners of the earth (20.7). In this chapter Gog and Magog symbolise something greater than the constituent nations, for as the Abrahamic descendants are prophesied to be like the sand of the sea shore (Gen.22.17), so Gog and Magog will be like the sand of the sea itself. Abraham will be a blessing to all his spiritual descendants who come from many nations, but Gog and Magog will bring the curse of death on all their followers, who also originate from many nations.

The object of the attack is the camp of God’s people and the city he loves. Camp is the word used in the story of the Exodus for Israel’s wilderness home, and reminds us that Gods people, even in the golden age of the millennium, the ecclesia in the wilderness is still the ecclesia in pilgrimage.6

In order to complete the picture we must ask ourselves another important question. What occasion calls for all the saints to be gathered in the beloved city at the end of the millennium? We would expect the saints in their role as Christ’s agents and as part of his theocratic government, to be dispersed all over the world. What occasion calls for this summit meeting? The suggestion is that the only event that merits such a huge gathering is the last judgment. As king-priests it is not unreasonable to assume that they will participate in the judgment scenario just as they did in ruling the nations.

Those cast outside the city are the mortals found wanting at the last (second) resurrection – for, “without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whoso loveth and maketh a lie” (22.15). “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.” (Luke 13.28)
The elements, refused entry to the city, foment the last rebellion. The city is of course the community of saints known as the “New Jerusalem”, with Christ, the tree of life in the midst. The imagery comes from Eden with Satan (cf. the serpent) tempting the nations and the rejected sinners denied access to the tree of life and exiled from Eden (the beloved city). It cannot be coincidence that the last rebellion and the last resurrection both occur at the end of the thousand years. The angel with the key has the authority to release Satan from the pit, but the key is also symbolic of the authority to raise the dead from the pit, for Christ has the key of David and whatever he opens cannot be shut and vies versa (3.7). He has the keys to death and Hades and can open or shut the doors of the kingdom on whomever he chooses. The prophet Isaiah seems to confirm that the release of Satan and the second resurrection are the same event. “And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.” (Isa.24.22-23)

If the release of Satan from the abyss equates with the wicked elements rejected at the second resurrection, what purpose does it serve? It seems that the wicked are not immediately condemned to the second death (lake of fire). Apparently they function as emissaries of Satan, going out into the world at the end of the millennium to preach rebellion. This is in contrast to the immortal ambassadors of Christ, who continued the gospel mission during the millennial age. It is obvious that God has allowed this to occur in order to distinguish the “wheat from the chaff.” In an age of longevity and peace, man is again faced with the same choices that he had at the beginning – love of God or love of self. The antagonistic elements of the mortal population will show their hand - - in their folly they will attack the peaceful and ostensibly unprotected camp of the saints. Those who join the insurrection will be instantly consumed by fire from heaven. Those who choose the side of Christ will be immortalised.

The wicked elements that encouraged rebellion because they were rejected at the second resurrection will also be consumed by fire along with all the others. This second death is called the lake of fire. Gog and his supporters will in fact join the beast and the false prophet who had also been cast into the lake a thousand years previously (20.10).

Casting death and Hades into the lake of fire (the second death- 20.14) is a metaphor for condemning those who have the nature of death back to their natural home. Death to death and ashes to ashes but Spirit to Spirit, the last enemy, death has been abolished because effectively, all those who bore the nature of sin and death were consumed in the last rebellion. “O death, where is thy victory? O grave, where is thy sting?” (1 Cor. 15.55)
Those mortals who remained loyal to Christ become immortals and unite with the rest of the beloved city. Then the entire globe will contain an immortal population and is prepared to be presented to the Father as a perfect gift, for it is covered with his glory (an immortal population who reflect his image).

The language of Ezekiel 39 is employed by John at the commencement of the thousand years to depict Armageddon in Revelation 16 and 19 without mentioning Gog by name. In contrast, Ezekiel 38 is employed by John in Revelation 20 to depict the final Gog invasion at the conclusion of the millennium when sin (Amalek/Agag/Gog) is finally destroyed and all those with the nature of sin (mortality) perish leaving the earth populated with immortals. At that point the divine universal war against sin/Amalek/Agag/Gog is finalized - - a war that lasted from generation to generation is not necessary when there are no more generations! The “beloved city” (a play on the name of David) is actually a “camp” – a temporary dwelling place - - even in the kingdom age the true fulfilment awaits the revelation of the “heavenly Jerusalem” when the entire earthly population is immortalised. Note that the context is not “entering the land” or even entering into the “Sabbath rest” (kingdom) but the final fulfilment of the age (it is done) when God will be all in all. The attack occurs immediately prior to this event when the saints are “dwelling safely without walls”. This is a kingdom picture as depicted in Ezekiel 34.24-27:

“And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; (the beast destroyed at Armageddon) and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them”. The intertextual employment of Ezekiel 38 -39 as a sub-text for Revelation 19-20 necessitates closer scrutiny of the background and intention of Ezekiel 38.
Analysis of Ezekiel 38

For several reasons Ezekiel 38 is a difficult prophecy to understand. It presents difficulties in identifying the protagonists, the ancient geographical regions, the chronology and the initial fulfilment (is there a contemporary fulfilment or is it all placed in the future?). The inherent ambiguity in this prophecy lends itself to various interpretations that are often forced onto current geo-political circumstances. One can speak of eisegesis rather than exegesis. In other words, the interpreter makes the prophecy “fit” the interpreters worldview rather than letting the prophecy “speak”.

A cursory reading of the chapter brought to attention the following enigmatic passages: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?” (Ezekiel 38.17) The reference to earlier prophecies is affirmatively confirmed in the next chapter: “Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this is the day whereof I have spoken”. (Ezekiel 39.8)

The Greek LXX version of 38.17 actually addresses the protagonist with an article as the Gog, leaving no doubt that the subject “he whom I have spoken” is Gog. But which “earlier” prophecy is here being referenced? Sverre Bøe lists three options (1) Unknown prophecies lost to posterity (2) A reference to Num 24.7 (3) A reference to similar enemies that do not specifically mention Gog. There is little we can do with option (1) and option (3) is too generic but option (2) requires further examination:

“He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed [Jacob’s] shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted”. (Numbers 24.7)

This is the Balaam oracle when the King of Moab sought to hire the prophet to curse the nation of Israel when they were about to enter the land. The prophecy is concerned with the “latter days” (24.14) and the “star out of Jacob” (24.17) is interpreted as a messianic reference. Note the words in v.19: “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Num 23.19) This is very similar to Ezekiel 39.8; “this is the day whereof I have spoken”.
It might be objected that Num 24.7 mentions Agag and not Gog, however, both the Septuagint (LXX) and the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) have Gog in this prophecy; “There shall come a man out of his seed, and he shall rule over many nations; and the kingdom of Gog shall be exalted, and his kingdom shall be increased” (LXE Numbers 24.7). Commenting on the work done by Bøe, Myrto Theocharous summarises as follows:

Bøe notes the early shift from Agag to Gog in the LXX, and possibly in other Greek versions such as Theodotion, in the Vetus Latina and in the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP). As Bøe says of the last-named, “This is surprising since Gog elsewhere is not witnessed in the Pentateuch, but rather in the latter prophets. These writings did not come to hold any canonical position for the Samaritan society.” Nevertheless, in agreement with Gerleman, Bøe recognizes the weight of this tradition in pre-Christian times, meaning that Gog, not Agag, was the common reading. Normally it is a strong indication of a different Vorlage when the LXX and the Samaritan Pentateuch agree against the MT. Bøe’s thorough work on Gog and Magog covers a very broad range of extrabiblical tradition…

Bøe concludes;

Several of the texts studied read Gog where other versions or manuscripts have names which are quite similar to Gog either phonetically or in written form, such as “Agag” (Num 24.7), “the Agagite” (Esth 3.1 and 9.24), and “Og” (Deut 3.1,13; 4,47). There is no indication that “Goug” in 1 Chr 5.4 ever was a part of the Gog and Magog traditions. Other texts referring to Gog may have had a Vorlage with Hebrew words that easily could be confused with “Gog”, such as in Amos 7.1 and Sir 48.17.

Of particular interest to us is Esther (3.1 and 9.24) where Haman is described as an “Agagite” thus linking Esther with Agag in the Baalam oracle of Num 24.7(Gog LXX), which as Bøe remarks is quite similar to Gog either phonetically or in written form. This is interesting as Alan Fowler has suggested that a partial fulfilment of Ezekiel 38 can be found in the genocide planned by Haman;
The events recorded in Esther probably occurred in the reign of Xerxes during the 60-year ‘silent period’ between the completion of the temple in B.C. 516 and the return under Ezra in B.C. 458. During this period, Jerusalem was without walls and the Israelites were dwelling safely because the Samaritans had been suppressed by the decree of Darius (Ezra 6:7-13).

This suggestion holds merit for several reasons. (1) The restoration “prince” was the legitimate Davidic descendant Zerubbabel (2) The villages and Jerusalem were without walls (3) The Jews were extremely wealthy (4) The surrounding nations were hostile (5) This was a planned genocide. (6) The temple was rebuilt.

Of course there are anomalies as this was but a partial fulfilment (curtailed because of disobedience) – the Davidic prince was not the Messiah and the rebuilt temple was not Ezekiel’s visionary temple and the genocide organised by Haman (the Agagite or Gogite) was not the latter day invasion of Gog. However, the incident prefigured the final confrontation and 75,000 of Israel’s enemies perished (Esther 9.16). As Fowler notes…“there [is no] mention of any loss of life amongst the Jews. It was, therefore, no ordinary war”. Some form of divine intervention (besides Esther’s mediation) must have occurred and the “Gog invasion” was thwarted on the “mountains of Israel” but (obviously) also in the dispersed provinces and satrapies of Persia. It seems that a coordinated pogrom was organised to target diaspora Jews as well as those in the land, who would all be extinguished on the same day (the planning of this event took twelve months). Haman can be equated with Hitler. It was motivated by greed and jealousy and involved merchant nations (Tarshish) prepared to “fence” the stolen wealth. As Fowler observes the Jews were the “bankers” of the Persian Empire, they held important positions and accumulated great wealth. In support of this reading we note the similarity between Esther 3.1 and Ezekiel 39.11: “They bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it The valley of Hamongog”

BHT Esther 3:1 ʼet-hāmān bēn-hammādāṭāʼ hāʾāgāḡi

Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite

BHT Ezekiel 39:11 gēʾ hāmōn gōḡ

Valley of Hamongog
Although the Lexicon’s point to different roots, the deconstructed phrases are almost homophones and the word play between Haman (the descendant of) Agag and Hamon -Gog would appeal to the Semitic mind and we can possibly speak of a neologism. However, there is more as Kline recognizes a word play on Abraham’s new name in Gen.17.14-15; “thou shalt be a father of many nations” or Father of a great multitude (אָב הָמֹון גוֹיִים) - - Abraham’s descendants would be like the sand on the sea shore (Gen 22.17) and the hordes of the latter day Gog would number like the sand of the sea (Rev 20.8). Once again this contrasts with Num 24.7 where Jacob’s descendants are described; “And his seed [Jacob’s] shall be in many waters. His king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted”. Note that (Num.24.20) - - “Amelek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever”. Amelek was the first nation to war against Israel (in the wilderness) and will be the last nation to war against Israel (at the end of the eschaton) for, “the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amelek from generation to generation”.

Agag is either the name of an Amalekite dynasty based on a prominent founder or perhaps a title. There was an Amalekite king called Agag (Gog LXX/SP) in the time of Balaam and one slain by Samuel (1 Sam 15.9-33). Haman is given the appellation of Agagite. According to Josephus it is a reference to his Amalekite descent (Jos. Antiq, xi. 6, 5). The LXX and SP have Gog for Agag in Num 24.7. However, under the entry for Haman in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: “Agag was a territory adjacent to that of Media. In an inscription found at Khorsabad, Sargon, the father of Sennacherib, says: “Thirty-four districts of Media I conquered and I added them to the domain of Assyria: I imposed upon them an annual tribute of horses. The country of Agazi (Agag) .... I ravaged, I wasted, I burned.” It may be added that the name of Haman is not Hebrew, neither is that of Hammedatha his father. “The name of Haman,” writes M. Oppert, the distinguished Assyriologist, “as well as that of his father, belongs to the Medo-Persian.”

Of course, we know little of the dispersal and absorption of the Amalekites), and therefore likely subjects of Assyria and subsequently of Persia. Nevertheless, Agag the Amalekite becomes an archetype in Jewish traditional writings, a sort of “bogeyman” bent on the destruction of Jews. Esau the brother of Jacob married two Hittite wives (Gen 26.34-35; 36.1-2) as well as the daughter of Ishmael (Gen 28.9; 36.3) his descendants formed the Edomites and the Amalekites (and other Semitic peoples through Ishmael’s daughter). All these people became implacable enemies of the Jews.
Seventy nations

Jewish commentary on Esther describes the exile as follows: “One sheep attempting to survive among seventy wolves.” Note that Israel in exile is not subjected to one kingdom but to seventy nations. Where does this figure of seventy nations come from? It comes from the table of nations in Genesis 10, the same nations from which the coalition of Ezekiel 38 is drawn.

The reference to Magog, Japheth’s son in the table of nations in Gen 10.2 (and in Chr 1.5) is crucial to establishing the connection, as well as references to the other nations of Genesis 10 mentioned in Ezekiel 38. The motif of “seventy” is a recurring motif in the ANE (not just in Israel) based on the council of the “high god” and his pantheon (seventy sons). This was de-mythologised and de-constructed by the prophets and depicts Yahweh and his divine council which is subsequently reflected throughout Israelite history. Seventy souls entered Egypt, Moses appointed seventy judges (Sanhedrin), Jesus sends out seventy disciples etc. The idea behind this is that the seventy angels (in heaven) and their proxies (the seventy rulers/judges on earth) would administer the seventy nations in the eschaton. Moses Song in Deuteronomy 32 informs us that the boundaries of Israel where determined (delimited) by the seventy nations: “Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD’S portion is his people; Jacob is the line of his inheritance” (Deuteronomy 32.7-9)

In the MT the boundaries are delimited by the children of Israel (the 70 souls entering into Egypt) and in the LXX the boundaries are defined by the angels (70 archangels controlling the nations). In essence there is little difference as both versions are informing the reader that Israel is God’s portion (inheritance) and his sons (whether angelic or Adamic) function as arbitrators defining and delimiting the boundaries of the Gentile nations. Similarly, Israel (eretz = the earth) is metaphorically depicted as “dry land” emerging from waters (surrounded by the gentile sea) when God establishes the boundaries of land and sea as in Gen 1.9.
The scenario in Ezekiel 38 depicts the seventy nations breaching the divinely established boundaries and flooding the dry land and uses the same word (cover) that describes the flood in Gen 7.19. “Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee”. (Ezekiel 38.9) The character of Gog is described as evil in similar terms as the pre-flood generation: “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6.5). “Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought” (Ezekiel 38.10).

Only one man was righteous – Noah whose name means “rest” alluding to those who “rest” (different Hebrew word) securely and peacefully in the land in Ezekiel’s oracle. The lifespan of the rebellious pre-flood generation was reduced to one hundred and twenty years (6.3) the same age as Moses when he died because he rebelled against God. In Deuteronomy 32 Moses is refused entry into the land “…because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel” (32.51) contrast Ezekiel 38.16, “…and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes”.

We have then a number of contrasts established with Deuteronomy 32. The context of the Song of Moses is that the people are about to enter the land whose boundaries are delimited by the arbiters of the seventy nations. They are warned that a number of calamities would follow apostasy. Moses is not allowed to enter because he did not sanctify God. The Song of Moses had both a prophetic purpose (it predicted the nation’s falling away) and a didactic purpose (it taught the faithfulness of God and the consequences of sin). It warned against God’s wrath and advised them to consider their “latter end” (32.29) after all it was God who “makes alive” and God who “kills” (32.39).

The Ezekiel Oracle reverses the Song of Moses; the saints are now in the land living peacefully the nation has been resurrected (made alive) by God (Ezek. 37) and they have a “Davidic Shepherd” and dwell peacefully (Ezek. 34) there is no more apostasy. The wealth of the nations flows to them as they are the blessed of God and sanctified by him. However, Gog has an evil thought and heads up the nations of Genesis 10 (Ezek. 38), and the gentile nations breach their God established boundaries and converge from all directions to conduct genocide and to rob the peaceful saints.
Boe summarises as follows: The directions from which Gog’s army has been recruited give an impression of a **universal plot** against Israel; cf. the following list of the nations according to their place on a (modern) map:

38.2 Meshech **N**  
38.2 Tubal **N**  
38.5 Persia **E**  
38.5 Cush **SW**  
38.5 Put **W**  
38.6 Gomer **N**  
38.6 Bel Togarmah **N**  
38.13 Sheba **S**  
38.13 Tarshish **W**  
39.6 “The coastlands” **NW**

A map of the settlement of the sons of Noah
### Ezekiel 38 and Deuteronomy 32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ezekiel 38</th>
<th>Deuteronomy 32</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boundaries of nations breached</strong></td>
<td><strong>32.8…Boundaries of the nations established</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>38.10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Seventy <strong>listed in Genesis 10</strong>&lt;sup&gt;10&lt;/sup&gt;</strong>  And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually** (Gen 6.5).  The flood <strong>covered</strong> the land (Gen7.19)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>38.9…Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>38.8…in the latter years</strong></td>
<td><strong>32.29…that they [Israel] would consider their latter end!</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>38.16…it shall be in the latter days</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>38.8…that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains</strong></td>
<td><strong>32.26…I said, I would scatter them [Israel] into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>38.19…For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken [against Gog]</strong></td>
<td><strong>32.22…For a fire is kindled in mine anger [against Israel]</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>38.17…Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time (Gog LXX Num 24.7)</strong>&lt;sup&gt;25&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td><strong>32.7…Remember the days of old, consider the years… thy elders, and they will tell thee.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>38.16…when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog</strong></td>
<td><strong>32.51…because ye [Moses] sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel</strong></td>
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In Ezekiel 38 all the punishments reserved for apostate Israel are now poured out on Gog and his hoards as they had breached the ordained boundaries and failed to acknowledge that “Jacob was God’s portion (inheritance)”. God is now “sanctified” in his punishment of Gog.

“Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, (contrast.Num.24.7; “his king [Jacob’s] shall be higher than Agag, and his [Jacob’s] kingdom shall be exalted”) and the LORD hath not done all this” (Deuteronomy 32.27).
We find then a complete reversal of fortunes. Israel is safe and secure in the land as there are no walls around Israel’s cities…this is as close as it comes to a lamb among seventy wolves. It is the story of Esther writ large….the genocide has been averted. The punishments that Israel was warned about when they entered the land have now been heaped on Gog and his hoards. Bøe posits the following considerations regarding the nations of Ezekiel 38.

1. All the lands listed are remote nations, geographically as well as culturally.
2. Many of the nations listed were bygone powers, only heard of in historical accounts.
3. None of the peoples with whom Israel and Judah had actually been engaged in war are listed here, e.g. Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, Syria, Edom, Moab, Ammon, the Philistines etc.
4. The only nation with whom Israel ever came to be politically involved is Persia and that took place after the days of Ezekiel.
5. All the names, except for Gog, are also found in the tables of the nations in Genesis 10 and 1 Chronicles 1.

Bøe is essentially correct (with the exception of Amalek), for it was not Israel but God himself who would conduct perpetual war against Amalek, “…the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation”.

Analysis of Rev 19

At the last supper the disciples and Jesus sang a hymn (Matt 26.30//Mark 14.26). The hymn they sang is part of the traditional liturgy for the Passover service known as the great ‘Hallel’, which is composed of Psalms 113-118. Each first line was repeated till the end of Psalm 118, and the people responded to the rest. The next time we encounter recital of the ‘Hallel’ is not at the last supper but at the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm 113.1-9</th>
<th>Revelation 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levites: ‘Hallelujah’</td>
<td>Multitude: ‘Hallelujah’(v.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People: ‘Hallelujah’</td>
<td>Multitude: ‘Hallelujah’(v.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Elders</td>
<td>‘Amen, Hallelujah’(v.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living creatures:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Levites: ‘Praise (Hallelu), O ye servants of Yahweh’</td>
<td>Christ? ‘Give praise to our God all ye his servants’ (v.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People: ‘Hallelujah’</td>
<td>Multitude: ‘Hallelujah’(v.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levites: ‘Praise, (Hallelu) the name of Yahweh’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People: ‘Hallelujah’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levites: ‘When Israel went out of Egypt’</td>
<td>‘For he hath judged the great whore…’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People: ‘When Israel went out of Egypt’</td>
<td>‘…and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand’ (v.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levites: ‘The house of Jacob from a people of strange language’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People: ‘Hallelujah’</td>
<td>‘Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ (v. 9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the same manner, repeating each first line, and responding at the rest, till they came to Psalm 118, when besides the first, these three lines were also repeated by the people (118.25,26):

‘save now I beseech thee Yahweh’
‘O, Yahweh, I beseech Thee, send now prosperity;’
‘Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord.’

‘Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ (v. 9)
It is apparent that the Passover Temple service forms the basis of the ‘Hallelujah’ that is sung in Revelation 19. The Passover Lamb first appears at the commencement of the Seals, “And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain…” (Rev 5.6 NKJ), an obvious reference to the Passover lamb with the ritual of blood redemption referred to in verse nine.

Passover deliverance is celebrated at intervals throughout Revelation with a ‘New Song’ (5.9; 14:3) which is, “the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” – in other words the “song” of Exodus 15.1 has found its fulfilment in the Passover deliverance wrought by Christ. A summary27 of the “Passover Hallel”---

(1) Psalm 113 praises God’s majesty.
(2) Psalm 114 speaks of deliverance.
(3) Psalm 115 praises God for the deliverance.
(4) Psalm 116 praises God for the one through whom the deliverance came.
(5) Psalm 117 is the appeal by the saints to the mortal nations in the millennium.
(6) Psalm 118 is the praise of Jesus and the redeemed.

The following verses from these Psalms of praise are particularly appropriate to the scene in chapter 19;

Revelation 19

And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God (19.1).

Hallel

Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD (13.1). But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD (115.18).

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth (19.6).

O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD (117.1-2).

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready (19.7).

This is the day (i.e., Passover) which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it (118.24).
The marriage of the Lamb is based on the Song of Loves (Psalm 45), a Korah Psalm, which is itself drawn from the Song of Songs. The Korah Psalms are contemporary with Hezekiah.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm 45</th>
<th>Revelation 19</th>
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</table>
| 4. Ride prosperously.  
7. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. | 11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. |
| 3. Gird thy sword on thy thigh, O mighty one. | 16. The name on his thigh, LORD OF LORDS AND KING OF KINGS. |
| 5. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee. | 15, 21. Sword and rod of iron… which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. |
| Song 3.8 They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. | 14. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. |
| 8. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. | 13. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. |
| 6. Thy throne, is the throne of God, is forever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. (RV)  
17. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever. | 5. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. |
| 13-14 The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. | 8. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. |
| 14-15 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. | Rev. 21. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. |
| 10. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. | Rev. 21. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. |
| 11. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. | 10. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (Rev. 22. 9; Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not… worship God.) |
| Song 7.10 I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me | 9. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. |
| Song 3.11 Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart. | 12. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. |
Beside the Passover, allusions can be found to the apostasy that occurred after the Exodus from Egypt:

**Exodus 32**
- Moses descends the mount (v.15)
- Worship the golden calf (v.19)
- Who is on the Lord’s side? (v.26)
- Levites sword on thigh (v.27 RV)
- Levites action blessed (v.29)
- Blotted out the book of life (v.33)

**Revelation 19**
- Heaven opened… (v.11)
- Worship image of the beast (v.20)
- Heavenly armies follow him (v.14)
- Sword…name on thigh (v.15-16)
- Blessed called to the marriage (v.9)
-Thrown into the lake of fire (20.14)
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Conclusion

The many verbal similarities between Rev 19.3-5 and the seventh trump (Rev 11.15) make it clear that Rev 19 is a detailed exposition of the same theme. The servants….who fear him, both great and small (Rev 11.18), the peals of thunder (Rev 11.19), and above all the declaration of divine sovereignty (Rev 11.15-16). Then it was the choir of heaven that sang: “the sovereignty of the world has passed to our Lord and to his Christ”; now the vast throng of martyrs joins the Hallelujah chorus, because it is through them that God has broken down the last resistance to his universal and eternal reign. Then the elders declared; “Now is the time… for rewarding your servants the prophets…for destroying the destroyer of the earth,” and these are the two themes that the chapter proceeds to develop. The host sings a second Hallelujah. Their praise is that the smoke of Babylon rises forever and ever. This verse is an allusion to Isaiah 34.10; “It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.”

Isaiah 34.10 and Rev.19.3 share the same hyperbole, which portrays the destruction as lasting forever i.e. emphasising the finality and totality of the destruction. It also draws on the destruction of Sodom (Gen.19.28), which is fitting, for this city is spiritually Sodom (Rev 11.8). As the hymn of triumph rises up, so also does “the smoke of her burning.” In contrast New Jerusalem will be shrouded in the shekinah glory; the pillar of cloud and fire (Exod.14.20,24);“And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.” (Isa.4.5-6)

The whole of creation prostrates itself before God, in praise to him. The twenty four elders represent the “heavenly priesthood” they are symbolic of the old and new covenant – they are the twelve patriarchs (Rev 21.12) and the twelve apostles (Rev 21.14). They are joined in their adoration by the four living creatures, respectively lion, ox, man and eagle. We have already observed that they represent God’s glory in the natural and spiritual creation. He is the “living God” because his throne is in the midst of the “living creatures”, for in him everything lives moves and has its being. He is a God of the living not of the dead – and all his creation, the old and the new and the natural together with the spiritual will join in their praise of him – Hallelujah!!! The voice that comes from the midst of the throne is that of Jesus Christ, for “thy throne is the throne of God forever and ever.” (Ps.45.6) and also Psalm 22.22-23; “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.”
The voice instructs the congregation to praise our God. Some commentators consider this inappropriate, and suggest that the voice could not be that of Christ otherwise the phrase “my God” would have been used. The sonship of Jesus is, after all, distinct from that of his disciples: “Jesus saith unto her, ‘Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.’” (John 20.17). While it is true that the sonship of Jesus is unique, in the kingdom age the saints will be “like him” - immortal beings, they are joint-heirs with Christ, they suffered with him and they are glorified with him (Rom 8.17). It is therefore an honour for them to be addressed by their Lord in this manner, and it emphasises a great truth – “they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev 21.3).

Two sets of people are called on to praise God. First, there are his servants. In Revelation two kinds of people are specially called the servants of God; the prophets (Rev 10.7, 11.18, 22. 6), and the martyrs (Rev 7.3, 19.2). First, then, this is the praise of the prophets and the martyrs who have witnessed for God with their voices and their lives. Second, there are the small and great. The praising of God involves all his servants, those of low and high status. God is no respecter of persons, so what does this mean? The gospel teaches that “he that is least among you all, the same shall be great” (Luke 9.48) and “he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve” (Luke 22.26). This reverses human notions of “greatness.” The apostle Paul, whose name means little or small, saw himself as the “least of all saints” (Eph 3.8), and the “least of the apostles” (1 Cor. 15.19). If Paul considered himself the least, then who is the greatest? His zeal for God was unmatched, and his ministry unsurpassed. Paul himself reminds the Corinthians that the least honourable members of the body often perform some of the most important functions, and therefore require our lavish attention and protection. For God “gives more abundant honour to that part which lacked” (1 Cor.12.24). Who then is small and who is great in the kingdom of God? It was a question that exercised the mind of John the recipient of the apocalypse, and his brother James. Their mother requested (no doubt on their behalf) the honour of sitting on his right and left hand. Jesus asked them if they could drink from his cup and be baptised with his baptism (suffer martyrdom like him). When they answered positively, Jesus acknowledged that they would indeed suffer martyrdom. But even this could not guarantee high status in the kingdom, for, “It is not mine to give, but it shall be given them for whom it is prepared of my Father.” God is not “beholden” to any man and it is his gift to grant high status in the kingdom. We should be content to take the lowest seat at the wedding feast.

2 Stewart Crane, The Restoration of Israel: Ezekiel 36-39 in Early Jewish Interpretation: A textual-comparative study of the oldest extant Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.(theses Murdoch University, 2006),301

3 See, P. Wyns, Technical Supplement: A Stylometric Analysis of Ezekiel 38, CEJBI, Vol. 11, No. 2, Apr 2017 pp., 81-103


8 For objections to the traditional approach see See, P. Wyns, Russia in Ezekiel 38, CEJBI, Vol. 11, No. 1, Jan 2017, pp.56-62. [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/Russia.pdf"]

9 Sverre Boe, Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38-39 as Pre-text for Revelation 19, 17-21 and 20, 7-10 (Mohr Siebeck GmbH & Company KG:Germany,2001),113-114

10 Boe, Gog and Magog, 52.

11 Ibid, 52, 55, 58. For various explanations of the Gog reading, see pp.54-57

12 Myrto Theocharous, Lexical Dependence and Intertextual Allusion in the Septuagint of the Twelve Prophets Studies in Hosea, Amos and Micah(Bloomsbury Publishing PLC:UK,2012),249

13 Boe, Gog and Magog, 75. For Amos 7.1(LXX) See William A. Tooman: Excursus C: Gog the Locust King in LXX-Amos 7.1 (143-144); “The difficulty of the MT when contrasted with the clarity and fluidity of LXX, suggests that the LXX represents a clarification of this difficult text. But in light of the retroversion, it is impossible to characterize it as a “free” translation”. William A. Tooman, Gog of Magog: Reuse of Scripture and Compositional Technique in Ezekiel 38-39, (Mohr Siebeck GmbH & Company KG :Germany, 2011)


15 Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another. (Esther 9:19)

16 Ibid Fowler, “Haman also had a financial motive for his genocide. He had calculated that the spoils would enable him to offer the king 10,000 talents of silver. Herodotus tells us that the annual revenue of the whole Persian Empire was about two thirds of this sum. This would not have included spoils for Haman and his army”…… Fifth century B.C. cuneiform tablets from southern Mesopotamia record that one large banking firm employed many Jews (The Bible and the Ancient Near East, C.H. Gordon, G.A. Rendsburg, 1997 4th edn. P. 303). Of course we must make a distinction between poor Jews (some who remained in the land during the exile) and rich diaspora Jews in the satrapies who held properties and wealth throughout the Persian Empire and some wealthy returnees to the land.


18 Gog also means “high” (mountain?)

19 Orr, James, M.A., D.D. (ed.) Entry under HAMAN in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (1915). Gleason Archer also understands Agagite to mean Haman was from this province instead of a distant relation to the Amalekite king (Survey OT, 421). Annuals of Sargon: 25. The countries of Agag and Amhinda, in Media, opposite the Arabs of the East, had refused their tributes, I destroyed them, laid them waste, and burnt them by fire.

20 Esther Rabba (10:11)

Bøe, Gog and Magog, 107

[HYPERLINK "http://www.israel-a-history-of.com/sons-of-noah.html"]

**Genesis 10:5** – “By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations”.

Note context of Balaam Oracle is entering the land

Bøe, Gog and Magog, 106


Revelation 20-22 introduces the end of the age and the kingdom. This period is nominally a thousand years conforming to a Sabbath rest at the conclusion of the creative “week” thus fitting a conceptual framework totalling seven thousand years. However, any literalism regarding time-frames can be dispelled by the fact that the seventh creative day in Genesis is lacking the evening and morning formula even though it lies within the same creative “week” as the other days.

The millennium age is the period between the first and second resurrections, in other words it is the kingdom age which is a time of probation for the mortal population. The kingdom is administered by the immortalized saints and during this time Satan \(^1\) is bound. The release of Satan occurs at the end of this period and is therefore associated with the “second resurrection”.

It seems that the last resurrection results in the unbinding of Satan and this suggest that elements rejected at the second resurrection ferment the Gog rebellion. Gog is destroyed before any harm can come to the “camp” of the saints. When that point is reached the earth no longer contains a mortal population. All elements opposed to God and his Christ have been destroyed. There are no more nations and God is “all in all” (1 Cor. 15.28).

Rev 20 provides an overview of the entire period from the beginning of the millennium until the end of the millennium and Rev 21-22 describes the conditions during the millennium. The point that is emphasised in Rev 21-22 is that there is no temple present during the millennium.
Where is the temple? (Rev 21.22-26)

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. 23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. 26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.”

Revelation makes it clear that there is no temple in the kingdom age and therefore ipso facto animal sacrifice does not occur because there is no Law of Moses. It is sometimes asserted that the reason that the temple is absent is because this passage describes events after the millennium. Therefore a temple is necessary during the millennium but no longer necessary after the millennium. That cannot be substantiated from the text. The time “after the millennium” is one where no more nations exist.
No more Sea (Rev 20.13-21.1)

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea”.

The “sea” is a metaphor for the gentile nations and the concept of nationhood is done away with after the 1,000 years. In fact, the concept of death no longer exists because all those with the “nature of death” have been judged and cast into hell. There are no more mortals on earth - the earth is populated with the saints. Therefore during the millennium;

KJV Revelation 22:2 leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

KJV Revelation 22:3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

KJV Revelation 22:14-15 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. 15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.
Inside and outside the kingdom
So in the kingdom there is an “inside” and an “outside” like the Garden of Eden. This is a kingdom picture -there are “nations” which require “healing” -the “throne” of God and the Lamb are in the city but no temple.

KJV 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that God may be all in all.

The “nations” only exist during the millennium and the mortal population only exists during the millennium. It is during this period that the nations are “healed” and enter into the “city” but this “city” into which the nations bring their glory has no temple. After the final rebellion of the nations under Gog which coincides with the second resurrection and last judgement there are no more nations and there are no more mortals for God is “all in all”. Ezekiel’s temple will not be built during the kingdom age and Harry Whittaker has produced a comprehensive analysis of Ezekiel’s temple demonstrating why such a structure would be entirely inappropriate. On Rev 21 Osborne3 notes the following:

The idea of twelve gates, three on each side, is taken from Ezek. 48:30-35, where the new temple also has twelve, with three on each side. A major difference is that each gate in Ezekiel is named after a tribe, while here it says simply that “the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel were written on the gates.” The meaning in Ezekiel is that each tribe has a gate that opens to its own tribal territory. Here the thrust is quite different. These gates provide access to all “humankind,” namely, the “people” (21:3) who have “overcome” the world (21:7a) and so “inherited” the city of God (21:7b). The fact of twelve gates means that access is plentiful and the names of the twelve tribes written on the gates builds on the symbol of the 144,000 in 7:1-8, meaning that the people of God provide access to the “people” of the world so that they might repent and thus gain entrance to the city of God.
Gen 15.18 and the city of God

The small scale, exclusively Jewish “oblation” envisaged by Ezekiel (the division of the land of Israel into a parallel grid of tribal allotments) is transformed into an inclusive “city” of gigantic proportions. While the New Jerusalem is 12,000 stadia to a side, Ezekiel’s city is but 4,500 cubits to a side. The measurements in Rev 21.16-17 are sometimes taken as a perimeter measurement making each side 3,000 furlongs but that is not correct as the “New Jerusalem” is meant to encompass the territory promised to Abraham. Moreover, with the length of each side being 12 \(\times 10^5\) stadia, totalling the cuboids’ perimeters equals 144 \(\times 10^5\) which is the Fibonacci number associated with the tribes in Rev 7 and with the height of the “wall”. This region will be under the complete control of the saints. The wall has the height of a twenty story building but each side of the city is roughly 1,500 miles high so the “wall” does not extend to the full height of the city. As Mt Everest is about 5.5 miles above sea level the city has a height that is roughly 272 times higher than Mt Everest.
Of course, these measurements are purely symbolic as the city has no need of a literal defensive wall or gates, or foundations. The countries that surround Israel which are largely Muslim will now make pilgrimages to Jerusalem (rather than Mecca) to worship the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords”. They will be administered by the saints. “In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance” (Isa. 19.23-25).

There will, no doubt be topographic changes brought on by the exceeding great earthquake which has a spiritual and literal dimension. The Dead Sea is the lowest point on earth and lies on the Great Rift fault line that originates at the African lakes and travels through the Jordan valley up into the valley of Lebanon. An earthquake big enough to split the Mount of Olives would rearrange elevations and redirect rivers and water catchment and therefore the “water of life” will likely also have a literal and spiritual component. The whole area will be transformed into a verdant –fruit producing garden and the wilderness will bloom. There will be no cursed earth in the presence of the Lamb – truly a land of milk and honey – and this area will include the whole Middle East.
The Lord is there

God is not content to save a handful of martyrs and allow the rest of mankind, along with all their achievements of culture and civilisation, to perish in the abyss. For into the holy city he now brings the nations and the kings of the earth. To suppose that by these phrases he means only the elect would be to run counter to his consistent usage throughout the whole of his book. The nations are the heathen, who had once been allowed to trample the holy city underfoot, who were seduced by the great whore, and who were finally reduced to subjection by the armies of Christ (11:2; 18: 3, 23; 19: 15).

The kings of the earth are those over whom Christ has asserted his authority only at the cost of untold suffering to his faithful people (1: 5; 6: 15; 17: 2, 18; 18: 3,9). Those who once brought the splendour of their luxury trade to deck the great whore now bring their willing tribute to adorn the holy city. Nothing from the old order which has value in the sight of God is debarred from entry into the new. The heaven that John describes is no world-denying Nirvana, into which men may escape from the incurable ills of sublunary existence, but the seal of affirmation on the goodness of God’s creation. The treasure that men laid up in heaven turns out to be the treasures and wealth of the nations, the best they have known and loved on earth redeemed of all imperfections and transfigured by the radiance of God. Nothing is excluded but what is obscene and false, that is, totally alien to the character of God. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find a more eloquent statement of the all-embracing scope of Christ’s redemptive work.

The Garden of Eden, the Tabernacle and the Temple were all made after the pattern of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 8.5). Once the true sanctuary has descended “from heaven” it is no longer necessary to have the shadow or type. If the LORD IS THERE (Yahweh-shammmah Ezek 48.35) animal sacrifices will no longer be necessary and Christ himself will show them his piercings should they doubt (Like he did with Thomas). Gifts, meats, drinks, divers washings and carnal ordinances were imposed on the Jews until the time of reformation (Heb 9.10). In the kingdom there will be no need for “carnal ordinances” and the “place” of worship becomes a moot point;
Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. 21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (KJV John 4:20-24)

John makes it clear both in his Gospel (John 4.14) and in the Apocalypse that Jesus is the source of “living water”- the water emerges from the throne where God and the Lamb sit and what begins as a trickle becomes a roaring stream as his saints are sent into the world to heal the nations. This crystal clear river has the tree of life situated on either side yielding twelve crops of fruit every month. The description is very similar to the prophecy of Balaam where the tents of Jacob are depicted as beautiful gardens and trees planted on the riverside (Num 24.16) a metaphor for the Milky Way - the celestial river of stars surrounded by the twelve zodiac constellations. “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21.2). It is an image of the “heavens” descending to earth and the bearing of fruit every month speaks of a constant repetition of the harvest festival of tabernacles. A beautiful celebration of joyfulness and plenty – the building of booths for protection; “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat” (Rev 7.16); the booths are a symbol of the indwelling (tabernacing) presence of the Shekinah.

The symbolism of the city speaks for itself; the gold of tried faith forming the streets the jasper of the walls reflecting divine glory built on the solid foundations of the apostle’s gospel proclamation of the new covenant which can only be entered through the twelve tribal gates of the old covenant – everything demonstrates the unity and harmony of the divine purpose and the final revelation of the true temple of God – Jesus Christ and his saints who now carry the name in their foreheads. This contrasts with those left outside the city; “For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” (Rev 22.15). The “whoremongers” are those who worship the Great Harlot, the murderers are those who killed the witnesses, the idolaters are those who worship the image of the beast and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie is a follower of the serpent in all its manifestations (cf. dragon). Many of these enemies of the gospel were already cast out in the first and second centuries but the pattern repeats and many more followers of Satan will be revealed at the end.
Surely, I come quickly (Rev 22.20-21)

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen”.

The Apocalypse ends the same way as it began – with a sense of imminence and urgency – these things will happen soon and they will happen quickly. The generation that first heard these words in the first century saw a partial realization, similarly, the generation that sees the restoration of Israel will experience a repeat pattern and the conclusion of the matter.
1 On the dragon, Satan and the ancient serpent see chapter 17 page 375
2 Harry A. Whittaker, A Fresh Look at Ezekiel's Temple, [Retrieved Aug 2017] {HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/EzekTemp.pdf"} apart from the fact that Ezekiel's temple will not be built we must add the observation that Sulley's depiction of the temple is completely wrong and based on interpretive errors and wishful thinking. The first and second temples were similar to the layout of the tabernacle and any design that varies from the revealed template is bound to be wrong. Ezekiel would certainly be amazed if he were able to see {HYPERLINK "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Henry_Sulley&oldid=818129395"}
Conclusion

In the preface of *Pattern Recognition in the Apocalypse* the danger of apophenia was noted, that is; “The human tendency to see patterns that do not actually exist”. This exposition has guarded against the perception of causal relationships between events which are, in fact, unrelated by contextualising those events in their contemporary historical situation *together* with their intertextual roots and structural ordering.

For example, Anthony Siew noted that Rev 11.1 to 14.5 is a literary unit in the form of a *chiasm* delineated by an *inclusio.* The use of this literary device for structuring the section that commences with the measuring of the temple and witnessing (Rev 11) followed by the birth narrative (Rev 12) and the beast transformations (Rev 13) makes a linear sequential reading improbable. Although the seals, trumpets and vials provide sequential readings (e.g., one seal automatically follows the other) even so we need to proceed with care. The seals are for a large part retrospective from John’s viewpoint as they look backwards to the sacrificed Passover Lamb (the cross) in order to find a uniquely qualified individual who is able to open (and therefore activate) the seals.

In modern parlance, if we were watching a movie, this would be considered a “flashback”. The director or screenwriter is able to construct this artificial interlude by showing the past in order to bring the audience up to speed. The screenwriter is omniscient in that he knows how the movie starts and how it will end and he is able to introduce his main character as having a “flashback” so that the audience understands how the past history of the character interacts with the present. Some of the methods used in literature and film making are also used in the Apocalypse; in fact they are built into the structure of the vision:

Flashback is a literary device wherein the author depicts the occurrence of specific events to the reader, which have taken place before the present time the narration is following, or events that have happened before the events that are currently unfolding in the story.

**Analepsis (plural analepses)** A form of flashback in which earlier parts of a narrative are related to others that have already been narrated.
A flashforward (also spelled flash-forward; also called a prolepsis) is a scene that temporarily takes the narrative forward in time from the current point of the story in literature, film, television and other media.

The interpreter must therefore take care and realize that a “time-element” is also present – not everything looks forwards (some looks backwards as well=flashback) other events are parallel (happening the same time – think here of a “split screen” in a movie) and yet others depict the conclusion before it has actually happened (prolepsis=flash-forward). The chiastic structures of the Apocalypse contain both analepsis and prolepsis and therefore (especially in the vision section) a sequential linear reading is somewhat forced. For example, do the beasts of Revelation 13 only look forwards to beasts that will appear in John’s future? Perhaps they also look backwards (as the seals did) in order to show John a recognizable beast that then transforms into something similar-yet-different in the future of John and his readers? The same with the birth narrative in Revelation 12, is it looking backwards, or forwards (or perhaps both?) from John’s perspective?

The fact is that scripture employs multiple patterns in the form of allusions, types and echoes that constantly “flashback” to the OT in order to depict patterns of a cosmic battle from the beginning of time. In Rev 12.17 the followers of Christ are referred to as the “seed” (of the woman) an intertextual link with Eve who was promised that her seed (Christ) would conquer the serpent (dragon). In Rev 11.10 (second woe) the inhabitants of the earth rejoice and in Rev 12.12 the inhabitants in heaven rejoice and a woe (last woe?) is pronounced against the inhabitants of the earth. This indicates that events on earth and in heaven are running parallel, with two different viewpoints (split screen) being shown simultaneously. What seems like victory to the beast-followers is actually the beginning of their defeat. Think here of the death of Jesus (perceived as a victory by his opponents) which defeated sin and death and ultimately gave birth to his church.

**John 16:20-22.**  
20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.  
21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.  
22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.
One commentator calls the cross the “transvaluator” because it transforms (worldly) values of pride, ambition and self-righteousness; it upends all human values. The cross was perceived as foolishness by the Greeks and a stumbling-block by the Jews. It judges the world and everything the world represents by crucifying the flesh and what seems like a defeat to the world is in effect a great triumph against the world. The world may laugh, rejoice and scorn but God will have the last laugh.\(^2\)

Bearing the above in mind interpreting the Apocalypse is best suited by a polyvalent approach. Some sections look backwards and seek a **partial fulfilment** in the ministry of Christ (**the faithful witness in Rev 1.5**) and the early pre-70 CE church, but it also looks forwards (from John’s viewpoint) at an **intermediate** fulfilment in the period between 70 and 135 CE. Finally, it extends even further to **the end** (our time) for the final fulfilment.

If we are correct in understanding the Apocalypse as presenting **repeat patterns** and if we are correct in understanding the Apocalypse as initially delivered to pre 70 Jewish believers (Jewish Christians) with the implicit warning that a negative response would see **the nation cast off**  \(^3\) then it logically follows that the pattern is set to repeat **once more** when the times of the Gentiles are finished. Such is the point that we have now reached --- the nation has returned to the land but still rejects the messiah --- the Apocalypse dictates that a repeat pattern of witnessing, birth and persecution will emerge.

The beast is then a recurrent pattern that keeps reappearing at certain intervals. Each time the beast reappears he has a slightly different manifestation. Emergence of the beast and his acolytes in their various formats is associated with Jewish temple worship and/or a virulent form of rabbanism that was conceived in Babylon. The birth and witnessing also reoccur in different yet similar configurations. The “faithful witness” is Jesus himself but John the Baptist is the forerunner (first Elijah) to be followed by second Elijah at the finale. However, Stephen, the disciples and the Holy Spirit were also first century witnesses as were first century Christians put to death by Nero in the Coliseum. There was no doubt witnessing and martyrdom during the Bar Kochba revolt. Applying the above principle of recurrent patterns a proposed overview of the Apocalypse looks as follows:
The seals were a first century phenomenon that ended with the destruction of the temple in 70. The trumpets found their first fulfilment in the Bar Kochba revolt and the thunders describe in detail the fall of Jerusalem/Betar in 135/6. The little book (Biblaridion) that interrupts this section assures John (and his readers) that the Jews are not permanently cast off. In the second century the seventh trump was not sounded and did not herald the vial-plagues...instead the nation was exiled and Jerusalem officially became a Gentile city. The seventh trump was not sounded and the kingdom did not materialize. The “whenever” aspect of the trumpets assures that they will repeat (second fulfilment) once the Jews returned from exile (1948). This time, once the trumpets recommence they will continue at a rapid pace with the seventh trump incorporating the vial-plagues culminating in Armageddon and the return of Christ. The seals, trumpets and vials are therefore repeat patterns that culminate with the Kingdom of God. Similarly, the witnessing, which results in repentance by a minority and the birth of a covenant community...is also a pattern repeated throughout sacred history and will also repeat at the end (including martyrdom). At each stage of this pattern the nation could have repented and the kingdom would have been established. God always sent his prophets to the nation before passing judgement. Christ made it clear that John the Baptist was not Elijah but that second Elijah was yet to come. Therefore a repeat pattern will ensue with a contest between the beast and the witness right at the end. The witnesses will (once again) be martyred ---but this time the seeming victory of the powers of evil is short lived --- the divine response is immediate and devastating. Hallelujah.
Calculating dates

An example of pattern recognition and symmetry might be Sir Isaac Newton’s interpretation and calculation of the return of Christ in 2060 known as the Yehuda manuscripts.\(^4\) Newton interpreted Revelation as depicting the corruption of the Church and used the “day for a year principle” from Daniel to achieve this.\(^5\) A similar date can be achieved by adding the cycle patterns that we have discovered to the date when the nation of Israel became independent (1948+42+21+49 =2060). The same date is achieved using different methodologies and more likely than not they are both wrong.

Revelation was given to encourage and comfort the saints to assure them that ultimately all their tribulations were under divine control. Previously it was noted that a pre-70 Christian would have read Revelation differently to a post-70 Christian and that patterns are a deliberately flexible means for allowing for alternatives depending on the response of the nation. In this we might think of Israel in the wilderness who should have reached the Promised Land within a couple of weeks instead of forty years. Yahweh declared that they would “know his breach of promise” (Num 14.34) and the same warning was given to first century Christians (Heb 4.1-5). In other words, God is able to either accelerate or delay his promises in reaction to the response. He is able to interrupt the process completely to inaugurate the “times of the gentiles” (when the Jews are cast off). This makes it impossible to “calculate dates” but we are still given important “signposts” and the closer we are to the destination the clearer the picture.
Conclusion Page 461

**Day of Atonement War**

The most important “sign” that has occurred in this generation is the return of Israel to the land. There can be no national reconciliation without the existence of a nation. Of course, that does not neglect the possibility of yet another national defeat and dispersal but the historical anomaly that is Zionist Israel is a clear sign of imminent events.

With a closer look at national Jewish history in the light of revelatory patterns one particular event stands out, namely the Day of Atonement war. On the *Yom Kippur* war of 1973, Egypt and Syria, backed up by expeditionary forces from other Arab nations, launch a surprise attack against Israel on their Holiest Day, *Yom Kippur*. After absorbing the initial attacks, Israel recaptures lost ground and then pushes into Egypt and Syria. Subsequently, OPEC reduces oil production, driving up oil prices and triggering a global economic crisis.

Recognising the patterns revealed in revelation delivers a number of cycles, but more likely than not they are all wrong or inconclusive at the very least (Matt 24.36). However, although dates are not calculable and although the divine schema maintains the flexibility to be directed however the Father wills, one cannot but help note that since 1973 dramatic events have occurred that are now in the process of reshaping the Middle East and that have repercussions for the whole world. For example, the fall of the twin-towers resembles the fifth trumpet with the “smoke from the abyss” darkening the sky and the emergence of demonic creatures might well be an apt description of adherents of the Islamic caliphate.

The subsequent fall of Iraq (Babylon) and the “Arab spring” that is reshaping the Levant and destroying the stability achieved by the Western powers after the fall of the Ottoman Empire is largely driven by neoconservatives heavily influenced by American Jews, who wield more power in every field (politics, legal and media) in the USA than they ever did in the courts of Babylon or Persia. Suffice to say that these events (meant by Israel to counter the rise of Iranian-Shiite power) have failed and caused a backlash of terrorism and refugees. The Zionist nation of Israel stands behind the curtain influencing and shaping events. A summary of important world events, particularly from the perspective of the Middle East for this period:


It is tempting to see this last “seven” as inaugurating the kingdom especially as we have seen an exponential increase in global turmoil but the Jewish “super shemita” (Jubilee) of 2016-17 did not herald any particular result although we are significantly closer to another global economic crisis (the result of not forgiving debt as the Jubilee demands). Suffice to say that events point to an emergent pattern of increasing chaos with climate, disease, war and debt interacting in unknowable ways. However, although a date is not calculable, we continue to observe the signs and the onset of a messianic movement in Israel together with the establishment of temple worship would be a crucial sign of the proximity of the end (and may be the result of a temporary Israeli-Arab detente). That religious Jewry has been planning a temple for years, electing a Sanhedrin, choosing priests and appealing to authorities is a known fact. The project also finds support from Christian Zionists.

If such a project ever came to fruition it would be an abomination to God and a sure sign of the end, thus completing the patterns established in Revelation.
Things hereafter

The Apocalypse is not a crystal ball that allows us to predict the future, nevertheless it does contain repeat patterns and therefore we should be awake and informed so that we are able to recognise those patterns. The exposition presented in this book demonstrates the importance of the Jewish people in the events that have occurred and in the coming tribulation. It is therefore necessary to inform ourselves on the history and influence of the Jewish people both in a historic and contemporary sense. Let us commence by observing that they are a chosen people:

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel (Exod 19.5-6).

Of course, the Jewish people often did not keep the covenant and suffered the consequences of disobedience. Because of this their history is one of great adversity but also great success – profoundly so – as they have managed to retain their identity against the odds (and this is God’s doing). The Jews have always managed to gain positions of power – Joseph was second to Pharaoh, Daniel was a royal adviser, as was Nehemiah and Mordecai. These were all faithful men (and influential women like Esther). Beyond these Biblical examples contemporary history demonstrates the success of the Jewish people, who despite adversity have shaped the twentieth, and twenty first centuries and this with a global population of only about 0.2 percent. The Jews have always had their hands on the levers of power and one explanation of their success attributes it to education as Jewish children were taught to read and study the Torah in special Babylonian schools for centuries. Moreover, Jews were often forced to urbanize, leaving their farms behind to settle in cities and learn new trades. The combination of high literacy and new skills gave them an advantage over their counterparts and this could often lead to envy and resentment. Nevertheless, this cannot all be attributed to Jewish ingenuity; there is no doubt that God preserved his people despite their intransigence and disobedience.

God will fulfil his promise to Abraham because it is unconditional but that does not mean that disobedience will not be punished. Any critique of the Jews is often labelled as anti-Semitic and that charge tends to shut down any debate or fact finding but we must take of our rose tinted spectacles and cease from a sycophantic attitude towards the Jews in order to perceive the real truth of the matter. Facts are facts and we must consider them carefully and dispassionately without falling into the trap of either anti-Semitism or Jewish cheerleading.
Jewish influence

There can be no doubt that Jews shaped the last century and the outcome of that shaping was not for the best. Albert Einstein developed the theory of Relativity and from that we get nuclear weapons,\(^{13}\) Karl Marx proposed communism which has lead to the death of millions and Sigmund Freud was the father of a form of psycho-analysis that delegitimized personal responsibility\(^{14}\). These three Jewish men shaped our century for better or worse (worse I would argue). But Jewish influence does not stop there and many of our current problems including “multiculturalism”, neo-conservatism and many other humanistic liberal ideas (feminism etc) are attributed to Jewish academics. There are Jews to be found nearly everywhere in the world but the largest populations are in Israel and the USA with roughly six million at each location.

Jewish influence in the world of media,\(^{15}\) academia,\(^{16}\) finance and politics\(^{17}\) is impressive (to say the least). Almost half of American billionaires are Jewish one of the largest most influential global banks (Goldman Sachs) is Jewish; the last three chairs of the Federal Reserve (Greenspan, Bernake and Yellen) are Jewish. The Federal Reserve, the central bank of the USA more or less sets economic policy for the world and has ruined the global economy and widened the wealth gap globally by debt creation and Quantitative Easing.\(^{18}\) The founder of Google and Facebook are Jews and many other prominent positions are held by Jews.\(^{19}\) It is fair to say that Jews in the USA wield considerable influence in shaping public opinion and policy making.

Many Jews are politically liberal and have had a huge social impact by promoting “political correctness” and “diversity” something that they do not tolerate within their own communities leading to the charge of either hypocrisy or subversion (more on this anon) but there are also many conservative Jews who promote the “neo-conservative” agenda that so ruinously destroyed the Middle East (more on this anon). Although the Jewish community (in the USA) is not politically homogenous it is extremely influential both to the “left” and to the “right” of politics and from both directions their input has often had destructive consequences.
Some History

Jews have been attacked and slurred in anti-Semitic literature such as the Protocols of Zion – a fabricated treatise which supposedly describes a Jewish plot to “take over the world”. However, even Kissinger remarked; “any people who has been persecuted for two thousand years must be doing something wrong.” The clever Jew may well be a stereotype but stereotypes are often based on real world perceptions. The communist Bolshevik revolution is often said to have had Jewish origins, although an exaggeration Karl Marx was Jewish and Leon Trotsky who was a prominent party leader was also Jewish. Moreover the Frankfurt School, a Jewish philosophical-political spin off from Marxism has influenced academic thinking on “multiculturalism”, “diversity”, “political correctness” and “tolerance”. It is a form of cultural Marxism propagated by German Jewish intellectuals that became very influential in American universities and has spread globally. The Frankfurt school was a research institute set up in Germany during the 1920’s. They were instrumental in developing an intellectual base for cultural Marxism under the “critical theory” framework. The task of the Frankfurt School, then, was first, to undermine the Judeo-Christian legacy through an “abolition of culture” (Aufhebung der Kultur in Lukacs’ German); and, second, to determine new cultural forms which would increase the alienation of the population, thus creating a “new barbarism.” A deliberate strategy to undermine and atomize the foundation of western societies – the thinking is that it is a “survival strategy” – if society is not homogenous and accepts all sorts of deviations and perversions then it is easier for Jews to live unnoticed. However, Jewish society itself does not accept the preaching of the “Frankfurt School” as they have strict laws on segregation and intermarriage etc (at least religious Jews do). Jews from the Frankfurt School fled Nazi Germany and spread their poison throughout American Universities and we reap the consequences today.

A reaction to the onslaught of cultural Marxism has been the rise of neo-conservatism which also has largely Jewish origins. As reported in the Jewish newspaper Haaretz; “In the course of the past year [i.e. 2003], a new belief has emerged in the town: the belief in war against Iraq. That ardent faith was disseminated by a small group of 25 or 30 neoconservatives, almost all of them Jewish, almost all of them intellectuals (a partial list: Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, William Kristol, Eliot Abrams, Charles Krauthammer), people who are mutual friends and cultivate one another and are convinced that political ideas are a major driving force of history”.23
The whole sad history of “weapons of mass destruction” (that did not exist) and the freedom and democratization of Iraq that led to its inevitable decline and the rise of ISIS started with a Jewish think-tank. One cannot help but think that the balkanization of the Middle East is in accordance with the Oded Yinon Plan for the formation of a greater Israel devised in 1982 (recommended reading). 24 So, both cultural Marxism and neo-conservatism achieve the same outcomes – whereas cultural Marxism ferments societal anarchy and breakdown, neo-conservatism results in national anarchy and balkanization. When everyman’s hand is against his brother (in both a national and cultural sense) then little energy is left to demonize and persecute the Jews. If this was the intended agenda then it has been largely successful. The Oded Yinon programme of territorial expansionism (or sphere of influence) in the Middle East is still within reach of the Zionists and instability in the surrounding nations makes such an outcome more rather than less likely.
The goal of this exposition is to recognize that biblical patterns repeat. The belief is that the trumpets (associated with the Day of Atonement) began a repeat cycle in 1973 with the Day of Atonement War which would mark the first Woe with the fall of the twin towers. Many conspiracy theories circulate around this world changing event and no matter what one believes there is more going on than meets the eye (the truth will never be known) but with hindsight it is unbelievable that a man living in a cave in Afghanistan brought down seven buildings with two aircraft without the slightest leak of any information to any of the global intelligence agencies (it begs credibility). Nevertheless, this event changed the geopolitics of the Middle East and sowed the seeds of the GFC and the coming economic catastrophe (caused by Quantitative Easing) that is set to utterly devastate global economies. The problems facing humanity are manifold and they are growing – global warming, financial crisis, war, pollution, societal breakdown etc. In the first and second centuries the Jews successfully manipulated the super-powers of the day – both Rome and Babylon (Parthia) and used them as weapons to persecute first century Christians and promote their own agendas. It seems that the Jews are repeating the same strategy in modern times – if we substitute Rome and Babylon with the USA nothing much has changed.
The role of Islam at the end

Islam also has a role to play in the end time scenario – mainly because they are hostile to the Zionist state and also because they have administered the temple mount for the last eleven hundred years. Whether or not some sort of rapprochement will be reached is debatable but at the moment we are seeing factional power struggles between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. There is an indication that ten kings cede their power to the beast for a brief period and this makes a short accommodation with Israel likely. Interestingly, the territory promised to Abraham (and coveted in the Yonon plan) was settled by ten different peoples who have been absorbed by the current Arabic nations.

Nevertheless, the current factional struggles between Sunni and Shiite Muslims has morphed into proxy wars involving the super-powers with countries like the USA, Saudi and Israel trying to prevent countries like Iran, Syria and Russia forming a Shiite block across the Middle East. The situation is fluid and complex but a massive power struggle is underway and it all started with the first Woe (fall of the twin towers).

To this mix we have to add that Muslims also expect Jesus (a prophet in their eyes) to return, they also expect a deceiver (a bit like the anti-Christ) to appear and somewhere in this mix is the Mahdi who will bring back worship of true Islamic values, and bring the Ark of the Covenant to light. The picture presented by Islamic eschatology is rather confused and therefore ripe for manipulation. It is possible that some sort of agreement could be reached between Judaism and Islam about sharing the temple mount. It is also possible that the Jews reach a situation where the Muslim nations are so weakened that they expel Muslims from the temple mount but it is difficult to envisage such an outcome – it is more likely to be done by agreement.
Fundamentalist Jews wish to rebuild a temple on Mount Zion. They have already made the temple instruments and selected the priests. They have also lobbied both Putin and Trump. If such a temple was ever erected and Mosaic sacrifices recommenced it would be an abomination to God. It would literally be the “image of the beast”. Unfortunately, if that event occurs many Christians (Christian Zionists) would act as unqualified supporters and cheerleaders in the mistaken belief that it is God’s will.

Nothing can be known with any certainty but we can observe that the conditions are right for some sort of repeat pattern. The exact form of that pattern is as yet undetermined but we should be able to recognise the pattern when it occurs. It will encompass either an agreement with the Muslims or their subjection and this would mean either an expansion of territory or an expansion of Israel’s sphere of influence. It may well lead to the building of a Jewish temple on a “shared” platform or possibly (but less likely) the removal of the Dome of the Rock.

Judaism survived in Babylon for nearly 2,000 years and reinvented itself there. Subsequently, other “holy books” were written such as the “Zohar” (Cabbalism) which is nothing different from the sorcery that the Apocalypse warned about. Surprisingly (or perhaps not really), although these doctrines appeared many centuries later in Spain they were attributed to Rabi Akiva’s direct followers. This is pertinent because it was Akiva that supported the false Messiah in the second century.

The Jews are as yet unrepentant and will not allow Christian preaching in Israel. In the words of Paul they are still “enemies of the gospel”. A repentant remnant that recognises Jesus Christ as the messiah and the son of God is therefore necessary before the Lord returns. And how will they hear unless someone preaches to them? That is the work of the witnesses – God always sends his prophets to warn his people before unleashing judgement. We need to urgently revise our opinions on the Jews and the Jewish state – yes, they are beloved for the father’s sakes (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) but unstinting loyalty and sycophantic support is untenable because they are still alienated from God.
1 The chiasm is reproduced in the following review {HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/review.pdf"}
2 Psalm 24:“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision” note-Psalm 2 is one of the subtexts for the seventh and Rev 12.
3 Jewish-Christians had all but vanished from the land by the fifth century. The Bar Kochba revolt marked a turning point in Jewish and Jewish-Christian (Jewish believers) relations. Rabbanism replaced any forms of Christianity both in Israel and in the Diaspora. Eventually “Christianity” became a Gentile religion divorced from its Jewish roots. It is only recently that a minority of messianic Jews have appeared in Israel. They regard Jesus as the messiah but hold Trinitarian views as a result of Evangelical preaching. This is a pity but at least it is something God can work with.
4 The manuscripts can be found at the National Library of Israel are from the collection of Abraham Shalom Yehuda (1877–1951), an expert in Middle Eastern affairs. Professor Yehuda purchased the manuscripts at a public auction at Sotheby’s of London in 1936. [Accessed March 2017] {HYPERLINK "http://web.nl.org.il/sites/NLI/English/collections/Humanities/newton/Pages/default.aspx"}
6 1973+42+49=2064 (trumpets then vials?), 1973+49=2022 (trumpets and vials parallel?), 1973+21+49=2043 (last three trumpet woes followed by vials =10 plagues?)
7 Eitan Alimi notes that, “The October 1973 war represents a watershed in the history of the state. Despite investigations, the Israeli leadership failed to foresee the Arab States’ military attack. This misjudgement threw into question the leadership’s competence and credibility, a crisis exacerbated by the leadership’s misconduct during the war per Se; the October War, or, as it is labelled in Israel. “the omission,” has illustrated, for some, the possible devastating repercussions of the occupied territories’ “creeping annexation” (Lissak 1990). For others, the national trauma and void after the war were seen as a springboard for increasing the struggle for the ascendency of a new Zionism, a religious Zionism, as an alternative to the state (Peleg 1997)”. Eitan Alimi, Israeli Politics and the First Palestinian Intifada, (Routledge, London: New York,2007)91-92
8 The “Super Shemita” is the end of the 49 year Jubilee cycle. The first Shmita year in the modern State of Israel was 1951-52 (5712 in the Hebrew calendar). Subsequent Shmita years have been 1958–59 (5719), 1965–66 (5726), 1972–73 (5733), 1979–80 (5740), 1986–87 (5747), 1993–94 (5754), 2000–01 (5761), 2007–08 (5768), and 2014-15 (5775). The last Shmita year began on Rosh Hashanah in September 2014, corresponding to the Hebrew calendar year 5775. The 50th year of the land, which is also a Shabbat of the land, is called “Yovel” in Hebrew, which is the origin of the Latin term “Jubilee”, also meaning 50th. According to the Torah observance of Jubilee only applies when the Jewish people live in the land of Israel according to their tribes. Thus, with the exile of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Menashe (about 600 BCE) Jubilee has not been applicable. In 2000, Sefardic Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron withdrew religious certification of the validity of permits for the sale of land to non-Jews during the Shmita year following protests against his endorsement of the leniency by members of the Haredi community. Wikipedia contributors, ‘Shmita’, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 11 September 2017, 19:54 UTC, <[HYPERLINK "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Shmita&oldid=800150879"]> [accessed 18 September 2017]. In ancient times the rabbis were unsure about the importance of the “fiftieth year” (after the 49 year cycle). Moreover, new information has become available with Rabbi Dr.Hillel ben David highlighting year 5776 (2016) which would make 2016-2017 the Jubilee year (instead of 2015-2016). The Jubilee year ends when the New Year begins, which means that Rosh Hashanah 2017 will begin on the evening of Wednesday, September 20 (2017) which makes the Day of Atonement the evening of Saturday September 30 to October the first 2017) Every fiftieth (or 49th; this is a controversy year is considered yovel – See yovel1 to understand the various opinions: {HYPERLINK "http://www.betemunah.org/yovel.html"} Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David (Greg Killian), Yovel (Jubilee) Years. [HYPERLINK "http://www.betemunah.org/yovel.html" \"1\" "_Toc40107631\"] Anyway, the history of modern Israel does seem to proceed via recurrent patterns: Balfour declaration: 1917 +100 =2018; State of Israel: 1948 +70=2018 (UN Resolution 181 established international status for Jerusalem – 70 years ago on November 29, 1947). Jerusalem Liberated 1967+50 =2017. It seems then that 2018 is the first year after the “Super Jubilee” and as nothing has been set right during this period (no repentance etc) we can expect an acceleration of the patterns.
10 There is irony here – rejection of the messiah and concentration on their interpretation of the Law (for centuries in Babylon) prided the Jews for worldly success.
12 Readers are asked to ignore any anti-Semitic comments or bias on websites and judge only on the facts.
Julius Robert Oppenheimer the "father of the atomic bomb" (Manhattan Project) son of a wealthy Jewish textile importer who had immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1888, and Ella Friedman, a painter. The first atomic bomb was detonated on July 16, 1945, in the Trinity test in New Mexico; Oppenheimer later remarked that it brought to mind words from the Bhagavad Gita: "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds."


According to the Jewish Virtual Library, since the Nobel was first awarded in 1901 approximately 193 of the 855 honorees have been Jewish (22%). Jews make up less than 0.2% of the global population. Richard Dawkins Perplexed by High Number of Jewish Nobel Prize Winners. [accessed 9 August 2017] {HYPERLINK "https://www.alegemeiner.com/2013/10/29/richard-dawkins-perplexed-by-high-number-of-jewish-nobel-prize-winners/"


The Architects of Western Decline - A Study on the Frankfurt School and Cultural Marxism [HYPERLINK "https://www.templeinstitute.org/"


Specifically the atomization of communities and families – think here of “marriage equality” (abolishment of marriage), radical feminism, uncontrolled immigration and the elevation of minorities (Islamophobia) the doctrine of tolerance (of evil) etc, etc, etc is the outworking of the “Frankfurt School”.


The Temple Institute {HYPERLINK "https://www.templeinstitute.org/" [accessed 10 August 2017]

Israel : Israeli Housing Minister calls for Third Temple to replace al-Aqsa Mosque (Jan 26, 2014) [HYPERLINK "https://youtu.be/M4xAADNfITU"] [accessed 10 August 2017]

The Feasts of the Apocalypse

The Apocalypse is framed by a conceptual framework of Jewish Feasts and it seems that we are dealing with a cycle of three-and-a-half years of feast days. Of course the book of Revelation covers a time period that exceeds many thousands of years – the vision is prone to prophetic “breaks” and not all the visions are sequential (some are partially retrospective, others look to the future). For example, the millennium has a nominal time period of a thousand years so how can a conceptual framework cover a mere three-and-one-half years?

Nevertheless, the Apocalypse (and Daniel) stresses a period of 1260 days or 42 months, the equivalent of three-and-one-half years. This is a “special” time period that has symbolic resonance – there were 42 campsites in the wilderness before the people of Israel reached the Promised Land, Matthew organises his genealogy of Christ to total 42 generations. When the Tabernacle was dedicated gifts weighing 2 x 1260 shekels were offered. The ministry of Christ lasted 3½ years as did the ministry of Elijah (42 children were killed for mocking Elisha) and so forth (there are many more examples). The number 42 and associated time periods depict a time of trial before the arrival of the kingdom.

In *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship*, Aileen Guilding examines the relationship between the ancient Jewish lectionary system and John’s gospel. Unlike today, the Bible - or more accurately that portion known as the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) was not readily available to everyone. Apart from the fact that literacy was limited, few copies existed. The Pentateuch was read aloud in the synagogue every Sabbath. This was done over a three and a half year period known as the triennial cycle (see the Excursus at the end of this chapter). Her thesis is that John’s gospel was specifically written for the purpose of worship, ‘a plan of the gospel for three and a half lectionary years’ (pg.47). The events in John’s gospel are all structured around feast days (like Revelation) and she shows that many of the discourses recorded in his gospel actually match the reading for the Sabbath in the Jewish lectionary system. This is not as strange as it seems, for Jesus (the word made flesh) often used the occasion of the Sabbath to demonstrate miracles or for exposition, it would be natural for him to base that on the current reading. Besides the Torah, the Jews also read the Haftarah (prophets) and a Psalm (150 Psalms cover three years with the cycle sometimes interrupted with special feast readings).

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She comments that, “the Johnine ‘chronology’ is determined by liturgical rather than historical considerations” (pg.47). This may explain why, for example, John places the clearing of the Temple (John 2.13-25) at the first Passover, whereas others place it later in his ministry. Whether or not we agree with this analysis, it would make sense for our first century brethren, to read a portion of John’s gospel alongside the Sabbath Torah reading – especially if the gospel reading highlighted the true meaning of the Torah lesson. We can imagine then, how this might be done, particularly on special occasions (see the comparisons that she offers between John 14 and the Jewish readings for the New Year on page 87). It seems then, that the spirit continued to use this mechanism for structuring Revelation. The answer to our question is that Revelation has probably been constructed the way it has for liturgical reasons i.e., it was meant to be read over a cycle of three and a half years of Sabbaths. We can imagine, for example, Rev 5 being read at the feast of the Passover alongside the Torah Passover readings. The question now becomes; are both John’s gospel and Revelation structured this way for purely liturgical purposes? Is this period literal? The ministry of the Lord (and the Baptist?) was three and a half years, as was the ministry of Elijah. This is the only example that we have, interpreting scripture with scripture; we have no other option but to accept this period as literal at least for the ministry of Christ and this suggests a literal 3½ year cycle for the witnessing mission as indicated by Rev 11. If this is the case Jesus literally became the “word made flesh”, teaching and doing miracles that highlighted the “daily readings” an example of putting the “word” into practice.

Is it realistic to presume that all these events will commence or end on Jewish feast days? Scripture associates the Passover with the nation’s deliverance from Egypt, with the deliverance of Hezekiah from the Assyrian and with our deliverance, which lest we forget, was also at a Passover. Other feasts (fasts) are associated with national disasters, the post-Mosaic fast on the 9th of Ab (5th month). This is the day before the Temple was burned by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer.52.12 cf. Ezk.40.1; 2Kgs.25.8), when Herod’s Temple fell, for according to Josephus, ‘it was on the tenth day of the month of Ab, upon which it was formerly burnt by the King of Babylon’ (B.J.W.vi.4.5.). The Jews also associate the fall of Bether, the centre of the Bar Kochba rebellion, with the 9th of Ab. Some of these associations are probably legendary, but for whatever reason they all focus on the 9th of Ab. The fast of the fifth month was already kept in the time of Zechariah (8.19), probably originating during the Babylonian captivity. In more modern times the nation of Israel

\[2\text{According to Jewish tradition the fortress was betrayed to the Romans by a Samaritan, who showed them access to a secret entrance. This happened on the 9th of Ab, which is possible, for the Romans may have viewed this as an auspicious date.}\]
was attacked on a feast day – the ‘Yom Kippur War’ of 1973, the enemy no doubt benefiting from the nation’s unpreparedness. Once again, scripture demands that we must take the feast days and the fast days seriously. The time periods between the feast days are obviously related to Daniel in God is Judge (250-252) the following observation is made:

Conservative interpreters often regard the time periods as referring to the future revelation of the “man of sin” or to the in-breaking of the eschaton. An example of an “end time” application is the kind of approach proposed by Seventh Day Adventist interpreters, who understand the 2,300 evenings and mornings as 2,300 days, which are then equated with 2,300 years. They believe that Jesus did not enter the holiest in heaven until 1844 AD some 2,300 years after Cyrus issued his decree to rebuild the temple. The validity of this approach is questionable as the time period of 2,300 evenings and mornings\(^3\) concerns the “daily” (tāmīd). The tāmīd was offered every evening and morning – twice daily and therefore the period is most certainly 1,150 days. This period is shorter than the 1,260 days of Dan. 7:25 but is close to the actual period of the profanation of the sanctuary recorded in I Macc.1:54, 59 and 4:52, 59 that lasted three years. Therefore the dates find a rough correspondence with the historical facts – the problem is that the both the desecration and restoration of the temple and the nation occurred in stages and it is difficult to know precisely when the days commence and terminate, although the purification at Hanukkah is certainly one termination and the death of Antiochus another.

It is proposed that the time periods have a symbolic significance beyond their initial historical fulfilment during the Antiochene crisis. The time periods reflect the number of days in the Jewish Festal Calendar reckoned from the destruction of the temple on the 9\(^{th}\) of Ab. The differing numbers are accounted for by the leap year cycles. The Hebrew Calendar is a lunisolar calendar. It is a complex system, where a year can have any of six different numbers of days in it (353, 354, 355, 383, 384, or 385) and referred to as ‘deficient, regular or complete’ and ‘common (350s) or embolismic (380s)’. On average a leap year (383/4/5) would need to be added every three years in order for the calendar to synchronise with the harvest seasons; in practice this meant that sometimes no leap years were added during the three years and at other times two leap years may have been added almost consecutively in order to balance a calendar based on observation rather than calculation. The table below calculates the number of days from the destruction of the temple (9\(^{th}\) of Ab) until a prominent feast day, allowing for different combinations of deficient, regular and leap years:

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\(^3\) The Greek and Latin versions mistakenly read twenty-three hundred days.
It is surely not coincidental that from the destruction of the temple to the feasts of Purim and Passover covers a period of 1,335 days – as both feasts celebrate deliverance. Moreover, Hanukkah can be calculated by two different methods delivering a period of either 1,260 or 1,290 days. That the number 1,260 is associated with the dedication of the temple is reflected by the total weight of the vessels brought in Numbers chapter 7 at the dedication of the tabernacle, which is 2,520 shekels (2 x 1,260). The number 1,260 is also associated with measuring (dedicating) the temple in Revelation (11:1-3) and the feast of Purim is also alluded to in Rev. 11:10.

The Chronology of the Feasts

The chronology of the feasts is difficult to determine (for the reasons enumerated in the introduction) but here follows a list of the feasts alluded to in the Apocalypse in the order that they are mentioned which does not always imply sequential chronological order (depending on whether the vision is parallel/sequential/retrospective) etc. See the respective chapters in this exposition for further explanations.

Rev 1 - Day of Atonement (probable): Year One
Rev 5 and 6 – Passover (partially retrospective)
Rev 7 – Tabernacles
Rev 8 and 9 - Day of Atonement: Year Two
Rev 11 - Dedication and Purim (looking backwards and forwards)
Rev 12 – Passover and Pentecost (looking backwards and forwards)
Rev 14 – Tabernacles
Rev 15 and 16 - Passover (looking forwards to Rev 19) and Day of Atonement: Year Three
Rev 19 – Passover
Rev 20-21 – Tabernacles
Although this is a conceptual framework of 3½ years it spans historical time from the cross to the end of the millennium.

**Tabernacles and the Kingdom**

The **Feast of Tabernacles** is the feast of the ingathering of the harvest. Tabernacles is the **Feast of the kingdom**: “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zech.14.16). This does not mean that blood sacrifice will be part of the Tabernacles ritual, but the building of booths, reading of scriptures, enjoyment of the harvest fruits, rejoicing and worship will form part of the festival. The last two chapters of Revelation 4 reflect this experience;

- The Tabernacle of God is with men (21:3)
- God will wipe away all tears (21:4)
- I will give to him that is a thirst (21:6)
- A pure river of water (22:1)
- Twelve manner of fruits (22:2)

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4 See Isa.25.6-8: ‘And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined….the Lord will wipe away tears from all faces.’ This is the Feast of Tabernacles, when death is finally ‘swallowed up’ (cp.Isa.25.7; Rev 20.14, 21.4). The dedication of Solomon’s Temple was in the seventh month (1Kgs.8.2), when the house was filled with the Shekinah glory (v.10) and the people celebrate a Feast of Tabernacles lasting twice the proscribed time. (v.65) Sending the people home after the second seven. (v.66)
Excursus: Triennial reading Cycle of the Old Testament

The encyclopaedia Judaica comments as follows: Triennial Cycle, term denoting the custom according to which the weekly Pentateuchal readings on Sabbaths are completed in a three-year cycle. The triennial cycle was practised in Palestine and in Egypt as late as A.D.1170, whereas in Babylonia the reading of the Pentateuch was completed in one year, from Tishri to Tishri. The latter became the accepted traditional custom the world over (Meg.29b; Maim.Yad, Tefillah, 13:1).

The masoretic text of the Pentateuch has 154 divisions, known as Sedarim. According to other traditions, however, the Pentateuch consists of 161 and even 175 portions (Sof.16: 10); the Yemenites divide the Pentateuch into 167. It has been suggested that the 154 – division correspond to the minimum number of Sabbaths in the triennial cycle and 161 to the maximum. The difference is due to the occurrence of festivals on Sabbaths when the regular Pentateuch portions were suspended by special Pentateuch readings appropriate to the festivals. The 175-division stems from the practice of completing the reading of the whole Pentateuch within a cycle of three and a half years (twice within seven years).

On the following page is a reconstruction of the triennial cycle culled from the encyclopaedia Judaica, to this table I have added the Psalms. The reading for the end of Elul in the second year of the cycle (the commencement of the witnesses ministry) is Lev.5.1-6.1; the chapter starts with the theme of witnessing, the next reading is Psalm 79 – extensively alluded to in Rev 11 and a haftarah reading of Zech.5.3-6.19. The previous chapter to this (Zech.4) is also extensively quoted in Rev 11. The present author believes that Zech.2.14 – 4.7 was probably the original Haftarah, which, at some time was displaced to the first Sabbath in Hanukkah as it was appropriate to the dedication of the Temple. The motif’s for Hanukkah are the same as those at the end of Elul, namely witnessing and dedicating (measuring Rev.11:1) the Temple. I have allocated the Psalms in parenthesis; the gap in the third year at Tevet is artificial and has been done for ease of numbering. Psalm 119 was probably split into three portions, read over three consecutive Sabbaths – this would obviously shift all the Psalms after 119 downwards in the table.
It must be remembered that this table is a reconstruction made from references and comments in Jewish literature. Aileen Guilding also includes a lectionary calendar in her book, which varies slightly from the one here. For example the reading for the first Sabbath in Elul of the first year, would be Gen.27.28 (to 28.1), not Gen.26.11 (to 27.1). She freely admits that the reconstruction is an approximation. Also discussed is whether the reading cycle began in the first year at Nisan (beginning of months) or at Tishri (the New Year = civil New Year). She argues for Nisan, which seems likely, though different communities may have well opted for Tishri. From studying the lectionary we can obtain some remarkable insights into our New Testament. For example according to the above table the reading on (or around) the seventh Sabbath after Passover (=Pentecost) is Gen.11.1 (to 12.1) this is the tower of Babel incident – where language was confused, in the New Testament we find this process reversed at Pentecost by the spirit gifted witnesses (the apostles), recorded in Acts 2.1-13!

Aileen Guilding observes the following: “Further, it is striking that the two New Testament passages which tell of the Lord's birth, Revelation 12 and Luke 2, seem to depend on Genesis 37, Leviticus 12, and Isaiah 66, all of which are lectionary readings for Tabernacles (2nd and 3rd Sabbaths in Tishri – this is only slightly out from our table – author). Luke 2 combines ‘Mary kept all these sayings pondering them in her heart’ (compare Gen.37.11) with a reference to the law of circumcision as it is given in Lev.12. In Rev.12 the mention of the sun, moon, and stars recalls Joseph’s dream. In Rev.12.4 the dragon waits to devour the woman’s child. In Genesis 37 Jacob says when he sees Joseph’s blood stained coat, “An evil beast has devoured him, ‘a wild beast has snatched away Joseph’” (pg. 100-101). Such correspondences are not coincidental, however the theme for Rev.12 is that of Passover and Pentecost; the Exodus delivery from Egypt (birth of a nation, birth of the Lord, etc), this could well be explained by a reading cycle beginning in Tishri (at Gen.1.1) this would make the above, Passover readings, instead of Tabernacle readings. It is quite possible that both lectionary cycles were practised, one by the Diaspora, and one by Erez Israel. The triennial cycle has obviously influenced the structure of the Gospels and Revelation amongst others. The Sabbath readings also determined and structured the Lord’s preaching and healing ministry – for he was ‘the word made flesh.’ The triennial cycle probably stems from the Babylonian exile, and must have been in existence at least 280 years before Christ, for the LXX already has the Gen.33.17 reference to booths, a Tabernacles reading in the Nisan cycle. There follows two further tables, the current table for yearly scriptural readings on the Sabbath, and a table for the readings on feast days. Although the last two tables are (relatively) modern, it must be remembered that the ordinary Sabbath reading was either supplemented or displaced by special readings on Sabbath feast days. The current table of feast day readings no doubt reflects very old traditions.
Digression 1 Page 8

Reconstructed Triennial Readings:
FIRST YEAR
PENTATEUCH HAFTARAH

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SECOND YEAR

PSALM

PENTATEUCH HAFTARAH

THIRD YEAR

PSALM

PENTATEUCH

HAFTARAH PSALM
(not extant)
Zech.4:14
(not extant)
(not extant)

GENESIS
1:
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24
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6:9
8:1
8 : 15
9 : 18
11 : 1
12 :
14 :
15 :
16 :

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1

17 : 1
18 : 1
19 : 1
20 : 1
21 : 1

Isa.42:5
(not extant)
(not extant)
Isa.30:8-15

(1)
(2)
(3)
(4)

12 :
13 :
13 :
15 :

29
1
21
21

Isa.21:11
Isa.46:3
Isa.45:24
Isa.49:10

(55)
(56)
(57)
(58)

6:
8:
9:
11 :

22
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22
1

Isa. 54:9-10
Hab. 3:1-5
Isa. 42:7-21
Isa. 49:9-13
(not extant)

(5)
(6)
(7)
(8)
(9)

16 :
18 :
21 :
22 :

25
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1
26

Isa.58:23
Isa.6;61:6-10
Jer.34:1
Isa.49:3

(59)
(60)
(61)
(62)

12 :
13 :
14 :
15 :
16 :

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(10)
(11)
Zeph.3:9-19;Isa.1:1-17 (12)
Isa.64:1
(13)

24 :
25 :
26 :
27 :
29 :

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31
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Isa.60:17-61:9
Isa.66
Ezk.16:10-19

17 :
18 :
20 :
22 :

16
25
14
2

Josh. 24:3-18

(not extant)
Mal.2:5

(118)
(119)

(16)
(17)
(18)

31 : 1
32 : 14

Isa.43:7-21
(70)
2 Sam.22:10-51 (71)

26 : 52
28 : 1

Josh.17:4
Ezk.45:12

(120)
(121)

34 :
37 :
38 :
39 :

26 :
27 :
27 :
28 :
29 :

11
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28
10
31

Isa 65:23-66:8
Isa 46:3-6
Micah 1:1;5:7-13
Hos. 12:13
Isa 60.15

(24)
(25)
(26)
(27)
(28)

30 :
31 :
32 :
33 :

21
1 Sam. 1:11
(29)
3 Jer.30;10-16.Mic.6:3-7:20 (30)
4
Obad.1:1
(31)
18
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6:
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12 :

12
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35 :
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Isa. 43:1-7
Jer. 38:8
Isa.37:31-37
Isa.52:3-9

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Amos 1:3-15; 2:6
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Isa.50:10-52:11

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Jer.42:12-17;43:12-14;

49 : 27

Josh 14:6;Ezk.37:10

Zech.14:1;Mic.2:12

(114)
(115)
(116)
(117)

23 : 2
25 : 10

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{ 1 Kgs.13:14
{ 1 Kgs.2:1
Isa.43:2

Ezk.44:15
Ezk.44:29
Judg. 11
Mic.5:6

(68)
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Isa.33:7-22
1 Kgs.1:1
Judg.19:20
Isa 12.3-14:2
2 Sam.2:21-28

18
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Mal.1:11-2:7
2 Kgs.12:5

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44 :
{ 47 :
{ 48 :
49 :

----1 Sam.11

Isa.61:6

(14)
Isa.33:17-34:12;2Kgs.4 (15)

1 Kgs 3:15

(41)
(42)
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(45)
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EXODUS

Hos.14:7;Ezk.43:10

27 Jer.31:33-40;1Kgs.18:27-39 (72)
1
1 Kgs.8:18
(73)
21
Jer.30:18
(74)
1 Isa.33:20-34:8;1Kgs.7:13 (75)

LEVITICUS
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3:
4:
5:
6:

1Isa.43:21;Jer.21:19;Mic.6:9-7:8(76)
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(80)

30 :
32 :
33 :
34 :
35 :

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9

Jer.4:2
Jer.2
(not extant)

(122)
(123)
(124)
Ezk.45:1;Josh.21:41 (125)
Josh.20:1
(126)

DEUTERONOMY
1:
2:
3:
4:

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23
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Jer.30:4;Amos 2:9
(not extant)
Jer.32:16
(not extant)

(127)
(128)
(129)
(130)

(81)
(82)
(83)
(84)

5:
6:
8:
9:

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(not extant)
(not extant)
Jer.9:22-24
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2 Kgs.5
2 Kgs.7:8
(not extant)
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10 :
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17 : 1
18 : 1
19 : 1
21 : 1

(not extant)
Ezk.22:1
Amos 9:7
Ezk.44:25

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17 :
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1 Sam.8:1
1 Sam.10:24
Jer.29:8
Josh.24:1

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(140)
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22 :
24 :
25 :
25 :

(not extant)
(not extant)
Jer.36:6;Ezk.34
Isa.24:2

(93)
(94)
(95)
(96)

21 : 10
(not extant)
(not extant)
26 : 1

Isa.54:1-10
(not extant)
(not extant)
Isa.60:1-22

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39

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Isa.27:6;Ezk.16:1;20 (47)

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3: 1
4 : 14
6: 2

Isa.40:11;2 Kgs.20:8 (48)

2: 4
3 : 14

(not extant)
Isa.24:2

(99)
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32 : 1

Ezk.17:22

4:
4:
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1 Sam 6:10
Judg.13:2-25
Hos.4:14
Judg.13:2

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33 : 1
34 : 1

Josh.1:1-18
(not extant)

7:
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18
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13

Isa.55:12
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Isa.63:10-11

22 :
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Josh.2:1; Judg.18:7 (110)

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(65)
(66)
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Isa.41:2-14;1Kgs.10:9

Isa.17:14-18:7
Isa.61:9-10
1 Sam.2:21-28

(105)
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Isa.19;Jer.4:6;1Sam.6:6(53)
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17
21
11
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Zakhor
Parah
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### Table of Scriptural Readings on Sabbaths (modern annual lectionary)

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</table>
| 1 This portion is not read on Sabbath but on Simhat Torah

1 Parentheses indicate Sephardi ritual. Italics (and Italics bold) indicate portions that are sometimes combined.

2 This portion is not read on Sabbath but on Simhat Torah.
### The Annual Jewish Calendar

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<th>MONTH</th>
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<th>SEASON</th>
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<td><strong>1. ABIB or NISAN</strong>&lt;br&gt;Ex.23:15; Neh.2:1; Jos. Antiq. i. 3, ii. 10, 5.</td>
<td><strong>APRIL</strong>&lt;br&gt;30 days.</td>
<td>New Moon&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;&lt;br&gt;Passover in the evening, the beginning of the 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; day (Ex. 12:18, 19; 13:3-10), introducing 15-21.&lt;br&gt;Feast of unleavened bread (Lev.23:6)&lt;br&gt;16. Sheaf of first fruits of the harvest presented (Lev. 23:10-14; cf.Josh.5:11; Jos. Antiq. ii. 10,5).</td>
<td>Latter or spring rains. Flax harvest at Jericho (Josh.2:6). Jordan at flood (Josh.3:15;Chron.12:15;Exclus.24:26). Barley harvest in Sharon, wheat in the Jordan valley. Pods on the carob tree. Dry season starts – n.n. winds</td>
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<td><strong>2. ZIV or IYAR</strong>&lt;br&gt;1 Kings 6:1,37; Jos. Antiq. viii. 3, 1.</td>
<td><strong>May</strong>&lt;br&gt;29 days</td>
<td>Passover for those who could not keep the regular one (Num. 9:10, 11).&lt;br&gt;Barley harvest in uplands (Ruth 1:22)&lt;br&gt;Wheat in lowlands.</td>
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<td><strong>3. SIVAN</strong>&lt;br&gt;Esth.8:9.</td>
<td><strong>June</strong>&lt;br&gt;30 days</td>
<td>Pentecost, or feast of weeks or of harvest, day of first fruits. Loaves as first fruits of gathered harvest presented. (Ex.23:16,19; 34:22; Lev.23:15-21; Num.28:26;Deut.16:9,10).&lt;br&gt;Apples on seacoast.&lt;br&gt;Early figs general.&lt;br&gt;Almonds ripe.&lt;br&gt;Intense heat (Jos. War iii.7,32)</td>
<td>Barley harvest in uplands (Ruth 1:22)&lt;br&gt;Wheat in high mountains. First grapes ripe. Heat increases.</td>
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<td><strong>5. AB</strong>&lt;br&gt;Jos. Antiq. iv. 4, 7.</td>
<td><strong>August</strong>&lt;br&gt;30 days</td>
<td>Memorial of trumpet-blowing (Num. 29:1). Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashana)&lt;br&gt;Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur (Lev.16:29-31).&lt;br&gt;Feast of ingathering or Tabernacles. First fruits of wine and oil (Ex.23:16 ; Lev.23:34; Deut.16:13)&lt;br&gt;Solemn Assembly (Lev.23:36; Num.29:35; Neh.8:18; cf. John7:37)&lt;br&gt;Pomegranates ripe. Season changing to winter (Jos. Antiq. iv. 10, 4) or rainy season, with prevailing w. s.w. wind.&lt;br&gt;Former or early rains. Pistachio nuts ripe. Plowing.</td>
<td>Barley harvest in uplands (Ruth 1:22)&lt;br&gt;Wheat in high mountains. First grapes ripe. Heat increases.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6. ELUL</strong>&lt;br&gt;Neh.6:15</td>
<td><strong>September</strong>&lt;br&gt;29 days</td>
<td>Dates and summer figs. Vintage general (cf. Lev. 25:5;Num.13:23)</td>
<td>Barley harvest in uplands (Ruth 1:22)&lt;br&gt;Wheat in high mountains. First grapes ripe. Heat increases.</td>
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<td><strong>ETHANIM or TISHRI</strong>&lt;br&gt;1 Kings 8:2; Jos. Antiq. viii. 4, 1.</td>
<td><strong>October</strong>&lt;br&gt;30 days</td>
<td>Memorial of trumpet-blowing (Num. 29:1). Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashana)&lt;br&gt;Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur (Lev.16:29-31).&lt;br&gt;Feast of ingathering or Tabernacles. First fruits of wine and oil (Ex.23:16 ; Lev.23:34; Deut.16:13)&lt;br&gt;Solemn Assembly (Lev.23:36; Num.29:35; Neh.8:18; cf. John7:37)&lt;br&gt;Pomegranates ripe. Season changing to winter (Jos. Antiq. iv. 10, 4) or rainy season, with prevailing w. s.w. wind.&lt;br&gt;Former or early rains. Pistachio nuts ripe. Plowing.</td>
<td>Barley harvest in uplands (Ruth 1:22)&lt;br&gt;Wheat in high mountains. First grapes ripe. Heat increases.</td>
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<td><strong>7. BUL or MARHESHVAN</strong>&lt;br&gt;1 Kings. 6:38; Jos. Antiq. i. 3, 3.</td>
<td><strong>November</strong>&lt;br&gt;29 days in regular or defective year&lt;br&gt;30 days in perfect year</td>
<td>Memorial of trumpet-blowing (Num. 29:1). Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashana)&lt;br&gt;Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur (Lev.16:29-31).&lt;br&gt;Feast of ingathering or Tabernacles. First fruits of wine and oil (Ex.23:16 ; Lev.23:34; Deut.16:13)&lt;br&gt;Solemn Assembly (Lev.23:36; Num.29:35; Neh.8:18; cf. John7:37)&lt;br&gt;Pomegranates ripe. Season changing to winter (Jos. Antiq. iv. 10, 4) or rainy season, with prevailing w. s.w. wind.&lt;br&gt;Former or early rains. Pistachio nuts ripe. Plowing.</td>
<td>Barley harvest in uplands (Ruth 1:22)&lt;br&gt;Wheat in high mountains. First grapes ripe. Heat increases.</td>
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<td><strong>8. CHISLEV</strong>&lt;br&gt;Zech.7:5; cf.Jos.Antiq. xii. 5, 7, 6.</td>
<td><strong>December</strong>&lt;br&gt;29 days in a defective year&lt;br&gt;30 days in a perfect year</td>
<td>25. Feast of dedication @Macc.4: 52 (John 10:22)&lt;br&gt;Winter figs on trees.&lt;br&gt;Rainfall increases (cf. Ezra 10:9, 11).</td>
<td>Barley harvest in uplands (Ruth 1:22)&lt;br&gt;Wheat in high mountains. First grapes ripe. Heat increases.</td>
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<td><strong>9. TEBETH</strong>&lt;br&gt;Esth. 2:16; Jos. Antiq. xi. 5, 4.</td>
<td><strong>January</strong>&lt;br&gt;29 days</td>
<td>Memorial of trumpet-blowing (Num. 29:1). Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashana)&lt;br&gt;Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur (Lev.16:29-31).&lt;br&gt;Feast of ingathering or Tabernacles. First fruits of wine and oil (Ex.23:16 ; Lev.23:34; Deut.16:13)&lt;br&gt;Solemn Assembly (Lev.23:36; Num.29:35; Neh.8:18; cf. John7:37)&lt;br&gt;Pomegranates ripe. Season changing to winter (Jos. Antiq. iv. 10, 4) or rainy season, with prevailing w. s.w. wind.&lt;br&gt;Former or early rains. Pistachio nuts ripe. Plowing.</td>
<td>Barley harvest in uplands (Ruth 1:22)&lt;br&gt;Wheat in high mountains. First grapes ripe. Heat increases.</td>
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<td><strong>10. SHEBAT</strong>&lt;br&gt;Esth. 3:7; Jos. Antiq. xi. 8, 49.</td>
<td><strong>February</strong>&lt;br&gt;30 days</td>
<td>Memorial of trumpet-blowing (Num. 29:1). Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashana)&lt;br&gt;Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur (Lev.16:29-31).&lt;br&gt;Feast of ingathering or Tabernacles. First fruits of wine and oil (Ex.23:16 ; Lev.23:34; Deut.16:13)&lt;br&gt;Solemn Assembly (Lev.23:36; Num.29:35; Neh.8:18; cf. John7:37)&lt;br&gt;Pomegranates ripe. Season changing to winter (Jos. Antiq. iv. 10, 4) or rainy season, with prevailing w. s.w. wind.&lt;br&gt;Former or early rains. Pistachio nuts ripe. Plowing.</td>
<td>Barley harvest in uplands (Ruth 1:22)&lt;br&gt;Wheat in high mountains. First grapes ripe. Heat increases.</td>
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<td><strong>11. ADAR</strong>&lt;br&gt;Esth. 9:21-28</td>
<td><strong>March</strong>&lt;br&gt;29 days in leap year&lt;br&gt;30 days in leap year.</td>
<td>Memorial of trumpet-blowing (Num. 29:1). Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashana)&lt;br&gt;Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur (Lev.16:29-31).&lt;br&gt;Feast of ingathering or Tabernacles. First fruits of wine and oil (Ex.23:16 ; Lev.23:34; Deut.16:13)&lt;br&gt;Solemn Assembly (Lev.23:36; Num.29:35; Neh.8:18; cf. John7:37)&lt;br&gt;Pomegranates ripe. Season changing to winter (Jos. Antiq. iv. 10, 4) or rainy season, with prevailing w. s.w. wind.&lt;br&gt;Former or early rains. Pistachio nuts ripe. Plowing.</td>
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<td><strong>12. VEADAR</strong>&lt;br&gt;Intercausal month in leap years.</td>
<td><strong>April</strong>&lt;br&gt;29 days</td>
<td>Memorial of trumpet-blowing (Num. 29:1). Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashana)&lt;br&gt;Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur (Lev.16:29-31).&lt;br&gt;Feast of ingathering or Tabernacles. First fruits of wine and oil (Ex.23:16 ; Lev.23:34; Deut.16:13)&lt;br&gt;Solemn Assembly (Lev.23:36; Num.29:35; Neh.8:18; cf. John7:37)&lt;br&gt;Pomegranates ripe. Season changing to winter (Jos. Antiq. iv. 10, 4) or rainy season, with prevailing w. s.w. wind.&lt;br&gt;Former or early rains. Pistachio nuts ripe. Plowing.</td>
<td>Barley harvest in uplands (Ruth 1:22)&lt;br&gt;Wheat in high mountains. First grapes ripe. Heat increases.</td>
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*In every month the new moon falls on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month. Defective year = 353 or 354 days. Perfect year = 355 days. Leap year = 385 days.*
Table of Holiday Scriptural Readings for the Diaspora and for Erez Israel

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**Passover**

1st Day  
Ex. 12:21—51, Num. 28:19 — 25  
Josh. 5:2—6:1

2nd Day  
II Kings 23:1—9; 21—25 [none]

3rd Day  
Ex. 13:1—16, Num. 28:19 — 25

4th Day  
Ex. 22:24—23:19, Num. 28:19 — 25

5th Day  
Ex. 33:12—34:26, Num. 28:19 — 25

6th Day  
Num. 9:1—14; 28:19 — 25

Intermediate Shabbat  
The order changes to allow for the reading as on the 5th day above  
Ezek. 36:37—37:14 (37:1—14)

7th Day  
Ex. 13:17—15:26, Num. 28:19 — 25  
II Sam. 22:1—51

8th Day  
Deut. 15:19—16:17, Num. 28:19—25 [none.]  
Isa. 10:32—12:6 [none.]

**Shavuot**

1st Day  
Ex. 19:1—20:23, Num. 28:26—31  
Ezek. 1:1—28; 3:12

2nd Day  
Deut. 15:19—16:17, Num. 28:26—31 [none]  
Num. 3:1—19 (2:20—3:19)

**Ninth of Av**

Morning  
Deut. 4:25—40  
Jer. 8:13—9:23

Afternoon  
Ex. 32:11—14; 34:1—10  
Isa. 55:6—56:8 [Hos. 14:2—10; Micah 7:18—20]

**Other Fasts**

Morning and afternoon  
Ex. 32:11—14; 34:1—10  
Isa. 55:6—56:8

Rosh Hodesh  
Num 28:1—15

Shabbat and Rosh Hodesh  
Weekly portion. Num 28:9—15  
Isa. 66:1—24

Shabbat immediately preceding Rosh Hodesh  
Weekly portion.  
I Sam. 20:18—12

* Parenthesis indicate Sephardi custom, square brackets indicate Erez Israel custom.*
Dating Matters

Intertextuality accords with the hermeneutical rule that “Scripture interprets Scripture”. The intertextuality of the NT does not simply add a new and interesting angle to the historical-critical enterprise; it points exegetes towards a hermeneutical model in which OT and NT are “interactive (or intertexture) mediums of the word of the Lord” in the dynamic process by which the reader understands and then submits to the Bible.¹

G.K. Beale produced one of the most comprehensive single works ever written on the subject of allusions to the OT in Revelation. He argues that while an apple in a basket of fruit has been removed from its original context, it has not lost its identity as an apple. It has simply been placed in a new context. So when NT writers quote the OT, they are placing such texts in a new context and giving them “new significance” within that new context but they are not altering what the original writer meant. Beale cites four presuppositions (Christ corporately represents Israel; history is a unified plan; the end-time has been inaugurated by Christ; Christ is the key to the OT) which he believes governed John’s approach to Scripture. He then suggests that interpreters who agree with these presuppositions will conclude that John respects the original context of his allusions. Indeed, Beale opposes the ‘new meaning’ of the OT in Revelation. Moreover, he insists that meaning derives solely from an author’s intention, not from the creative processes of readers. Furthermore, elsewhere Beale (2001:32) asserts that, while he concedes that readers can ‘create’ meaning, it is a meaning, implied at least by and partially derivative from authorial intent. If one goes further than this concession, then one places the reader in a sphere separated from all significant links to a text’s original meaning.²

T. K. Beal observes that: “The basic force of intertextuality is to problematise, even spoil, textual boundaries — those lines of demarcation which allow a reader to talk about the meaning, subject, or origin of a writing. Such borders, intertextuality asserts, are never solid or stable. Texts are always spilling over into other texts. No text is an isolated island”.³

The criteria which provide constraints for intertextual analysis can be outlined briefly as follows⁴ (Keesmaat, 1994:34-35; cf. Hays, 1989:29-32; Van Wolde, 1997:432-433):

1. Availability: Was the proposed source of echo available to John and/or original audiences?

2. Volume: To what degree is there explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns? This also involves how distinctive or prominent the precursor text is within Scripture and how much rhetorical weight the echo receives in (the Apocalypse of) John. Volume should be measured on the phraseological plane and on other levels, for example, the replication of the form, genre, setting, and plot of their precursor. If on the level of plot, for example, a character in the successor text repeats the experience of a character in the precursor, the criterion of volume is valid (cf. Brawley, 1993:437; 1995:14; Brodie, 2001:110).

3. Recurrence: How often does John elsewhere cite or allude to the same scriptural passage?

4. Thematic coherence: How well does the alleged echo fit into the line of argument John is developing? Does it clarify or illuminate John’s discussion?

5. Historical plausibility: Could John have intended the suggested meaning? Could his audiences have understood it? Or, leaving the language of intentionality aside, is the suggested meaning plausible in the light of the plots which the intertext of the culture allows?

6. History of interpretation: Have other readers, both critical and pre-critical, heard the same echoes?

7. Satisfaction: Does the proposed reading make sense? Does it illuminate the surrounding discourse? Does it produce a satisfying account of the effect of intertextual relation for the reader?

8. Socio-historical, cultural, and ideological setting and structure (cf. Keesmaat, 1994:33): If it were not for the study of the socio-historical setting, as Schoors (2000:45, 59) points out, the study of intertextuality would be a synchronic business which, in the end, means an ahistorical study. Such an approach does not belong to scientific discourse, but rather to homiletical discourse. A text, a phrase, or a motif that has been borrowed receives its full meaning only from the actual (social) context in which it has been adopted.

The question of direction of influence is important for establishing the relative dating of books especially if the texts in question have the same underlying inter-texts. This becomes in essence a methodological question where a number of steps need to be rigorously followed in order to establish dependence (or otherwise). The first step is to confirm the presence of allusions, types and or, echoes. These go beyond mere coincidental word connections and should demonstrate thematic and contextual similarity with the underlying subtext. Once a number of such correspondences have been established the second step is to compare the texts to determine the direction of influence. A diagrammatic representation of the possibilities follows below:
Direction of influence

Case 1: Independent Texts
(Conclusion: Relative date of A and B cannot be established)

Old Testament
1. 2. 3.

N. T. Text A
1. 2. 3.

N. T. Text B
1. 2. 3.

Case 2: Text B dependent on A
(Conclusion: A is earlier than B)

Old Testament
1. 2. 3.

N. T. Text A
1. 2. 3.

N. T. Text B
1. 2. 3.

Primary
Direction of Influence
Secondary
In Case 1 the authors of text A and B use exactly the same allusions etc independently of each other as they are unaware of each other. Such serendipity is not possible but could be attributed to the Spirit making author A and author B use the same allusions in the same highly creative way.

If that is the situation we have no way of dating text A and B relative to each other. However, a static view of inspiration understands author A and B as mere instruments negating their own personalities and input. The Old Testament prophets employed scripture creatively and often cited each other or alluded to previous texts there is no reason to assume that NT authors acted any differently. Case 2 and Case 3 (not shown above) are similar but with reversed priority (therefore we examine only Case 2).

In Case 2 (a dynamic view of inspiration) text A employs the Old Testament as an inter-text and text B refers to text A making text A the prior text (the reverse case, where B is primary has not been shown). However, how do we determine which text is prior? If, for example, text A has a number of allusions, types and echoes from the Old Testament spread throughout the book but text B has them concentrated in one chapter then which text is prior?

Logic dictates that text A, in which the Old Testament forms the woof and weave (this is a characteristic of text A) is the prior text and text B which concentrates a number of unique allusions found throughout text A into one chapter (thus taking reader comprehension for granted) is dependent on text A.

A matrix of intratextual, intertextual allusions and echoes permeates Revelation. G. K. Beale notes; “In the book of Revelation, for example, where there are no formal quotations, the tally of allusions goes anywhere from 394 (UBS 6) to 635 (NA26) up to 1,000.” The wide disparity in the calculation is due to the disparity in how scholars define an allusion”.

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The article by Beale discusses criteria for identifying allusions and echoes as distinct from direct citations. As Beale observes there is sometimes considerable overlap between allusion/echo --- however, whereas an allusion can often be described as a paraphrase an echo may simply reflect the cultural milieu where similar idiom is employed in similar circumstances.\(^8\)

However, the situation is often more complex as text B will often supplement and expand on text A by adding its own commentary and allusions thus sharing the original inter-text used by A (shown as a dashed arrow in the diagram). Most cases of appropriation develop in the direction of expansion (an expanded version and the addition of descriptors) and this complicates matters.

The table that follows presents a comparison table of 19 allusions shared between Hebrews 12 and the book of Revelation as a whole. Of these shared allusions 32\% come from Rev 11 a chapter that has central themes of witnessing and the temple, with the outer court cast off (to the Gentiles) -- the same themes are central to Hebrews.


A case study in direction of influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrews 12</th>
<th>Revelation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A cloud of witnesses (v.1)</td>
<td>Witness ascend in a cloud (11.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let us run with patience (v.1)</td>
<td>patience and the faith of the saints (13.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus author and finisher of faith (v.2)</td>
<td>Alpha and Omega, first and last (1.11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>not yet resisted unto blood (v.4)</td>
<td>shall overcome and kill them (11.7 cf. 6.9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>faint not when rebuked by him (v.5)</td>
<td>repent or else I will come quickly (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject to the Father of spirits (v.9)</td>
<td>seven Spirits (churches) before throne (1.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Zion (v.22)</td>
<td>Mount Zion (14.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the living God (v.22)</td>
<td>God of the Living Creatures (4.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the heavenly Jerusalem (v.22)</td>
<td>New Jerusalem from heaven (21.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innumerable company of angels (v.22)</td>
<td>thousands of thousands of angels (5.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>church of the firstborn (v.23)</td>
<td>Jesus first begotten of the dead (1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which are written in heaven (v.23)</td>
<td>Written in the Lambs book of life (13.8; 21.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God the Judge of all (v.23)</td>
<td>time of the dead that they be judged (11.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirits (v.23)</td>
<td>Spirit of life from God entered them (11.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just men made perfect (v.23)</td>
<td>white robes were given to them (6.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus mediator of new covenant (v.24)</td>
<td>A lamb as it had been slain (5.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and to the blood of sprinkling (v.24)</td>
<td>overcame by blood of the Lamb (12.11 cf. 5.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>him that speaks from heaven (v.25)</td>
<td>heard a great voice from heaven (11.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shake the earth and also heaven (v.26)</td>
<td>a great earthquake (11.3) war in heaven (12.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serve God with reverence and fear (v.28)</td>
<td>remnant afraid and give glory to God (11.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following four texts are inter-texts:

538–330 BCE

Haggai 2:6-9  For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts. Haggai 2:21-22  And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

68-70 CE

Mark 13:23-27  But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

80-90 CE

Hebrews 12:25-28  See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

c. 96 CE

Revelation 11:12-13  And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.
Note the dates attached to these texts are critical date ranges and are used for the sake of the argument. For example many scholars suggest 66-70 (before the fall of the temple) for Hebrews and Mark is often also dated far earlier. The date 68-70 for Mark is largely influenced by the fact that many scholars do not accept an early prophecy for the fall of Jerusalem, therefore it must have been written during the war. Mark is selected for comparison as it is thought to be the earliest gospel account. Surprisingly, unlike the other NT books Revelation has no date range but is dated with precision by the critics (and accepted unquestioningly by many conservative Christians) to c.96 CE. The certainty of the date rests on a single external testimony that is itself open to alternative interpretations. One wonders if critical evaluation was biased by other considerations.

The Haggai Prophecy

The prophecy of Haggai is about the restoration of the temple, Benjamin W. Swinburnson notes:

“The temple stands at centre stage in Haggai’s prophecy as it is couched within a retrospective and prospective redemptive-historical dynamic. Retrospectively, the prophecy reaches back to the first Exodus. The exhortation to be strong and work is grounded in the promise of God in the first Exodus: “for (ς) I am with you…according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt” (Hag. 2:4-5). The protological shaking of the earth at Sinai (Hag. 2:6) also provides the retrospective backdrop for Haggai’s projection of Israel’s future possession of the nations. Furthermore, the mention of the “former glory” of the temple (Hag. 2:3, 9) links the prophecy back to the “glory days” of David and Solomon, when the temple’s beauty and splendour were at their height. All of this is brought to bear upon Israel’s existential present. As she contemplates her faded glory, the prophet addresses himself directly to Israel’s present situation (note the doubled emphasis on τάτη (“now”) in 2:3, 4). She is directed not only to her glorious past, but also to the semi-eschatological down-payment of the Glory-Spirit (2:5), which is structurally central to Haggai’s prophecy. In other words, as she despairingly compares the glory of the former and present temples, she is directed not only to what Yahweh will do in the future, but also to the present intrusion of that reality in her midst. Even as Israel is beckoned to continue work on the typological temple, she is also invited to look beyond its inglorious condition to the temple of the Glory-Spirit that is already invisibly present within her. Old Testament Israel already has vital contact with the life-giving Spirit of the age to come!”

9 Scholars such as J.A.T Robinson present cogent arguments for dating the whole NT pre-70 and the Gospels in the 40-60 range. A survey of critical scholarship shows that date ranges have constantly been revised downwards over the last two centuries (not upwards). The consensus is therefore gradually shifting.

10 Duncan W. McKenzie remarks, “Irenaeus, a source that should be a Rock of Gibraltar in terms of the date of Revelation, is not the sure foundation one would expect. On a date of much greater significance than that of Revelation (the age of Jesus at his death), Irenaeus is out in left field, if not totally out of the ballpark. Irenaeus asserts that Jesus was at an elder age (which he defines as “after the fortieth and fiftieth year” of life) when he died.” Duncan W. McKenzie, The Antichrist and the Second Coming A Preterist Examination, (Xulon Press, 2012), 22. Sec, JAT Robinson, Redating the New Testament for an alternative interpretation of Irenaeus’ testimony.

In Haggai, the word “desire” refers to gentile riches, the NetBible comments: “Though the subject here is singular (ךֶּמְדָּה, khemdah; “desire”), the preceding plural predicate mandates a collective subject, “desired (things)” or, better, an emendation to a plural form, ḥemdōt (khamudot, “desirable [things],” hence “treasures”). Cf. ASV “the precious things”; NASB “the wealth”; NRSV “the treasure.” In the OT context this has no direct reference to the coming of the Messiah”. Note the Septuagint translation: “And I will shake all nations, and the choice portions of all the nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord Almighty (Hag 2.7 LXE). The prophet Isaiah suggests that this is the correct reading; “But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves” (Isa.61.6). However, this is not the last word on the matter. Wayne Jackson summarises as follows:

“Actually the word “desire” [Heb. ḥemdot] is used of persons in the Old Testament — both in its singular and plural forms. Saul was described as “the desire of Israel” (1 Samuel 9:20), and Daniel was called the “greatly beloved” [plural in 9:23; 10:11, 19. Dr. Robert Alden notes that “such irregularities are common in OT Hebrew” (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 586). The prophet may have been thinking of the “nations,” and selected a verb to agree with that emphasis. Walter Kaiser notes that often in the Hebrew, when a verb is controlled by two nouns (e.g., “desire” and “nations” in this case), “the verb agrees with the second noun even if the verb actually belongs with the former substantive” (Hard Sayings of the Old Testament, p. 237). Also, the sentence structure allows for “desire” to be the object to which the nations would come (see NKJV). Such a translation answers the grammatical problem and retains the messianic import of the passage. The case cannot be settled on the basis of grammar. One scholar, who inclines against the messianic concept, concedes that either view is “within the realm of semantic possibilities” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia – Revised, Vol. IV, p. 898). There are other factors which may suggest that the “desire of the nations” was fulfilled by Christ. First, there was a longing among the Gentiles for a Teacher (cf. Matthew 2:1, 2; Luke 10:24), Plato has Socrates saying: “We must of necessity wait, till someone from Him who cares for us, shall come and instruct us how we ought to behave toward the gods and man.” Again: “This law-giver must be more than man, that he may teach us the things man cannot know by his own nature” (see J. W. Monser, An Encyclopedia on the Evidences, p. 528). Second, the use of the word “glory” also hints of a Messianic fulfilment (see verses 7, 9). It is certain that the later temple did not possess a greater material glory than the former. There thus seems to be a spiritual application, especially in light of the “peace” that is promised.”

12 The word “portions” in Italics has been provided by the translators as it is absent in the Greek.
The above comments are all valid, so why should we be forced to choose between any of these options? Scripture always has multiple applications and therefore the wording is deliberately ambiguous allowing the passage to refer to; (1) Gentile riches flowing to God (Gentile riches constructed the tabernacle and the first temple); (2) Gentile converts flowing to God; (3) Desire understood as messianic term with the silver and gold that belongs to the Lord signifying purified faith (gold)\textsuperscript{14} and redemption (silver).\textsuperscript{15} This allows the prophecy of Haggai a primary and a secondary realization, a fulfilment in his own day and a further application in the future.

Swinburnson observes that, “The typological connection between the Sinai theophany and the eschatological upheaval is explicit in Haggai—note the phrase “once more” (2:6). This is obviously an antecedent reference to the Exodus event mentioned in 2:5, thus clearly correlating the two events”. [Op.cit.] The Jews of Haggai’s time were reluctant in progressing with restoration, through dread of the world power, Medo-Persia, influenced by the antagonism of Samaria. Haggai assures them this and all other world powers are to fall before the Messiah, who is to be associated with this temple; therefore they need not fear. At the establishment of the Sinaitic covenant, only the earth was shaken to introduce it, but now heaven and earth and all things are to be shaken.

The MT indicates that the shaking in Hag 2.6 would happen soon, the anticipated action is imminent; thus the repetition in that verse provides emphasis.\textsuperscript{16} This anticipates the inauguration of the temple by Zerubbabel when it would be filled with divine glory and the wealth of the nations would flow to it. In other words Zerubbabel and Joshua were promised a theophany upon completion of the temple and the divine presence would change geo-political dynamics by demonstrating to the surrounding nations (and particularly the Samaritans) that the divine will cannot be thwarted. The Jewish people would again become a national entity with a capital city and a centralised form of worship.

\textsuperscript{14} The sanctification or purifying of one’s faith: Job 23.8-12; Psalms 66.10; Zechariah 13.9; Isaiah 48.10; Malachi 3.1-3; 1 Peter 1.3-9 and Rev 21.21: The street of the city was pure gold
\textsuperscript{15} Atonement money (Exod 30.12-16), Trespass Offering (Lev 5.15-16), Sockets of silver for jointing the tabernacle (Exod 26.19-32)
\textsuperscript{16} The expression in the MT is equivalent to “once again within a little time” I will shake, etc. and this is how the majority of translations render the Hebrew of Hag 2.26 as in the NKJ, “Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth” as opposed to the LXX of Haggai (Yet once I will shake the heaven) and the Heb 12.26-27 paraphrase (Yet once more I shake NKJ). Therefore the writer of Hebrews founds his argument on the Greek rendering of the LXX of Haggai ἐκ τῶν ἡδων (Septuagint); Adhuc annum modicum est (Vulgate) and not on the Hebrew MT
Does Jesus refer to Haggai in Mark 13.25?

Is Jesus the first NT “exegete” who employs Haggai (a restoration prophecy) to describe the destruction of the temple (shaking) as a prelude to the coming glory (i.e., the new temple of his body which will be far greater than the “former glory” of the old temple). But first the old temple required removing and that is the “shaking” before the “new heavens” can appear.

However, the case is not straightforward as Jesus conflates Haggai (heaven shaking) with a prophecy that relates to the Son of Man coming in judgement (Dan 7) together with the casting down (Dan 8.10) of the heavenly host (powers in Mark). The shaking of the earth is intimated by his remark; “there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down” (Mark 13.2). So in a literal and a figurative sense the heavens and earth would be shaken (yet once more). However, other candidates (i.e., Isa 13.13) are possible inter-texts for Mark 13.25 (more on this anon) the case is therefore not yet clear.

Haggai in Hebrews

Hebrews expands on the Haggai prophecy by offering a paraphrased commentary and a conflation. Hebrews conflates Hag 2.6,7 with Hag 2.21,22 thus the author of Hebrews does not differentiate between the shaking in v.6 of Haggai and the shaking in v.22 making them one and the same shaking.

It is the realization of Haggai in his own day that the writer to the Hebrews focuses on and he does so using words that suggest repetitive action as in “God has done this before and will do it again” (yet once more). Hebrews is not only alluding to the shaking at Sinai but also intimating the Babylonian shaking that removed the temple and the nation. However, this is contrary to Haggai who is concerned with the restoration of the temples former glory. Therefore, the author of Hebrews reverses the sentiment of the Haggai prophecy; it is not about restoration of glory but removal of glory. Restoration of temple glory can only happen if they listen to the voice from heaven otherwise they are left in fear of the voice (cf. the giving of the Law) that made them shake at Sinai.

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17 This means that the “shaking” has applications beyond the fall of the temple in 70CE. All of these “shakings” collectively constitute the “Day of the Lord” which punctuates history throughout the ages until the final and last consummation (the kingdom)—forming recurrent patterns.
“Beware of him (the angel that administered the Law), and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him” (Exod 23.21). The messiah (desire of nations) was the true temple of the age to come and he would pardon their sins and restore the glory promised to Zerubbabel, if only they would listen to his warning from heaven. However, on the Mount of transfiguration, the voice from heaven was the voice of God -- "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt 17:5). The prophets and the Law had vanished and they were instructed to listen to Jesus from henceforth (And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only, Matt 17.8). Peter comments on this experience as follows:

2 Peter 1: 17-21 17For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. 19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

What is the “more sure word of prophecy”, that Peter refers to here and who is being compared to the holy men of God? Whoever is being compared (to Moses and Elijah) cannot be the Old Testament prophets themselves because Peter is relating to “when we were with him on the holy mount” (Mount of transfiguration). On that Mount the Law and Prophets vanished. The New Testament prophets are therefore the subject of the comparison the foremost of whom was John who received the Apocalypse from “him that speaks from heaven” (Heb 12.25), which voice is now Jesus who has been granted that authority by God (listen to him) – this was not John’s “private interpretation” of the Old Testament (he didn't make it up in Patmos) but rather a vision sent directly from Jesus demonstrating that the whole of Scriptures point to the coming kingdom and the “Day of the Lord”.

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18 With the implication from the Haggai inter-text that refusal to listen would see Gentile wealth flow to the messiah - - faithful Gentile converts that build the new temple. It was Paul’s collections from the Diaspora including Gentiles that supported the growth of the early church.
19 NKJ: And so we have the prophetic word confirmed
20 John was also present on the transfiguration Mount
The voice of God instructs Peter, James and John on the Mount to listen to Jesus and now Jesus himself “speaks from heaven” (in Revelations) to his church (message to the seven churches) just like the Father did to the wilderness church at Sinai. This is the voice (the book of Revelation) of the New Covenant recast in the language and idiom of the Old Covenant because in the volume of the book (OT) it is written of him (Jesus) and all things point to the fulfilment of the old in the new (the establishment of the kingdom and rule of the messiah). According to Peter this (Revelation) was confirmation of the prophetic word (v.19 NKJ) i.e. the Apocalypse confirms the prophecies of the Old Testament.21 Peter argues that just as the “old time” prophets were inspired so also the New Testament prophet John. The faithful of Thyatira are promised the “morning star” by Jesus (Rev 2.28) and although Peter employs slightly different phraseology (day star) the meaning is clear --- Jezebel (that false prophetess), who killed the heir along with his children and stole the vineyard is about to be punished --- when the vintage is crushed her blood will come to the height of the horses bridles (2 Kings 9.33, Rev 14.20) because the vineyard belongs to God and his son. They are about to find out that God is not an absentee Landlord as he will “shake” heaven and earth yet one more time because they refuse to listen to his son.

In his commentary on Haggai, Hebrews says that they refused him that spake on earth. This is a reference to Moses and to the defence that Stephen offered during his trial; “This Moses whom they refused” (Acts 7.35), which was a polemic against second temple Judaism. Stephen continues, “This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear”(Acts 7.37). Stephen was referring to Deut 18.15-19, where the Israelites were afraid to hear the voice of God (v.16); “According to all that thou desired of the L ORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the L ORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not”. The mountain shook and trembled and burnt with fire at the receiving of the old covenant, and Hebrews (12.21) even has Moses shaking (Moses was afraid and quaked) and the fiery theophany of Exod 19.6 is replicated in 12.29; “For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12.29). The trial of Stephen ends with him seeing Jesus in heaven (Acts 7.55-56) and Hebrews warns against not hearing the one who speaks from heaven. Moreover, Stephen asks Jesus to receive his spirit (Acts 7.59) and Hebrews refers to “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12.23), which also harks back to Deut 18 (used by Stephen) and the words of Deut 18.13; “Thou shalt be perfect with the L ORD thy God”.

21 For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.(Rev.19.10)
So both Hebrews 12 and Acts 7 play off Deuteronomy, but also off each other (as if they are in conversation) but Hebrews also adds the dimension of Haggai which in turn was possibly first used by Jesus in Mark (regarding the destruction of the temple system). The new element introduced by Hebrews into this matrix is the voice speaking from heaven. This is not the voice of God from Sinai (which they feared) nor is it the voice on earth (of Moses which they refused). It is not the voice of the old covenant but the voice of the new covenant (Jesus) from heaven, who gave his revelation to John. Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God to ask for the Gentiles as his inheritance (Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, Ps 2.8). They had killed his witnesses and the Jews were about to be cast off (it is given unto the Gentiles, Rev 11.2). Psalm 2 is intetextually linked with Rev 11, in fact Psalm 2 forms one of the inter-texts for Rev 11-12 and the process of Gentile inheritance began almost immediately with the conversion of Paul (the apostle to the Gentiles) -- this was the answer to Stephen’s request (lay not this sin to their charge, Acts 7.60). Stephen hoped for Jewish conversion and Saul (Paul) and many of the priests did convert. However, Jewish repentance was only ever a minority and therefore the gospel was preached to the Gentiles and the temple was destroyed by the Gentiles.

Is Revelation Prior to Hebrews?

Is Hebrews drawing on Old Testament allusions and Revelation using the same allusions independently (Case 1)? The very first allusion cloud of witnesses draws directly on one of the major themes of Revelation with Jesus Christ called the faithful witness (Rev 1.5). Now, of course, Revelation draws on the Old Testament for this:

**Jeremiah 42:4-5**  
4 Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you; behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God according to your words; and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you.  
5 Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us.

Jesus was sent as the true and faithful witness with his Revelation message (I will keep nothing back from you) indeed the Epistle to the Hebrews commences with the words, “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb 1.2). Note Hebrew’s use of last days therefore this was not during Jesus’ ministry as Hebrews says that he has now been appointed heir of all things (Heb 1.2b) which means that this speaks of the resurrected Christ who is now (post-resurrection) the prince of the kings of the earth (Rev 1.5). Moreover, Hebrews makes it clear that this speaking is from heaven (Heb 12.25) therefore it cannot be referring to his earthly ministry.
Both Hebrews 12 and Revelation have Jesus speaking from heaven. The unique expression cloud of witnesses is an echo of the two witnesses who are called up to heaven in a cloud (Rev 11.12). Once again, the Apocalypse uses the Old Testament in a distinct way because one of the witnesses is modelled on Elijah who was caught up in a whirlwind. Moreover, 15% of the NT occurrences of the word witness (μάρτυς, martus) and 24% of the related word testimony (μαρτυρία, marturia) occur in the book of Revelation making witness/testimony one of the books major themes. The witnesses of Rev 11.12 mimic their Master’s ascension (Acts 1.9) but the use of the plural witnesses (but with singular nouns) and Heb 12 likening them to a cloud refers not only to their ascension but to Jesus coming with clouds (Rev 1.7) as the witnesses themselves form a cloud around Jesus as in Dan 7.13, “the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven”. So, Revelation is telling us that this is a partial fulfilment of Dan 7.13 --- the Son of man coming in judgement as promised to the Sanhedrin during his trial; “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt 26.64). This ties directly in with the theme of Hebrews, namely, that not only was Jesus now the Melchizedek high priest, he was also the new temple and his followers were citizens of a heavenly city and country (depicted in Revelation) with the old temple system about to be swept away (as Jesus had warned in the Olivet prophecy).

Returning to Mark 13 the tribulation is described as the “beginning of sorrows” (v.8), employing a Greek word that describes “birth pangs” and that is associated both in the NT and the in the Greek (LXX) OT (and even in rabbinic literature) with the “birth pangs of messiah”. This birthing process occurs in heaven and the vision is shown in Rev 12, followed by war in heaven. This is certainly a picture of “heaven shaking” in fact; “heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places” (Rev 6.14). Heaven is rolled up like a scroll (like a torah scroll) –the old covenant was abolished and a new covenant church was born (the heavenly Jerusalem).

It is also fitting that Jesus echoes Haggai again in Revelation 11. The Greek verb “shake” (σείω, seio), now becomes the related noun “earthquake”(σείμα, seismos) used three times in Rev 11, with 50% of the total NT occurrences of this word found in the book of Revelation.

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22 Only Acts has a higher percentage of witness occurrences (38%) and the Gospel of John a higher percentage of testimony occurrences (38%) as a percentage of total NT occurrences. However, the combination of witness and testimony is 39% in the Apocalypse. The Fourth Gospel does not use the word witness at all (0%) and Acts has testimony at only 3%. Therefore, the combination of witness and testimony is expressed as a percentage of the total NT. (Revelation 1:0.625 Acts 1:0.078 John has no ratio)

23 Compare Rachel who died in labour --- delivering the son of sorrow renamed the son of the right hand.
Moreover, the witnesses to the **New Covenant** in Rev 11 are typologically Moses and Elijah. They are called with a great voice (compare Sinai) to heaven//Mt. Zion (in a cloud) to form the “cloud of witnesses” that is referred to by Hebrews. Godly fear (Heb 12.28//Rev 11.13 is the reaction, rather than the terror experienced at Sinai; in other words a repentant remnant. In the end, God and the Lamb will avenge the repentant nation: “And should destroy those who destroy the earth” (Rev 11.18)//“Will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen” (Hag 2.22)

### Inter-texts for Revelation 6.12-17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revelation 6.12-17</th>
<th>Isaiah 13.9-13</th>
<th>Isaiah 34.4-5,8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;</td>
<td>9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.</td>
<td>13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place</td>
<td>4b and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.</td>
<td>10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.</td>
<td>4 And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;</td>
<td>11 And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:</td>
<td></td>
<td>3b and the mountains shall be melted with their blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?</td>
<td>13b In the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.</td>
<td>8 For it is the day of the LORD'S vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them… 19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms… 20 It shall never be inhabited</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sixth seal of Rev 6 employs Isa 13 and Isa 34 (and other texts) in a creative way. This was not a simple copy and paste exercise as words are often substituted and passages are deconstructed, with sentences inverted or conflated with other passages. The context of the selected inter-texts also has a significant role to play. It is important to examine the differences with the original inter-texts and ask why certain word choices or structures are preferred.

Rev 6.13 inverts the order of the allusion in Isa 34 by first alluding to Isa 34.4b (the stars/figs) and then in Rev 6.14a to the heavens rolling up (Isa 34.4a). The inverted order has the stars/figs fall before the heavens are rolled up. Below are the verses in the NKJ (OT Hebrew, NT Greek) and the LXE (from LXX Greek):

**NKJ Isaiah 34:4** All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; All their host shall fall down As the leaf falls from the vine, And as *fruit* falling from a fig tree.

**LXE Isaiah 34:4** And all the powers of the heavens shall melt, and the sky shall be rolled up like a scroll: and all the stars shall fall like leaves from a vine, and as leaves fall from a fig-tree.

**NKJ Revelation 6:13-14** And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

Note the differences\(^{24}\) – neither the Hebrew, nor the Greek versions of Isa 34.4 mention fruit falling from the tree. The NKJ has supplied the word “*fruit*” in italics and the LXX has “leaves” but Revelation has “late figs” (οὐλονθος) found in neither passage.\(^{25}\)

\(^{24}\)Some of the important vocabulary of the inter-texts—using only the root forms (rather than the constructs or aspects) and comparing NT Greek with OT LXX Greek: In Hebrews 12.26-27 two different Greek words are used for the shaking of heaven and earth (σαλεύω saleuo) in 12.27 and (σείω seio) in 12.26. Comparing with the Greek LXX Haggai 2.6 uses (σείω seio) as does Rev 6.13 (for the fig tree) and Rev 11.12-13 (for the fall off the city), Mark 13.25 uses (σαλεύω saleuo) for shaking the powers of heaven. Isaiah 13.13 uses (σείω seio) for shaking the earth and enraged/furious (θυμῶ thumó) for the heavens, Isaiah 34 does not use either word (σείω seio // σαλεύω saleuo) as the heavens are rolled up (ε’λισσό e`li,sso) in 34.4 and stars/figs fall down (πέτω πέπτο peto) in Rev 6.13 the stars fall (πέτω πέπτo) and the figs are thrown violently or cast (βαλλό ballo). Isa 34.4 uses (ἀστρά astra) for powers (host) and Hag 2.22 (δύναμις dunamis) for power of the kings, Mark 13.25 uses (δύναμις dunamis) for the powers that are in heaven and Rev 6.13 uses (ἀστήρ aster) for the stars of heaven.

\(^{25}\)In his Revelation commentary Aune notes that the term τοῖς ὀξύοις ὀξύοις, lit. “late figs”, refers to figs produced late in the summer, which often fall off the tree before ripening, and so can be translated “unripe figs” (§ Louw-Nida 3.37). LSJ sv ὀξύος, understands it to refer to “the sterile summer fruit of the cultivated fig”. David E. Aune, Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation 6-16, (Thomas Nelson, 1998), 385, Note 13b. The word is found in Song of Solomon 2.13 (LXE): “The fig-tree has put forth its young figs” – these are figs that are unripe (the MT has green) but in Revelation they do not “drop prematurely” but are “cast” of when the tree is shaken by a mighty wind.
Other differences with Isaiah 34 are instructive, namely something (?) falls (MT) or leaves (LXX) “fall” but in Revelation they are definitely figs (removing all uncertainty) and they are “cast” (the NKJ has translated this as “drop” but YLT/KJV and ASV has “cast” or flung denoting a more violent action than mere gravity. Rev 6.13 (unlike Isa 34.4) also supplies the cause of the forceful action -- “they are shaken of a mighty wind”. The absence of this phrase from both the Hebrew and Greek texts of Isaiah 34 highlights its significance. 26

Rev 6.13 also employs σεἰομένη (the normative form of the verb σείω (seio), “shake”) usually associated with earthquakes (σεισμός seismos). Revelation uses the same verb to describe both the shaking of the fig tree in 6.13 and the destruction of the city by an earthquake in 11.12-13. The verb σείω (seio) is not used in Isaiah 34 but occurs in Isa 13.13 and Hag 2.6 in relation to shaking the heavens. Isa 13.13 is a candidate for the origin of “shake” in Rev 6.13 as Isa 13 functions as an inter-text (see the above table) to Rev 6 and this would supplement the inverted order of Isaiah 34.4 b followed by 34.4a in Rev 6.13. Haggai 2.6 is also a strong candidate however neither Isa 13 nor Hag 2 refers to the heavens shaking like a fig tree. A more suitable word for wind movement is a form of the verb σαλεύω (saleuo)27 employed in Luke 7.24b; κάλαμον ὑπὸ ἀνέμου σαλεύομεν (a reed shaken28 with the wind).

The combination of the two motifs (darkening of the sun moon and stars and the falling of the stars) occurs only in Rev 6.12-13 and in the Synoptic Apocalypse (Mark 13.25=Matt 24.29=Luke 21.26) where it is closely associated with the distress of the Jewish nation and the fall of the temple. This textual innovation is therefore directly attributable to Jesus who combines the two biblical images into a new format:

Mark 13:24-25 24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, 25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken (σαλευθήσονται saleuthEsontai).

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26 The phrase shaken by a mighty wind (ὑπὸ ἀνέμου μεγάλου σειομένη) uses the lemmas (μέγας megas) for mighty and (ἄνεμος anemos) for wind (cf. Rev 7.1). The same terms are found in the parabolic saying in Matt 7.27 that describes the fate of those who fail to act on Jesus’ words, “and the winds (ἄνεμος anemos) blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great (μέγας megas) was the fall of it”. In Matthew it is the fall of the house that was “great” (μέγας megas) in Revelation it is the wind that is “mighty” (μέγας megas). In Matthew it is a house that falls and in Revelation figs are cast.

27 4531 σαλεύω saleuo Meaning: 1) a motion produced by winds, storms, waves, etc 1a) to agitate or shake 1b) to cause to totter 1c) to shake thoroughly, of a measure filled by shaking its contents together 2) to shake down, overthrow 2a) to cast down from one’s (secure and happy) state 2b) to move, agitate the mind, to disturb one

28 Swaying rather than periodic oscillation or tremors?
In the Synoptic tradition Jesus employs an aspect of σαλέω (saleo) for “shaken” a word that seems more suited to wind-blown trees than “shaking” (vibrating) stars⁹ and in Rev 6.13 Jesus uses an aspect of the verb σείω (seio) for shaking the tree -- a word more suited to the quaking of the earth (and other planets/stars). It seems that both passages would be improved if the verbs were swapped. The choice is nonetheless deliberate as Jesus demonstrated during his ministry that he could command the winds and the sea (Mark 4.41 cf. Lk 21.25) and warned that ignoring his words would lead to a wind strong enough to destroy the house (cf. “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate”, Lk 13:35). The choice of σεισμόνης (from σείω, seio) in Rev 6.13 for “shake” (of the tree by wind) is influenced by the need to highlight the intra-text correspondence between the quaking tree and the quaking city in Rev 11.

The writer to the Hebrews is aware of this as he uses both words. He employs (σείω seio) in Heb 12.26 and (σαλέω saleo) in Heb 12.27. It is obvious that the use of σείω (seisO) in Hag 2.6 influenced the choice of Heb 12.26 and σαλευθέρωται (saleuthEsontai) in Mark 13.25 influenced his word choice in Heb 12.27. The selections made by the author of Hebrews can therefore explain his verb choices without resorting to Rev 6.13 but it does not explain why he chose the prophecy of Haggai in preference to Isa 13.13 that also uses σεισθήσται (seisthEsetai, from σείω). Our argument is that the use of Haggai in Hebrews was inspired by Revelation.

The association of the “fig tree” (Rev 6.13) and the “city” (Rev 11.12-13) with a quake (especially as this city housed the temple cf. Rev 11.1-2) point to the Haggai prophecy, a prophecy that is also concerned with the temple and with shaking. Moreover, the eschatological witnessing of Rev 11 echoes the work of Zerubbabel and Joshua (compare their role in the restoration prophecies).³⁰

The thrust of the argument in Hebrews was that the old temple, old city and old covenant was about to be removed and replaced by a better temple, city and covenant. Haggai pointed out that their livelihood had not prospered because they neglected restoring the temple. The harvest had failed and even the fig tree had not brought forth fruit, even so, God would bless them from that day forward (Hag 2.18-19) and they were vouched safe by the “shaking” ---

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²⁹ Fluctuating light intensity can make stars seem to vibrate to the naked eye
³⁰ The feast of “Lights” (celebrated roughly on Dec 25th) for rededicating the temple was officially instituted by the Maccabees but is actually based on Hag 2.20 because the Jews (and temple restoration) was blessed from that day forward. The lampstands of Revelation 11 allude to this and John the Baptist (second-Elijah) is called a burning and shining lamp (John 5.25). John the Baptist was born during the Feast of Lights as he had come to dedicate a new temple – See, Chapter 17 in P. Wyns, God is Judge: A commentary on the book of Daniel (Biblaridion, 2011)
--- a theophany that would demonstrate to the nations the restoration of glory (the divine presence) returning to the rebuilt temple. However, Jesus cursed the fig tree (Matt. 11.13-23) because despite his preaching there was an absence of fruit, not even “the first-ripe in the fig tree at her first time” (Hos. 9.10). As Prov. 27.18 remarks, “Whoever keeps the fig tree will eat its fruit; So he who waits on his master will be honoured.” When Jesus searched the tree (because he was hungry) there were no figs. Even forty-two years later there were only immature, unripe figs only fit for rejection. The Jews had not waited for their Master; however, the faithful who waited on Christ would be honoured. So, the blessing and positive theophany (shaking) of Haggai would be transformed into a curse and a negative theophany of judgment (a different kind of shaking) in Revelation and the author of Hebrews understood the implications of Rev 6.12-17 and this gives Hebrews the confidence to reinvent the prophecy of Haggai by bringing together the shakings of Mark, Haggai and Revelation because in their negative and positive aspects they all have the same subject matter (the temple).

The context of the original inter-texts

As already noted, the thematic of Haggai is imminently suitable as a background to Revelation (and Hebrews) in both a negative and positive sense. In a negative sense because the “shaking” removes the former temple glory and in a positive sense as the “shaking” introduces a new temple with far greater glory: “Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail” (Rev 11.19). “I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Rev 21.22).

However, the context of Isaiah 34 is the judgement of Edom (Idumea). How can this have anything to do with the temple? Did Jesus disregard the context when he chose Isaiah 34 as an inter-text for his Revelation message? That is definitely not the case. It was the Edomite (Idumean) Herod the Great that built the temple. The early church suffered under the Herodian dynasty. Herod the Great (reigned 37-4 BCE) sought to murder the messiah and slaughtered the innocents in Bethlehem. Herod Antipater (reigned 4 BCE-39 CE) was involved in events that led to the executions of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth.

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31 It was actually a reconstruction but virtually nothing remained of the old temple, it became known as Herod’s Temple and Herod was the “temple builder”. 
Herod Agrippa (reigned 41–44 CE) had James (the brother of John) murdered. Moreover, the prophecy of Malachi which predicts the coming of the forerunner (John the Baptist-second Elijah) commences with the words that “God hates Esau (Edom)” (Mal 1.3).\(^{32}\)

What can we say of Isaiah 13 another sub-text used by Jesus in the sixth seal? There is almost a complete failure of commentaries to recognise that Babylon in this chapter refers to the Assyrian Empire and not the neo-Babylonian Empire. This is probably due to the fact that Jeremiah appropriates the language of Isaiah when he predicts the fall of Babylon.\(^{33}\) This mistake is due to a failure to recognise that in ancient times the city of Nineveh and Babylon were synonymous terms\(^{34}\) because they were thought to have the same legendary founder (Nimrod). Of course, the interchangeable terms caused confusion for later exegesis who therefore blithely conclude that Isaiah was a late production (either exilic or post exilic). The chapter context is the Assyrian invasions that resulted in the deportation of the ten tribes of Israel to the regions of Mesopotamia and Babylon.\(^{35}\) This explains the references to the birth pangs of the messiah; “Pangs and sorrows will take hold of them; they will be in pain as a woman in childbirth” (Isa 13.8). A similar fate awaited Judah some 136 years later but unlike Israel they would be delivered; “Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in birth pangs. For now you shall go forth from the city, you shall dwell in the field, and to Babylon you shall go. There you shall be delivered; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies”. (Micah 4:10). Many from Judah returned from exile but Israel (the ten tribes) never returned from exile.

Allusions to messianic birth pangs are picked up in Mark 13.8, “These are the beginnings of sorrows”, and in the related vision of Rev 12 of the woman giving birth to the man-child. The question of the identity of Babylon in the Apocalypse is beyond the remit of this article; however, the fact that Babylon/Assyria has the characteristics of the sea-beast of Rev 13 is another point in favour of the suitability of Isa 13 as an inter-text for the sixth seal.

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\(^{32}\) A forthcoming exposition emphasises the importance of the Herodians in understanding the apocalyptic setting and the parallels with Malachi.


\(^{34}\) This was common practice in the ANE and not limited to biblical literature, see; Stephanie Daily, Babylon as a Name for other cities including Nineveh, Proceedings of the 51 st Recontre Assiologique Internationale [2005], (eds., R. Briggs, J. Myers, M. Roth, University of Chicago, 2008): 25-33. See also the excerpt taken from H.A. Whittaker's Isaiah on the resources page [ HYPERLINK "http://www.biblaridion.info/html/resources.html" ] under the heading Interchangeability of Babylon/Assyria

\(^{35}\) Ibid, the note by A. Perry. See also the excerpt taken from H.A. Whittaker's Isaiah
The historical context of the inter-texts (Hag 2, Isa 13 and Isa 34) is therefore appropriate for describing the fall of the nation and the removal of the temple. Subtle changes and reordering of those sub-texts allude to warnings made by Christ (during his ministry) about the unfitness of the nation and the coming judgement (shaking) a shaking that would remove the old heavens and earth (contra Haggai’s intent) but also, (like Haggai) a covenant shaking that was a prelude to restoring a far greater temple glory. The one cannot occur without the other as the old needs to be removed before it can be replaced. Hebrews and many first century Christians expected a single last shaking, with the removal of the old and the return of the messiah to coincide, but that was not to be as it is a recurring pattern.

Discussion and Conclusion

This case study has been limited to Hebrews 12 in order to demonstrate direction of influence but many other New Testament writings display the same familiarity with the book of Revelation and other examples could have been chosen. It is therefore pointless to argue that perhaps Hebrews was written in ca. 100 CE, after Revelation and after the fall of the temple in 70 (making the argument in Hebrews against second temple Judaism completely pointless). The way that Hebrews uses other New Testament writings (Acts 7) and the Old Testament (Hag, Deut, Exod) are clearly secondary interactions driven by Hebrews primary interaction with Revelation. Hebrews frames its conceptual arguments about the temple and witnessing by listening to the voice from heaven (the voice of Jesus) which is the voice of the new covenant that promises a better priesthood and a better city in the Apocalypse. This framework was not conceived in isolation and the fact that the Epistle commences and ends with Jesus speaking (Heb 1.2, Heb 12.25) demonstrates that the writer of Hebrews had already received the Apocalypse.

The Jews refused to listen to the voice of Jesus but they also refused to listen to Moses; “There is one who accuses you -- Moses, in whom you trust. ‘For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote about me, but if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?’” (John 5.45-47). Despite all the Old Testament evidence for the necessity of a suffering messiah who would atone for sin, despite all the types, allusions and echoes in the Old Testament the Jews ignored their own Scriptures.

This would have been a much larger article had we done so. Suffice to say that for those that are willing to “listen for the voice that speaks from heaven” many allusions to Revelation can be found in early pre-70 New Testament writings. Hebrews is not the only case by a long shot. These frameworks of allusion, echoes and type cannot be explained away by insisting on the coincidental (sic) use of the same Old Testament inter-texts in exactly the same way as Revelation, nor can they be dismissed by disingenuously asserting that the “Spirit” dictated the same allusions to other NT writers.
If there is a lesson here it is that pre-conceived notions and dogmatism can harden the heart.

It is inconceivable that the first century church did not receive the book of Revelation. It is inconceivable that the Apocalypse has nothing to say about Jewish affairs and that the Jews have somehow been supplanted by the Gentile church.

If we have replaced intertextual bible study with dogma then we are no better than the Jews in our refusal to listen to the Apocalypse. The threat to censure those who honestly investigate scripture, to dampen enthusiasm for searching the word and to cling to unbiblical interpretations is the sign of a dead community --- like the Jewish nation before its final collapse, who threw anyone who professed Christ out of the Synagogue. Moreover, it leaves the community open to a “strong delusion” the kind that is able to “deceive the very elect” such as the Jews of the second century who followed the false messiah Bar Kochba in an attempt to re-establish temple worship. The overweening (unwarranted) confidence of those who misappropriate scripture in an attempt to defend tradition is no different to those unbelieving Jews who could not (would not) understand Moses. It is the reverse of contending for the faith, true contention for the faith is the freedom of hermeneutics. The words of Vangemeren are appropriate here:

“But the Spirit of God calls on each generation to adapt anew to God's revelation. He is the power of God who applies the word of God to a new situation. He transforms human beings, interpretations, and traditions. As long as he is operating in and through the word, the community of God's people lives in the tension between stability and adaptability.”

This is exactly what the New Testament prophets did. They took the interpretation of the Old Testament to the “next level” demonstrating that all scripture pointed to Christ and his kingdom. Jesus had not come to destroy the Law and Prophets but to fulfil them. (Matt 5.17) Tradition of itself is a useful safeguard against malicious change but if left unchecked it becomes an end unto itself, stifling scripture and not allowing it to speak. This is what the Jews did, their traditions were more important than the “new and radical” interpretation offered by Jesus and his church. But they even went a step further --- in Babylon they “ring-fenced” the Law by adding another 2,500,000 million words of tradition – layers upon layers, precept upon precept, to protect their faith and justify their intransigence.

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The worship of tradition and refusal to listen to scripture is not an example that any community should follow. Samuel Johnson (talking about false patriotism) once made the famous pronouncement that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel. The same is applicable to (false) religion - tradition is the last refuge of a scoundrel.

If we understand how the Apocalypse “worked” in the first and second centuries, how the patterns constantly reoccur, then it is possible to recognise those same patterns when they are repeated (as they surely will be) in our day. Expressed differently – a failure to recognize a partial fulfilment in the first century will result in a failure to recognize the pattern of final realization when it materializes in our day.

Our final conclusion is that Revelation is an early work, received before the fall of the temple in 70 CE and before many other NT writings. This should influence our interpretive approach. If it does not we are in danger of becoming like the Jews who refused to listen and we run the risk of repeating their mistakes.
The Tribal Blessings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>BY JACOB, Gen 49</th>
<th>BY MOSES, Deut 33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reuben</td>
<td>Verse 3</td>
<td>Verse 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>my firstborn, my might</td>
<td>Let not his men be few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simeon &amp; Levi</td>
<td>Verse 5</td>
<td>Verse 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brethren</td>
<td>Thy Urin and thy Thummim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judah</td>
<td>Verse 9</td>
<td>Verse 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A lion, &amp;c.</td>
<td>Thy Urin and thy Thummim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zebulon</td>
<td>Verse 13</td>
<td>Verse 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He shall dwell</td>
<td>Bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issachar</td>
<td>Verses 14 and 15</td>
<td>Verse 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A strong ass; he saw his resting-place, that it was good</td>
<td>Rejoice, Zebulon, in thy going out or forth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Verse 17</td>
<td>Verse 18</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A serpent by the way</td>
<td>Issachar, in thy tents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gad</td>
<td>Verse 19</td>
<td>Verse 22</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A troop shall pierce him. “He shall be pierced in the heel”</td>
<td>He shall leap or spring (as the adder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asher</td>
<td>Verse 20</td>
<td>Verse 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>his bread shall be fat</td>
<td>He provided the first part for himself, &amp;c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naphtali</td>
<td>Verse 21</td>
<td>Verse 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A hind let loose, released, or sent forth</td>
<td>Satisfied with favour, and filled with the blessing of the Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Verse 25</td>
<td>Verse 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>blessings of the breasts, and of the womb</td>
<td>the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td>Verse 27</td>
<td>Verse 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The wolf shall tear: in the morning he shall feed on the prey, in the evening he shall divide the spoil</td>
<td>The beloved of the Lord shall dwell between his shoulders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The above table gives a brief overview of the main elements of the “blessings” and is not meant to replace an in-depth analysis. The blessings have been exhaustively discussed in scholarship, specifically with composition history in mind. This article will take a “traditional view” of the “blessings”, namely that they are prophetic of the latter day history of Israel (“which shall befall you in the last days”, Gen 49.1). However critical analysis provides useful insights and asks valid questions which should not be lightly dismissed.

Critical scholars understand the blessings as reflecting historical developments of a later age. For example, the blessings of Jacob in Gen 49 promote Judah above his blood-brothers (Reuben, Simeon & Levi), and the sons of Joseph (particularly Ephraim) comes to the fore. As Judah and Ephraim form the two most important tribes of the monarchical era this is thought to indicate a later date of composition. Moreover, almost 60% of the blessings are concerned with the brothers of Judah and with Joseph, making the blessings of the remaining tribes peripheral. To this we add the observation that Reuben, Simeon and Levi can hardly be regarded as a “blessing” and some of the other “blessings” are rather ambiguous (sometimes this may be due to misunderstanding). Critical scholarship understands the “blessings” of Gen 49 as a composite work from different sources and there may be some truth to this as Israelite Hebrew (IH) can be detected in the blessings of the northern tribes but on the other hand the “blessings” of Judah (and his blood-brothers) and Joseph show remarkable uniformity.

If we turn to the blessings of Moses in Deut 33 we find notable differences but also similarities. One difference is that whereas Levi and Simeon are mentioned together in Gen 49 the tribe of Simeon is missing from Deut 33 but Ephraim and Manasseh are mentioned by name in Deut 33 with Ephraim only hinted at in the blessing of Joseph in Gen 49. The blessings of the other tribes demonstrate awareness but also divergence with Gen 49.

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3 Some suggest that Simeon is left out in order to give a total of twelve tribes with Ephraim and Manasseh substituting Joseph.
The original birth order and naming of the tribes commences in Gen 29.29 and when attempting to reconstruct a development history scholars compare the “blessings” of Gen 49 and Deut 33 with the birth names. Within this matrix the northern tribe list of Judges 5.14-18 is introduced and for comparative reasons the generic “blessing of Balaam” in Num 24.5-9 is also often discussed. Various hypothesis regarding development history and date of composition have been proposed which will not be pursued in this article. Suffice to say that other explanations are possible that do justice to the original context but allow for a form of development/redaction at a later stage.

For example, the tribal “blessings” (or should we call them sayings) probably circulated orally within each tribe before being collected and written down. This would explain the occurrence of Israelite Hebrew in the “northern blessings”. We can imagine that tribal patriotism would censor negative or disapproving sentiments (like those given to Reuben, Simeon and Levi) and is therefore likely that whoever collected and recorded the “blessings” gathered the “evidence” with difficulty and composed Judah-Reuben-Levi-Simeon as a unit. This would then explain the semantic-linguistic differences in the “blessings” recognised by critical scholarship.

Is it possible that the “blessings” were redacted at a later stage for political-historic reasons? All that can be said is that such theories are largely speculative and while it is true that the “victor” always writes history it is hard to imagine that such an influential tribe as the priestly Levites would allow such a negative assessment to stand unless it was common knowledge. As to why they should be called blessings when some of the content is disapproving or negative is explained by Dods - Jacob’s blessing is not for an individual, but for a family, and more than that, for a nation. Dods writes, “a unit that God will bless, but this unit is now no longer a single person—as Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob—but one people, composed of several parts, and yet one whole.”

Jung sums it up as follows; “Consequently, it cannot be said that the blessing of Jacob is not a true blessing because part of the twelve sons was condemned. All sons share the blessing of the father together in the name of Israel. Only there are differences among brothers according to their role and capacity”. What follows is a brief examination of the blessings from a canonical aspect (i.e., regarding the text holistically) and analysing the intertextual-historic context.

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4 The account in Judges 5 is regarded as ancient even by the critics.
5 Balaam does not name any particular tribes but is interesting from the perspective of form criticism.
7 Kwangbong Jung, The condemned Sons in the Blessing of Jacob (Gen.49:3-7): The Problem of Curses in the Blessing, (Diss., University of the Free State, 2010), 207
Analysis of the Blessings

The blessing of Reuben

**KJV Genesis 49:3-4** Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. 

**4** Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father’s bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.

**LXE Genesis 49:3-4** Ruben, thou art my first-born, thou my strength, and the first of my children, hard to be endured, hard and self-willed. 

**4** Thou wast insolent like water, burst not forth with violence, for thou wentest up to the bed of thy father; then thou defiledst the couch, whereupon thou wentest up.

**KJV Deuteronomy 33:6** Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few.

**LXE Deuteronomy 33:6** Let Ruben live, and not die; and let him be many in number.

Alter translates ⁸ paraphrases “the first yield of my manhood” and comments that the Hebrew ‘on is associated with “vigour” i.e. male potency and the Hebrew n’ebit with the “first yield of a crop”. Alter says, “The biological image of Reuben the product of Jacob’s first inseminating seed sharpens the evocation in the next line of his violation of his father’s concubine. The nation of Israel was also typified as the “firstborn” (Exod 4.22) brought to Sinai at Pentecost as the “first fruits” of Yahweh’s harvest where the nation committed idolatry with the golden calf. The punishment meted out by Moses was analogous to the “waters of jealousy” for suspected adultery (Deut 9.21, Num 5.17).

Obedience to the Law was a prerequisite to remaining in the land (Deut 30.9); “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life that both thou and thy seed may live”. The request by Moses is that Reuben may “live and not die”. In this sense Reuben represents the nation as a whole. Many of the other tribes are likened to animals but that seems to be absent in the Reuben saying although the emphasis on “strength” and “fertility” ⁹ has Jacob resembling a bull in his prime and Reuben a young bull challenging the authority of the dominant bull for the right to mate with the females in the herd. Reuben is depicted as unstable as water and this has been variously translated as turbulent, reckless, foaming etc seemingly giving the idea of something uncontrollable, which fits with the idea of sexual incontinence. The golden calf is the bull-face of the cherubim and is a suitable symbol for the nation as a whole and Reuben in particular.

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⁸ All references to Alter come from his commentary on Genesis which is annotated by chapter and verse. Robert Alter, Genesis: Translation and Commentary, (W. W. Norton & Company, New York: London, 1996)

⁹ Job 39:10-12 Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? 11 Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? The unicorn is the great aurochs or wild bulls which are now extinct.
It signified the glory of God as represented in the “wild-bull” that had been domesticated under the Law as a beast of burden. Jeroboam made two bull-calves (winged ox cherubim) and placed them in Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12.28-33). Effectively Jeroboam had turned the ten tribes into the “mercy seat” with a cherub at each end! This was done to counter the centralisation of the cult in Jerusalem by the Davidide and Paul alluding to the golden calf in the wilderness says; “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator” (Rom 1.25). Worshipping the ox-calf (living creature) was tantamount to worshipping themselves (self divinization) as the calf represented Israel under the Law. It is the original Causa sui project, as that is what the Law had become. Reuben (the young bull) usurped his Father’s prerogatives in the same way the nation over reached their authority and position. The marriage covenant had been degraded.

The blessing of Simeon and Levi

**KJV** Genesis 49:5-7 Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. 6 O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. 7 Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

**LXE** Genesis 49:5-7 Symeon and Levi, brethren, accomplished the injustice of their cutting off. Let not my soul come into their counsel, and let not mine inward parts contend in their conspiracy; for in their wrath they slew men, and in their passion they houghed a bull. Cursed be their wrath, for it was willful, and their anger, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

**KJV** Deuteronomy 33:8-11 And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; 9 Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. 10 They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. 11 Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.

**LXE** Deuteronomy 33:8-11 And to Levi he said, Give to Levi his manifestations, and his truth to the holy man, whom they tempted in the temptation; they reviled him at the water of strife. 9 Who says to his father and mother, I have not seen thee; and he knew not his brethren,
and he refused to know his sons: he kept thine oracles, and observed thy covenant.  

They shall declare thine ordinances to Jacob, and thy law to Israel: they shall place incense in the time of thy wrath continually upon thine altar.  

Bless, Lord, his strength, and accept the works of his hands; break the loins of his enemies that have risen up against him, and let not them that hate him rise up.

Most translations have either “instruments of cruelty” or “weapons of violence” but Dahood suggests “Circumcision knife” which makes sense within the context of the incident of Gen 34 which is often called “the rape of Diana”. However, the older translations have “humiliated” rather than “raped” or “violated”. In any case the Prince actually loved her and wanted her as his wife. It is obvious that the brothers of Diana did not want her to marry a foreigner and perhaps the only way the Prince could achieve his goal was through kidnapping and deflowering her thus making her unmarriageable. It is clear that he was amenable to enter into the covenant of circumcision thus joining himself and his people with the God of Israel. This is a love story gone wrong rather than a brutal rape. The brothers Simeon and Levi responded with deception and violence because family “honour” had been besmirched – this was an “honour killing” and it bears resemblance to the boast of Lamech (Gen 4.19-24) about another “honour killing” because Naamah (=loveliness) had been taken by a young man. The KJV mentions “digging down a wall” whereas the LXX has “houghed a bull” the better translations have “hamstrung an ox” (NKJ/NIV) or “hocked an ox” (ASV). The reference is to cutting an animal’s tendon in order to immobilise it and to a man the scholars suppose that this was done so that the inhabitants of Shechem could not engage in pursuit on their oxen! This misses the point altogether – the inhabitants of Shechem were hamstrung through the act of circumcision – they were attacked on the third day “when they were sore” (Gen 34.25) so that they offered minimal resistance.

10 Dahood, “MKRTYHM in Gen 49.5,” 54-56; idem., “Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography IV,” 418.

11 This probably informs the background of Genesis 6:2 - The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair (i.e., lovely); and they took them wives of all which they chose. Note also that Solomon (the Son of God cf. 2 Sam 7.14) loved many strange (foreign) women (1 Kings 11.1) and had his heir by an Ammonitess called Naamah (1 Kings 14.21).

12 Jung [p.115] remarks; “Probably to avoid a contradiction with Genesis 34: 28 some ancient versions change רָשׁוּ to רֶשׁ “wall” [Tar. Onq., Pesh., Aq., Symm., Vulg., and KJV] and רוּנַב to רוּעַ “they destroyed.” However, few today make this claim because the verb רוּעַ in the piel is only used to denote the laming of big animals, not the demolishing of a certain structure (cf. Josh. 11:6, 9; 2 Sam. 8:4 = 1 Chron.18:4). Alter translates this as “they tore down ramparts” and in the footnotes of Gen 49.6 Alter comments; “With many critics, the translation here reads שַבַּר, a poetic term for “wall”, instead of שָׁבַר, “ox”, as the Masoretic Text has it. The verb, if it refers to oxen, would mean to maim or hamstring the captured warhorses of an enemy, but it would have been foolish to hamstring captured oxen, which could be put to peaceful use. Moreover, since Jacob is speaking of the massacre at Shechem, the narrative there explicitly noted that the cattle and other livestock were carried off not maimed”. Robert Alter, Genesis: Translation and Commentary, (W. W. Norton & Company, New York: London, 1996). Alter is correct in concluding that this is not (literally) about hamstrung oxen but neither is it about a “wall”. It seems strange that even Alter does not draw the obvious analogy between hamstrung oxen and circumcision –both being cut with a knife to immobilise them.
The main theme of the “blessing” of Levi and the incident at Shechem is that of joining or unity. The Prince of Shechem “clave” (v.3) to Dinah, “to be one people” (v.22); but Jacob will not be united with his sons in their despicable act. The name Levi means “joined” or “twinned” and the brothers acted in unison in their violent act. What they did was not for the family honour, they acted “dishonourably” in contrast with the young prince who “was more honourable than all the house of his father” (Gen 34.19). Just as Reuben had denigrated the marriage covenant the Levites had denigrated the covenant of circumcision.

The situation with Levi is somewhat redeemed in Deut 33 because of their support for Moses during the golden calf incident of Exod 32.26-28 which also compensated for their failure at Meribah. The tribe of Simeon is notable for its absence in Deut 33 probably done in order to achieve the desired balance of twelve tribes (i.e., Ephraim and Manasseh replace Joseph) and Simeon was understood in some aspects to be inseparable from his brother.

As punishment Levi and Simeon were divided and scattered in Israel so that they could no longer perpetrate violence in unison. Levi, which comprised the priestly tribe and temple functionaries, was dispersed among the other tribes and received no tribal land of their own; the tribe of Simeon, ended up with certain cities allocated within the territory of Judah (Josh 19.1). Simeon was the third largest tribe at 59,300 (Num 1.23) but had dropped to 22,200 by the time that they entered the land (Num 26.14). Wood speculates that this was caused by the sin with the Midianite women at Baal-Peor in which the Simeonites were leaders as the punishment was only halted when Zimri “a prince of a chief house amongst the Simeonites” (Num 25.14) was killed. Wood notes that elements from Simeon migrated northwards and settled along the northern border of Manasseh with the rest remaining in Judah, which may account for the “war –like” language of Deut 33.11 (if this is directed at Simeon rather than Levi). Critical scholars believe that Deut 33.11 has been dislocated as it better suits the very short blessing of Judah that occurs in verse 7 (above Levi) others even argue that vv.7-11 is all about Judah and replace “Simeon” with “Judah” but the blessing is so obviously directed at Levi that it is difficult to understand how they reach such conclusions and Driver rightly dismiss such conjectures.

13 On Gen 49.6 Alter remarks; “The Hebrew says literally, “in their assembly let my presence not join”, but this is clumsy as English, and in any case the point is that Jacob is ostracizing the two brothers. Ibid, Alter, Genesis.
15 Ibid, Wood, 224
In any case, although Simeon is not named in Deut 33 it is a given that the “blessing” applies to both as their destinies were intertwined and therefore both tribes were divided and scattered in Israel – their brotherly allegiance was broken up.

**The blessing of Judah**

**KJV** *Genesis 49:8-12* Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. 9 Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? 10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. 11 Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: 12 His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

**LXE** *Genesis 49:8-12* Juda, thy brethren have praised thee, and thy hands shall be on the back of thine enemies; thy father's sons shall do thee reverence. 9 Juda is a lion’s whelp: from the tender plant, my son, thou art gone up, having couched thou liest as a lion, and as a whelp; who shall stir him up? 10 A ruler shall not fail from Juda, nor a prince from his loins, until there come the things stored up for him; and he is the expectation of nations. 11 Binding his foal to the vine, and the foal of his ass to the branch of it, he shall wash his robe in wine, and his garment in the blood of the grape. 12 His eyes shall be more cheering than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.

**KJV** *Deuteronomy 33:7* And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies.

**LXE** *Deuteronomy 33:7* And this is the blessing of Juda; Hear, Lord, the voice of Juda, and do thou visit his people: his hands shall contend for him, and thou shalt be a help from his enemies.

Of all Leah’s sons Judah is the one that seemingly reaps a true “blessing” in Gen 49 and he is even told that his father’s sons (presumably referring to his blood brothers Reuben, Levi and Simeon) will bow down to him. Judah is depicted as preeminent amongst Leah’s sons. This seems odd because in the context of Genesis it was Joseph (not Judah) who saw all his brethren and his father and mother bow down to him (Gen 37.10).
Although the blessing of Judah seems extravagant it is **Joseph who received a superlative blessing** (not Judah), which is in fact a **double blessing** inherited by both his sons (the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh). Some scholars present the possibility that Jacob’s blessing on Judah was declared in **sarcasm** as with the elder sons.\(^{17}\) Goldingay asserts, “It seems that Judah is disqualified from leadership by his marrying out and his recourse to an apparent prostitute: in realm of marriage and sex he behaves more like Reuben (and Shechem, who provoked Simeon and Levi’s sin) than Joseph, as chapter 39 will now portray him.”\(^{18}\)

It was through Joseph that the family were saved and it is at the end of the “Joseph story” that the blessings of Genesis 49 appear, it is therefore fitting that **Joseph** should receive the greatest blessing. On the other hand the conduct of Judah can hardly be described as much better than his blood brothers, particularly in the matters of Joseph’s faked death and the neglect of Tamar. Is the blessing of Judah sarcastic-ironic and if so how is this apropos in relation to a messianic prophecy?

Alter has an interesting observation on the phrase; “from the prey, my son, thou art gone up” which he translates as “from the prey, O my son, you mount”. Alter comments as follows; “Amos Funkenstein has astutely suggested to me that there is a double meaning here. The Hebrew can also be construed as “from the prey of my son you mounted”, introducing a shadow reference to Judah’s leading part in the plan to pass of Joseph as dead. When the bloodied tunic was brought to Jacob, he cried out, “Joseph is torn to shreds (\textit{tarof toraf}), and the term for “prey” here is \textit{teref}”. He adds, “you mount – “This is the same verb that is used above for Reuben’s act of sexual violation, but here it refers to a lion springing from the prey it has slain”….he also comments on the noun \textit{mace} (sceptre) in v.10; “ The Hebrew \textit{meHoqeq} refers to a rulers long staff, a clear parallel to “sceptre”. There is no reason to construe it, as some have done, as a euphemism for phallus, though the image of the mace between the legs surely suggests virile power in political leadership”.\(^{19}\) This last phrase is rendered in the KJV as “nor a lawgiver from between his feet” and contra Alter we will argue (and will demonstrate shortly) that the Hebrew deliberately alludes to the fact that Judah “mounted” Tamar and lost his “rulers staff” to her.


\(^{19}\) \textit{Ibid}, Alter, Gen 49.9
This indicates that the “blessing” is not as straightforward as it seems as Judah is being mocked for his stance toward Joseph and his sexual indiscretion with Tamar. It is however, more than that as Judah abused the custom of Leverite marriage just as Reuben abused the marriage covenant and Levi the covenant of circumcision. Accepting “praise” from his blood-brothers is therefore intended ironically – as if to say; “you are in good company”. The KJV has “and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?” This may also be a euphemism – with the Hebrew verb meaning “rise up” or “erect”. The KJV has “old lion” but other translations have “lioness”- the Hebrew has more than one word for lion, however, the feminine lioness is inappropriate here as the Hebrew literally means “parent lion” (ISA) as in a mature lion and therefore the KJV is probably correct. Judah is being depicted as the dominant lion tearing at his prey (Joseph) and then mounting (Tamar ) and loosing (from between his legs) his rulers staff!

That this reading is correct is confirmed by the enigmatic mention of Shiloh which is none other than Shelah who was promised in marriage to Tamar but Judah did not honour his word. This connection has been missed by most commentators except Good. Youngblood dismissively remarks; “Notable only for its eccentricity is the proposal that it be read as the personal name Shelah, the third son of Judah, on the basis of the reading šlh attested in many MT MSS and some Samaritan MSS (Good, 430)”. Although Youngblood’s offers a good summary of the issue he presents no arguments for his disparaging remarks and like most commentators fails to contextualize the “blessing” and therefore misses the point altogether.

The context is the loss of tribal authority by Judah in the case of Tamar (Gen 38.17-18) who acted faithfully in accordance with the custom of Leverite marriage. This was necessary in order to raise “seed to the dead” but Judah reneged on his promise. Tamar was prepared to remain a widow in Judah’s house (Gen 38.5) “until Shelah was grown” (cf. until Shiloh comes). She circumvented Judah’s duplicity by means of a ruse, thereby raising “seed to the dead” directly with the tribal chieftain rather than wait for a son who would never be given to her. Judah acknowledged that she had acted righteously within the confines of the Leverite marriage tradition, whereas he had not. The child was not only Judah’s son but in accordance with Leverite custom the child was also regarded as his grandson as it would keep the inheritance of the dead son alive. As the only remaining son alive (that we know off) the staff of tribal authority would pass to him (Shelah). In other words, Judah got his staff back until Shelah came off age.

20 Shelah, שֶלַח, Shiyloh
21 See the endnote where Youngblood’s entry in NIDOTTE is reproduced.
Note that Judah kept the loss of his staff very quiet because he was in danger of becoming a laughingstock amongst his brothers when the story came out. We can safely surmise that the “blessing” and “praise” is mocking – it is ironic.

How then does Shelah become Shiloh and achieve messianic status? From a text critical point of view this demonstrates the early origins of the “blessing” – it can hardly have been written during the monarchical period – poking fun at the ruling tribe - we can speculate that the “blessing” was well known among the other tribes during the early monarchy and an object of merriment with the “old lion”, “mounting” and “rising” and hints at losing his “staff”. The blessing by Moses in Deut 33 is also hardly effusive and does not point to Judah’s “dominance”, so neither blessing has the hallmarks of a late invention. The obfuscation of Shelah with Shiloh probably did occur at a later stage (whether through deliberate reinterpretation or scribal emendation) in the monarchical period when the tribe of Judah had became dominant as Shiloh takes the “sting” out of the “blessing” and points the reader away from an ironic reading, showing Judah as the only tribe vying with Joseph (Ephraim) for the ultimate blessing.

However, that said, the incident involving Tamar does point to the messiah as Christ “raised seed to the dead” (Adam) and faithful Tamar is included in the genealogy of Christ. Without her courage and faithfulness the messiah would not have resided in the line of Judah, moreover, tribal authority (and much more) now resides permanently with Shelah (Shiloh) the Davidide who inherited eternal life and keeps safe an “inheritance in Israel” for all those who would otherwise remain dead in Adam.

To summarise: Judah is represented as a Lion and like his blood-brothers he was guilty of abusing the covenants and traditions of his day. However, the “blessing” does contain messianic elements with the mention of Shelah/Shiloh and this is picked up by the later prophets (Ezek 21.27), moreover, the blessing of viticulture – where grapes and wine are depicted as so plentiful that a donkey is allowed to graze from the vine and wine is used for washing garments is realized during the reign of Uzziah (2 Chron 26.10).  

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22 Strong’s gives the meaning of Shelah as “petition” probably reflecting Tamar’s petition to Judah for the hand of the young man in marriage in order to raise seed to the dead. The messianic elements are obvious with the faithful petitioning God for the messiah to “raise seed to the dead” with the messiah acting as kinsman redeemer (On this see the book of Ruth another Judahite story with a similar theme).

23 This King also lost his ruling authority – his “sceptre” and lived the rest of his life as one “dead” in the lazar house; the seed of Judah almost became extinct (cf. unfaithful Ahaz) until the “suffering servant” (Hezekiah) was
The blessing of Zebulun

**KJV Genesis 49:13** Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon.

**LXE Genesis 49:13** Zabulon shall dwell on the coast, and he shall be by a haven of ships, and shall extend to Sidon.

**KJV Deuteronomy 33:18-19** And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents. 19 They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand.

**LXE Deuteronomy 33:18-19** And to Zabulon he said, Rejoice, Zabulon, in thy going out, and Issachar in his tents. They shall utterly destroy the nations, and ye shall call men there, and there offer the sacrifice of righteousness; for the wealth of the sea shall suckle thee, and so shall the marts of them that dwell by the sea-coast.

The blessing of Zebulun is associated with the abundance of the sea and dwelling by the coast and this is questioned in critical scholarship because whereas the territory of Asher lay on the coast the territory of Zebulun abutted Asher and therefore lay inland. There are number of solutions to this problem and notably, even in later history (Isaiah/NT/Josephus) the connection between Zebulun and the sea was not lost.

Josephus says the lot of Zebulun included the land which “lay as far as the Lake of Gennesareth, and that which belonged to Carmel and the sea.” Perhaps, however, the limits changed from time to time. So far as the words in Genesis 49.13 are concerned, Delitzsch thinks they do not necessarily imply actual contact with the sea; but only that his position should enable him to profit by maritime trade. Zebulun certainly did profit from the great caravan route, “the way of the sea”, passed through his territory.

raised from his deathbed – “Isaiah 53:10; “He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand”. The blessing is therefore appropriate to God keeping the “seed” of Judah alive until the arrival of the messiah.

24 In Joshua 19.11 (KJV) the border of Zebulun is described thus; “And their border went up toward the sea, and Maralah, and reached to Dabbasheth, and reached to the river that is before Jokneam”. The CLV translates Gen 49.13 as follows; “He tabernacles toward the sea shore; he lies toward the shore for ships, with his flank toward Sidon”.


26 Antip., 5.1.22
The prophet Isaiah (9.1) refers to this and it is quoted in Matt 4.15: “Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations”. This was the trade route that skirted the Sea of Galilee, so Zebulun found that its fortunes lay in commercial trade probably linking coastal trade routes with routes around Galilee.

Extra-biblical sources also testify to this association. The Testament of Zebulun has much to tell about successful fishing, and Targ. Onk. even speaks of subduing provinces with ships,\(^\text{27}\) whilst Talm. Shabb. 26 refers to the wealth derived from traffic in purple dyes, to which Targ.pseudo-Jon., adds the making of glass. Clarke’s commentary\(^\text{28}\) has the following information;

> Jonathan ben Uzziel has probably hit upon the true meaning of this difficult passage: “From the sand,” says he, are produced looking-glass and glass in general; the treasures—the method of finding and working this was revealed to these tribes.” Several ancient writers inform us that there were havens in the coasts of the Zebulunites in which the vitreous sand, or sand proper for making glass, was found. See Strabo, lib. xvi.; see also Pliny, Hist. Nat. I. xxxvi., c. 20; Tacitus, Hist. I. v., c. 7. The words of Tacitus are remarkable: Et Belus amnis Judaico mari illabitur; circa; ejus os lectae admixto nitro in vitrium excoquuntur. “The River Belus falls into the Jewish sea, about whose mouth those sands, mixed with nitre, are collected, out of which glass is formed,” or which is melted into glass. Some think that the celebrated shell-fish called murex, out of which the precious purple dye was extracted, is here intended by the treasure hid in the sand: this also Jonathan introduces in this verse. And others think that it is a general term for the advantages derived from navigation and commerce.

The great sea trading power of the day was Phoenicia also known for trading glass and powdered Tyrian purple. Shmuel Aḥituv believes that the reign of Solomon, who collaborated in the Tyrian commerce, can explain how Zebulun suits a blessing of benefit from the abundance of the sea.\(^\text{29}\)

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\(^\text{27}\) Presumably across the Sea of Galilee.

\(^\text{28}\) A. Clarke, Holy Bible, with a comm. and critical notes, (1836,Original from Oxford University), 848

\(^\text{29}\) Shmuel Aḥituv’s book is summarised as follows; “The blessing of Jacob describes Zebulun as a maritime tribe (Gen 49.13). This, and the description of Zebulun and Issachar in the Blessing of Moses (Deut 33.18-19), led the Rabbis to assume that the tribe of Zebulun was engaged in commerce, including overseas trade. The inheritance of Zebulun is described in Josh 19.10-16 as separated from the sea by the inheritance of the tribe of Asher. Curiously, Asher's blessing has no reference to his allotment by the sea, from Mount Carmel northward, not in the Blessing of Jacob nor in the Blessing of Moses. Only in the Song of Deborah is Asher described as a coastal tribe. This description is quite similar to that of Zebulun in the Blessing of Jacob. The reign of Solomon, who collaborated in the Tyrian commerce, can explain how Zebulun suits a blessing of benefit from the abundance of the sea” Shmuel Aḥituv, Zebulun and the Sea: Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography, (Brill, 2000).
It seems that Zebulun was closely related with Phoenicia and this is even reflected in the name of Zebulun which means “exalted” or “excellency”. The naming of Zebulun is in fact a *paronomasia*, a play on Zebulun;

**KJV Genesis 30:20** And Leah said, God hath endued (zabad) me with a good dowry (zebed); now will my husband dwell (zabal) with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun.

**BHT Genesis 30:20** wattō’mer leʾāh zabāḏānī ʾēlōhīm ʾōti zēbeḏ tōb happā’ām yizbalēni ʾiši kī-yālāḏti lō šiššāb bānim wattiqrāʾ ʾet-śāmō zebūlūn

The verb *zbl* is found only in Gen 30.20. In the Ugaritic texts the word *zbl* occurs frequently as a title for the Canaanite deities. The title is also used in reference to the sea god Yam (*zbl Ym*) “the exalted one, Yammu.” Phonecia also uses this root in the name *b'l' zb* *l*, Baal (cf. Beelzebub) is exalted. The nom./adj. is found 5x when Solomon describes the exalted temple (*bēt ḥabu*) in 1 Kings 8.13; 2 Chron. 6.2 and used to describe the heavens in Hab. 3.11. The Hebrew word for “sea” is also “Yam,” therefore “the exalted one of the sea” is no longer a Phonecian or Canaanite “god” but has been replaced with the tribe of Zebulun. Leah’s husband would “honour (exalt)” her (zabal) and her son would become the “exalted one” (*zbl*) of the sea. The blessing of Moses in Deut 33.18-19 mentions Zebulun and Issachar together probably as a contrast – Zebulun would rejoice in his “going out” and Issachar “in his tents” – one would go out into the world and trade the other would find contentment in agriculture and horticulture.

They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness (Deut 33.19) the mountain here is often thought to be “Jerusalem” but is actually mount Tabor which looks like a giant rounded mound in the middle of an otherwise flat plain. It formed the border of three tribes: Zebulun, Issachar and Naphtali. There may have been a Levite city on this mountain, Ewing Summarises; “[Tabor is] one of the towns in the territory of Zebulun, given to the Merarite Levites (1 Chronicles 6:77). The parallel list in Joshua 21:24 f contains no name like this. There is no indication of its position. Some have thought that it may correspond to Daberath in the territory of Issachar (21:28), now represented by Deburiyeh on the western slope of Mt. Tabor; others that it may be the mountain itself; and yet others that it may be a city on the mountain, which probably was occupied from very early times.

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There is a Tabor mentioned as on the border of Issachar (Joshua 19:22); but that is almost certainly the mountain. It has been suggested that Tabor in 1 Chronicles 6:17 may be a contraction of Chisloth-tabor (Joshua 19:12), the modern Iksal, 3 miles West of the mountain. No certainty is possible.  

The blessing of Issachar

*KJV* Genesis 49:14-15  Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: 15 And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.

*LXX* Genesis 49:14-15  Issachar has desired that which is good; resting between the inheritances. 15 And having seen the resting place that it was good, and the land that it was fertile, he subjected his shoulder to labour, and became a husbandman.

The blessing of Issachar is often viewed negatively by commentators. It is confidently stated that Issachar was negligent in removing the Canaanites and was therefore put to tribute but this runs counter the earliest mention of the tribe where together with Zebulun, Naphtali won a great victory against the Canaanites under Deborah and Barak (Judges 4-5). They are described by the Chronicler as “valiant men of might in their generations” (1 Chron.7.2), were supporters of David at Hebron and responded to Hezekiah’s call to attend the Passover. In later Rabbinic writings they are portrayed as scholars, intellectuals and leaders. It is therefore an injustice to portray them as either too lazy or cowardly to realize their inheritance as this contradicts their portrayal as resourceful and brave. Issachar was sandwiched between the tribes of west Manasseh and Zebulun, it was located primarily in the Jezreel valley. Some of the confusion is probably caused by the use of archaic language (demonstrating the antiquity of the blessing). The LXX (Septuagint) offers a different reading (possibly from a different Hebrew Vorlage) which has Issachar resting between the inheritances (two burdens) which is probably a reference to Mount Tabor and Mount Gilboa on the tribal borders -indicating that Issachar puts down roots in the valley of Jezreel and commits to the hard work of agriculture (LXX). The discussion focuses on the word translated “hire”, “wages”, “tribute”, “reward” or “labour”; however

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33 Various suggestions are between the “sheepfolds” or “saddlebags” or “(fire) pots” the commentators are obviously unsure but these two mountains (especially Tabor) might suggest a basket or pot.
whatever meaning is chosen must relate to the naming of Issachar in Gen 30.18, where Leah says; “God hath given me my hire (םָּכַר sakar), because I have given my maiden to my husband”. In the previous verses Leah had “hired” a night with Jacob by giving the mandrakes (aphrodisiac) to her sister Rachel but in the next verse she relates her pregnancy as a reward (hire) for her generosity in giving her maiden (slave) as a concubine to Jacob. In this light the MT reading (which uses a completely different word denoting “tribute”) seems unlikely as the blessing indicates a place of rest and the reward found in fruitful physical labour. The blessing is therefore positive with Issachar portrayed as a raw boned (strong) ass.

The Blessing of Dan

KJV Genesis 49:16-17 Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. 17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.

LXX Genesis 49:16-17 Dan shall judge his people, as one tribe too in Israel. 17 And let Dan be a serpent in the way, besetting the path, biting the heel of the horse (and the rider shall fall backward),

KJV Deuteronomy 33:22 And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's whelp: he shall leap from Bashan.

LXX Deuteronomy 33:22 And to Dan he said, Dan is a lion's whelp, and shall leap out of Basan.

The naming formula is found in Gen 30.6 (KJV); “And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan”. Judged should be understood as “has vindicated me” (NIV/NIB), the name Daniel means God is Judge.

Dan is depicted as a נָהָה (nāḥāḥ), and as a יָפַי (šūpîpôn); usually translated as snake and adder. The latter word is ignored altogether by the LXX although the LXX uses the similar śīpōnim in Jer.8.17 as an attributive adjective modifying the noun into “deadly snakes” (LXX) “venomous snakes” (NIB) and serpents, cockatrices (KJV). The Hebrew verb form śrp is similar to the Ugaritic šṛp, both mean to burn (i.e., fiery). The phrase may well mean “a serpent, a fiery stinger” or it may denote a specific species; “a serpent, a horned adder”.

34 Ecclesiastes 3:13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.
The Targum (Num. R. ii.) makes the serpent the emblem of the tribe on its standard.\(^{35}\) The tribe of Dan was both a Northern and Southern tribe. Initial pressure from the Philistines and Amorites caused some of the tribe to migrate northwards.\(^{36}\) It was during this journey that they seconded a corrupt Levite priest and conquered Laish (Judges 17-18). Laish is a poetical term for lion which explains the reference to “a lion’s whelp” in the Moses blessing of Deut 33.22 and the otherwise unexplained reference to Bashan (which territory was never held by Dan) is probably the direction of the attack as it “reflects this post of vantage over the entrance of invaders from the North”.\(^{37}\) A member of the tribe of Dan was the first to blaspheme God (Lev 24.10-16) and Dan was the first tribe to commit idolatry in the land. When Jeroboam erected the golden calves, one was located in Dan; the tribe became a cultic centre of worship, the symbol of the northern kingdom’s religious deviance. Both Jeremiah (8.16-17) and Amos (8.14) prophesied against Dan, Amos predicting their extinction as a tribe. The blessing of Dan is therefore negative, yet despite this one of the greatest Judges, Samson, was a Danite. In many ways Samson typified his tribe – he broke his Nazarene vows and was led astray by his appetites but he died in faith, “out of weakness were made strong” (Heb 11.34).

KJV Genesis 49:18 I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.

It is not certain that the cry for help (prayer) articulated by Jacob has anything to do with the previous “blessing” accorded to Dan by Jacob. The Hebrew root form for salvation (yeshuw’ah) is very similar to the name of Jesus. However, there is possibly an indirect connection with the blessing as the first time yeshuw’ah occurs is in Exod 14.13 and Exod 15.1-2 where the Israelites are exhorted to wait patiently for the “salvation of the Lord” and “the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea” which links with the “rider [of the horse] falling backwards” in Dan’s blessing. The Rabbi’s see the blessing as a reference to Samson harassing the Philistines but it may well refer to the damage caused by Dan’s idolatry. Perhaps the blessing is meant as a contrast, i.e. that despite tribal transgressions (Dan causing Israel to fall backwards) God would work salvation (make the enemy fall backwards) through the messiah (prefigured by Joseph saving the family fortunes) and this was acted out when the Israelites left Egypt at the Passover (as was promised to Abraham –a prophecy that Jacob was surely aware of).


\(^{36}\) For a good summary of the history, maps and geography of all the tribes [Retrieved June 2017] see: {HYPERLINK "http://www.israel-a-history-of.com/12-tribes-of-israel.html"}

So, despite all their flaws (and future transgressions) the tribes (family) had to wait patiently until the salvation of Yah was revealed.

**The blessing of Gad**

**KJV Genesis 49:19** Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.

**LXE Genesis 49:19** Gad, a plundering troop shall plunder him; but he shall plunder him, pursuing him closely.

**KJV Deuteronomy 33:20-21** And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head. 21 And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel.

**LXE Deuteronomy 33:20-21** And to Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlarges Gad: as a lion he rested, having broken the arm and the ruler. 21 And he saw his first-fruits, that there the land of the princes gathered with the chiefs of the people was divided; the Lord wrought righteousness, and his judgment with Israel.

Gad was included in “the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah” (Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher) who tended the sheep when Joseph “told tales” to his father Jacob about their bad behaviour (Gen 37.2). The allotment of the tribe of Gad was allocated by Moses himself before they entered the land. This first period was the allotment of land east of the Jordan River to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, or East Manasseh. Reading between the lines it seems that Gad played a prominent role in the battle against King Sihon and they requested the rich rolling hills and watered pasture lands facing the Jordan and this was given on the proviso that the fighting men of the tribe would leave their families behind and accompany Israel in the conquests on the other side of Jordan. They formed the vanguard in these attacks – an elite army of shock-troops known for their courage and fighting skills. When David was fleeing Saul and became the focus of a rebel army he was joined by men from Gad; “Some Gadites defected to David at his stronghold in the desert.

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38 For a good summary of the history, maps and geography of all the tribes [Retrieved June 2017] see: {HYPERLINK "http://www.israel-a-history-of.com/12-tribes-of-israel.html"}
They were brave warriors, ready for battle and able to handle the shield and spear. Their faces were the faces of lions, and they were swift as gazelles in the mountains” (1 Chron.12.8). They are further described in vv.14-15 as if they are a commando unit; “These Gadites were army commanders; the least was a match for a hundred, and the greatest for a thousand. It was they who crossed the Jordan in the first month when it was overflowing all its banks, and they put to flight everyone living in the valleys to the east and to the west.”

The NIB gives a clearer dynamic rendering of the blessing by Moses; “About Gad he said: “Blessed is he who enlarges Gad’s domain! Gad lives there like a lion, tearing at arm or head. He chose the best land for himself; the leader’s portion was kept for him. When the heads of the people assembled, he carried out the LORD’s righteous will, and his judgments concerning Israel.”

Gad had very rich pasture land and formed a buffer state on the eastern border of Israel as a consequence it was under constant pressure from enemies. At one stage the tribe of Gad fell under the yoke of Hazael but managed to regain their territory, eventually they fell to the super power of the day (Assyria) and were deported. The prophet Jeremiah spoke concerning Gad and Ammon. “Concerning the Ammonites: “This is what the Lord says: ‘Has Israel no sons? Has she no heirs? Why then has Molech taken possession of Gad? Why do his people live in its towns? But the days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘When I will sound the battle cry against Rabbah of the Ammonites; it will become a mound of ruins, and its surrounding villages will be set on fire. Then Israel will drive out those who drove her out,’ says the Lord” (Jer.49.1).

It seems then that God will restore the territories of the “ten lost tribes” at some future stage and Gad will “overcome at the last”. The name of Gad means “Good luck has come”, Alter comments that the translation (Gen 30.11) follows the long established practice in separating the enigmatic single word of the Masoretic Text, bagad, into ba’ gad. However, as noted by Alter, in Gen 49.19 a sound play is made in the Hebrew gad gedud ye’mundenu (you shall be goaded by raiders) and the verse ends yet he shall goad their heel. Alter comments; “The phrase may be reminiscent of “and you shall bite his heel”, which is addressed to the serpent in the Garden. There could be carryover then of the snake imagery of the preceding lines. The snake, one should keep in mind, is not “demonic” but an image of darting, agile, lethal assault”. The Hebrew “heel” is translated as “last” in the KJV of Gen 49.19 and therefore translated dynamically as in “the hinder-part” (i.e. the heel – at the last). However, if rendered literally (as
Alter does) it demonstrates how well the poem is integrated into the wider context of Genesis as Jacob himself was a “heel grabber” (Gen 25.26), and Dan and Gad are “heel biters” and as Alter notes several ancient versions render the next blessing as “Asher’s heel shall be rich” as they “quite plausibly, attach the initial constant mem (“from”) to the end of the preceding word ‘aqev (“heel”), turning it into “their heel”. In Gen 30.13 (the naming of Asher) is translated by Alter as “What good fortune! For the girls have acclaimed me fortunate”; Alter remarks that, Asher’s name is derived from ‘osher, “good fortune”, and the entire name is thus closely parallel to the name of Gad. This noun ‘osher produces a common biblical verb ‘isher, the basic meaning of which is to call out to a lucky person, ‘asbrei, “happy is he” (or, here, “happy is she”).

The take away point is that the “blessings” are interconnected with each other and within the wider context of Genesis and can therefore hardly be later “interpolations”. They are very carefully crafted with multiple word-plays and associations and while “Gad” means “Good fortune” the word-play highlights Gad’s military prowess – “a troop” or “army”.

The blessing of Asher

KJV Genesis 49:20 Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.

LXE Genesis 49:20 Aser, his bread shall be fat; and he shall yield dainties to princes.

KJV Deuteronomy 33:24-25 And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.

LXE Deuteronomy 33:24-25 And to Aser he said, Aser is blessed with children; and he shall be acceptable to his brethren: he shall dip his foot in oil. His sandal shall be iron and brass; as thy days, so shall be thy strength.

KJV Genesis 30:13 And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher.

The blessing of Asher bears resemblance with the general blessing given to Israel in Deut 8:9; “A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass”. 
The reference to “iron and brass” in the blessing is not to Asher’s “sandals” but to “bars”, 39 as in fortified city gates, “The bolts of your gates will be iron and bronze, and your strength will equal your days” (NIV). Similarly the word translated “strength” 40 is nothing more than a guess which demonstrates the antiquity and archaic nature of the poem. However, the idea expressed is quite clear, one of fertility (children) and abundance. The land of Asher was known for its olive orchards. Asher produced such large amounts of oil that it became exceedingly wealthy. A big reason for Asher’s wealth, coupled with its natural production of olive oil, 41 was its proximity to the markets of Phoenicia. The tribe of Asher became a leader in the olive oil trade in Canaan. Asher occupied the highlands, and the settlements on the slopes of the western mountains and hills which merged with the coastal strip; they more or less “shared” the coast with the Phoenicians and Philistines who controlled much of the coastal strip. This cannot have been a peaceful or symbiotic relationship perhaps that is why iron and brass fortifications are referenced but it was probably tolerated because of lucrative trading. Asher must have had its own ships as the tribe is admonished by Deborah for not joining the fight; “Gilead remained across the Jordan; and why did Dan stay in ships? Asher sat at the seashore, and remained by its landings” (Judg.5.17).

The history of the tribe is chequered as it offered no support to Deborah but played a decisive role in Gideon’s defeat of the Midianites, killing the two Midianite chiefs. They also sent a large number of men to King David in Hebron, in support of his claim to the throne but broke of relationships and joined the ten tribes with the split that occurred after Solomon. 42 Asher was the second fastest growing tribe after Manasseh adding 20,500 men between the first and second census (Num 1 and Num 26). Asher also suffered deportation under the Assyrians but surprisingly we find the prophetess Anna from the tribe of Asher in Luke 2.36 demonstrating that members of the tribe retained their identity into the New Testament era. It is probably wrong to speak of “ten lost tribes” as remnants remained in the land (elements of Asher responded to Hezekiah’s reformation) and although some tribes were “absorbed” in exile it is quite possible that isolated families still retained their identity both inside and outside the land.

39 [bars] Heb. min’al, found only here, but the meaning is confirmed by that of the similar form man’al, Nehemiah 3:3, etc., and by the Sam. The shoes of A.V. and R.V. marg. and the LXX ὑπόδημα are a false conjecture from na’al, sandal. Thy, LXX his. Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges [Retrieved June 2017] {HYPERLINK "http://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/deuteronomy/33.htm"}
40 [strength] So Sam., LXX, Targ., perhaps reading robe’ for the Heb. dohe’, which is not found elsewhere and is of unknown meaning. Some render rest after the doubtful analogy of Ar.; Vulg. old age, as if reading d’b for db’. Ibid, Cambridge.
41 Rabbinical Literature, as pointed out by the Jewish Encyclopedia, supports this notion. It is believed that in times of scarcity and during the Rabbinical era, Asher supplied all of Israel with oil.
42 Perhaps Solomon over-taxed their trade—he also gave away some of their cities to Hiram of Tyre.
Asher is depicted as abundant and fertile and able to yield luxury goods (dainties) for the royal table, the blessing is therefore largely positive.

The blessing of Naphtali

**KJV** Genesis 49:21  Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.

**LXE** Genesis 49:21  Nephthalim is a spreading stem, bestowing beauty on its fruit.

**KJV** Deuteronomy 33:23  And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south.

**LXE** Deuteronomy 33:23  And to Nephthali he said, Nephthali has the fulness of good things; and let him be filled with blessing from the Lord: he shall inherit the west and the south.

**KJV** Genesis 30:8  And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali.

**LXE** Genesis 30:8  And Rachel said, God has helped me, and I contended with my sister and prevailed; and she called his name, Nephthalim.

Naphtali means “struggle” or “wrestling” --- it not only reflects the competition between Rachel and Leah for Jacob’s affection, but also the major theme of Jacob’s life – his wrestling against his brother Esau and against his uncle (and father-in-law) Laban and finally against God. Although the Mosoretic Text and Septuagint version of Gen 49.21 is markedly divergent the underlying themes are similar, namely something “let loose” or “spreading” resulting in something “beauty” or “goodly”. In light of the other animal idioms the MT seems more likely, particularly because the image of a hind or gazelle struggling to wrestle free from a trap suits the background to naming Naphtali. The MT reference to “goodly words” seems to be a non sequitur and Alter translates “lovely fawns” commenting “The Hebrew 'imrei shafer is in doubt. The translation follows one prevalent conjecture in deriving the first word from the Aramaic 'imeir, which usually means “lamb”’’. Both the NIV and NIB follow this route; “Naphtali is a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns” as does the RSV (comely fawns) and YLT (beauteous young ones). Naphtali possessed the east and the north of the country. In other words the tribe was bordered by the sea (of Galilee) and laid to the south of Dan (the tribe previously mentioned in Moses’ blessing). Naphtali had some of the most fertile land in the whole country suitable as pasture land and for agriculture.
The blessing of Joseph

**KJV Genesis 49:22-26**  
Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:  
23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him:  
24 But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)  
25 Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:  
26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

**LXXE Genesis 49:22-26**  
Joseph is a son increased; my dearly loved son is increased; my youngest son, turn to me.  
23 Against whom men taking evil counsel reproached him, and the archers pressed hard upon him.  
But their bow and arrows were mightily consumed, and the sinews of their arms were slackened by the hand of the mighty one of Jacob; thence is he that strengthened Israel from the God of thy father; 25 and my God helped thee, and he blessed thee with the blessing of heaven from above, and the blessing of the earth possessing all things, because of the blessing of the breasts and of the womb, 26 the blessings of thy father and thy mother-- it has prevailed above the blessing of the lasting mountains, and beyond the blessings of the everlasting hills; they shall be upon the head of Joseph, and upon the head of the brothers of whom he took the lead.

**KJV Deuteronomy 33:13-17**  
And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,  
14 And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon,  
15 And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills,  
16 And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.  
17 His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.
Deuteronomy 33:13-17  And to Joseph he said, His land is of the blessing of the Lord, of the seasons of sky and dew, and of the deeps of wells below, 14 and of the fruits of the changes of the sun in season, and of the produce of the months, 15 from the top of the ancient mountains, and from the top of the everlasting hills, 16 and of the fullness of the land in season: and let the things pleasing to him that dwelt in the bush come on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of him who was glorified above his brethren. 17 His beauty is as the firstling of his bull, his horns are the horns of a unicorn; with them he shall thrust the nations at once, even from the end of the earth: these are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and these are the thousands of Manasse.

The first line of this blessing is translated as follows by the YLT; “Joseph is a fruitful son; a fruitful son by a fountain, daughters step over the wall”. There is no mention of a vine or branches and some translations have “Joseph is a wild ass” reading porat as per‘e but as Alter notes; “A link between porat and the root p-r-h, to be fruitful is less of a grammatical stretch, and is encouraged by Joseph’s play on the same root in naming his son Ephraim”. Another crux (noted by Alter) is that “run” [over] in the KJV and “step” [over] in the YLT is a feminine singular verb. This makes sense because the reference is to the “daughters”. It is obvious that the translators (even the LXX translators) struggled with interpreting the archaic poetry but the dynamic rendering of the modern versions (and the KJV) is probably correct with Joseph’s sons depicted as a fruitful vine by a well or spring and his daughters as branches growing over a wall (or rampart) behind which Joseph flexes his bow in order to return fire to his enemies.

The phrase in parenthesis in the KJV is also notoriously difficult; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel). This is translated by Alter as “through the hands of the Champion of Jacob, through the name of the Shepherd, and Israel’s rock”. Alter comments; “along with some of the ancient versions, the translation here reads mishem for the Masoretic misham, “from there” which is obscure”. However, Alter translates (as do some versions) the noun, יָבָן, ‘eben as “rock” (ṣûr) when “stone” is more exact. God is usually referred to as a “rock” not a “stone” as the noun plays on the Hebrew for “son” (ben) even though it is in the feminine construct here. The YLT translates: “Whence is a shepherd, a son of Israel”. The Cambridge Bible comments; “the word mis-shâm (= “from thence”) seems more prosaic and less impressive than mis-shêm (= “from the Name”)” and the JPS reads thus; “from thence, from the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel” which has a definite messianic flavour as does the ASV and NKJ.
This seems to be supported by the “separation” of Joseph from his brethren – a reference to priestly dedication or consecration in imitation of the high priest in the Nazirite vow “of him that was separate נזיר (naziyr) from his brethren”. The Rabbi’s accord a priestly function to the “coat of many colors” worn by Joseph and this would explain the envy of his brethren. The favorite son, by the favorite wife was also appointed as the family priest by his father Jacob. It is therefore not certain at this stage whether the messiah would come from the tribes of Joseph or Judah. It is certainly significant that the messiah was raised by Joseph in Nazareth – the “territory” of Joseph although by descent coming from Judah. Of course, the tribe of Joseph did not exist but was represented by his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh with Ephraim promised the ascendancy (ten thousands of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh); therefore Joseph receives a “double blessing” which is superlative and extravagant far outweighing any of the previous blessings. This can be seen in the usage of the title “Almighty” (El Shadday) which denotes fertility and blessing.\(^43\) The major theme of this blessing is therefore fruitfulness and fertility.

**The blessing of Benjamin**

\(^{KJV}\) Genesis 49:27 Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

\(^{LXE}\) Genesis 49:27 Benjamin, as a ravening wolf, shall eat still in the morning, and at evening he gives food.

\(^{KJV}\) Deuteronomy 33:12 And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.

\(^{LXE}\) Deuteronomy 33:12 And to Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in confidence, and God overshadows him always, and he rested between his shoulders.

\(^{KJV}\) Genesis 35:17-18 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. \(^{18}\) And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin.

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The tribe of Benjamin was a tribe of “left hander’s” 44 named the “son of the right hand” he was a “son of sorrow” causing the death of his mother but was a joy and comfort of his father’s old age. He represents contradiction as does his blessing – two different sides of the same coin. The tribal allotment of Benjamin was next to Judah probably reflecting the bond established by Judah when he was prepared to offer himself as surety for Benjamin (Gen. 44.3). It seems that Jerusalem (Jebus) lay in the territory of Benjamin but became part of Judah when it was conquered by David. Benjamin is likened to a “ravening wolf” and this is prophetic of the disgraceful incident at Gibeah which in many ways echoes what occurred at Sodom, an incident that almost led to the extinction of the tribe at the hands of their brethren as a judgement on Benjamin’s wickedness (Judges 19-21).

The tribes took an oath not to allow their daughters to marry the men of Benjamin but when they saw that the consequence was tribal extinction they devised a “work around” by allowing the men of Benjamin to “kidnap” their daughters (Judg 21.20-23). In the morning the young men of Benjamin would lurk around the vineyards like wolves staking out their prey and when the young women were dancing at the evening harvest festivals at Shiloh where the tabernacle resided45 the young men would strike; kidnapping the girls and taking them back to the territory of Benjamin so that they could “divide” the spoils. There was a tacit agreement to turn a blind eye to this unusual “courtship” arrangement which was a face saving result born of desperation. But there is much more to this prophecy as in the “morning” of Israel’s history the first king of Israel – Saul persecuted David and in the “evening” of Israel’s history Saul of Tarsus persecuted Christ. On both occasions we have a prominent member of Benjamin acting like a “ravening wolf” towards a Davidide from the tribe of Judah.

However, according to the blessing of Moses; “The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him” and this is surely a reference to Judah living safely next to Benjamin. The YLT renders the blessing thus; “Of Benjamin he said: -- The beloved of Jehovah doth tabernacle confidently by him, Covering him over all the day; Yea, between his shoulders He doth tabernacle”. The reference to “tabernacling” and “between his shoulders” indicates the high priests “breastplate” which he wore over his heart (Exod. 28.29-30). In the time of David (the beloved) both Shiloh and Jerusalem were places of worship because David brought the ark to Jerusalem and housed it in a tent.  

44 It seems that they were ambidextrous warriors (1 Chron. 12.2)  
45 “And they said: ‘Behold, there is the feast of the LORD from year to year in Shiloh, which is on the north of Beth-el, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebanon.’” (Judges 21.19)
So Benjamin literally dwelt between the two holy places and David made a covenant with Jonathan for “he (Jonathan) loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul” (1 Sam 20.17). This was an everlasting covenant between the house of the beloved (David) and Jonathan which was honoured when Christ stopped Saul of Tarsus of the tribe of Benjamin on the road to Damascus and spared his life. Benjamin therefore shows great contrasts – loyalty and persecution – right and left hand – sorrow and joy – a ravening wolf and a devoted friend.

Endnotes


The traditional understanding of "Shiloh" in Gen 49:10 (as a name of or a metaphor) for the Messiah (cf. NIV footnote; KJV) goes far back at least as far as b. *Sanh.* 98b: Rabbi Yohanan said concerning the messiah, 'What is his name…..Shiloh is his name, as it is said, "Until Shiloh comes"'. But the Babylonian Talmud was compiled between the 3rd and 6th century AD, and the NT does not cite Gen 49:10 as a messianic text. Indeed the Christian interpretation of Gen 49:10 did not become popular until the late 16th century. 4QPBless, a commentary on Gen 49.10, apparently understands "Shiloh" in that verse as messianic: "Until the Messiah of Righteousness [i.e., the Legitimate Messiah], the Shoot of David comes" (lines 3-4; cf. Allegro 174-6; cf. also, with modifications, Margulius, 202-5 [esp. 205 n.6]). But since the word "Shiloh" does not appear in 4QPBless (or in 4Q252, a similar text; cf. Bateman 20-21) we cannot know what in the text is being commented on. Indeed the ancient versions are virtually unanimous in reading the word in their Heb. *Vorlage(n)* in ways other than a proper nom.(cf. conveniently Moran, 414-415; Treves, 354 n.4). In any case the Heb. K reading ʾšylḥ in Gen 49:10 is unique and, thus, offers no solace to those who wish to understand it as a messianic title (NASB, NKJV) or, for that matter, as the place name Shiloh (e.g., Wordsworth, 142; Eissfeldt, 141; Treves, 356; Saboottka, 226; Schley, 89,163). Notable only for its eccentricity is the proposal that it be read as the personal name Shelah, the third son of Judah, on the basis of the reading ʾšlh attested in many MT MSS and some Samaritan MSS (Good, 430).

The phrase ’d-b’ ʾsr-lw hmšpt, "until he comes to whom it rightfully belongs" (Ezek 21:27 [32]), is often pointed out as a parallel to the phrase ’d ky kb’ ʾšylḥ in Gen 49:10. On the basis of the Ezekiel text, many have pointed ʾšylḥ as ʾšelḥ as and translated the Genesis phrase "until he comes to whom it belongs" (NIV; cf. JB; REB; RSV), often citing support from the ancient versions. Such a reading is not only grammatically difficult but is also "artificial" and "needlessly obscure" (Moran, 410).
The most satisfying solution of the anomalous šāylb in Gen 49:10 is to divide the consonants into two words and repoint them as šāy lōb, "tribute to him." The word šāy means "gift offered as homage" (BDB, 1009), "tribute," and is attested elsewhere in Ps 68:29 (30); 76:11 (12); Isa 18:7 (NIV "gifts" in each case). The intimate relationship of the passage to the obedience of the nations is his" (NIV). The intimate relationship of the passage to Ezek 21:27(32) remains unaffected (for details cf. Moran, 415-24) -and so, for that matter, does its messianism. Initially fulfilled in David, it will eventually be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He, after all, is the King of kings and is, therefore, ultimately the one to whom the tribute and obedience of all nations must come (Matt 2:11; Phil 2:10; Rev 7:9; 11:15).
The Constellations

This digression is concerned with the relationship between the constellations, the layout of the camp of Israel around the Tabernacle and the four-faces of the Cherubim. For thousands of years, before the era of mass entertainment and artificial light people told stories about the stars, developed myths about the constellations and worshiped them as “gods”. The stars were used for navigation and for determining the agricultural calendar. The importance of the constellations to ancient civilizations was cross-cultural and a certain amount of syncretism occurred with many of the constellations depicting the same figures and stories under different names in different languages. Some of the constellations suggested themselves because they have a distinct shape, others bear no resemblance to the figures they portray and their origins are lost in time.

Did these ideas influence Hebrew religion and if so how do we interpret the symbology? The Jews were prohibited from worshipping the stars but that does not mean that they held no significance for them; “Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years” (Gen 1.14). The word for “lights” is the same word used for the lamps in the tabernacle and “signs and seasons” relates to the festal calendar (appointed times); the seasonal celebrations for the worshiping community which were also closely related with the agricultural season in the lunar calendar. The stars, sun and moon are completely functional they have been demythologised and are no longer deities in Israelite religion.

The prophet Isaiah warns against using the “stars” for prediction; “Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee” (Isaiah 47.13). The universe is not deterministic it is only God who “knows” the future; “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa.46.10). That said, Yahweh is able to use the “lights” in his heavenly temple to signify important events (star at the birth of Christ) or the constellations to symbolise important eternal truths – they have been created for his pleasure and for man’s edification but not as objects of worship. The destiny of Abraham’s seed is to be as multitudinous as the stars and in Daniel the righteous will “shine like the stars” and it is only then that the “host of the heavens” will be finished (Gen 2.1).

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1This Digression should be read in conjunction with Digression 3 on the Tribal Blessings.
Jacob and the Stars

The twelve constellations of the Zodiac\(^2\) obviously form the backdrop to Joseph’s dream, Jacob’s blessing and the tribal layout round the temple. Joseph had a dream where he saw the constellations bowing down to him (Gen.37.9-10). In Genesis 49 many of the tribes are associated with animal symbology found in the Zodiac constellations and the layout of the camp of Israel also follows a layout that indicates awareness of the constellations. We can imagine Jacob pointing out the constellations as he delivers his blessing; “You, Judah are like the constellation Leo in the sky….crouching like a lion” (Gen 49.9), etc. Similar imagery is carried over into the NT where we find the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev 5.5) and John sees a woman in heaven with a “crown of twelve stars” (Rev 12.1) pursued by a dragon – reminiscent of the constellations Virgo (the virgin) and Draco (the dragon).

Forbidden to worship images

You shall not make for yourself a graven image or any likeness of what is in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them” (Exodus 20:4–5)

The Jews were forbidden to produce images and reacted adversely to the standards borne by the Roman legions that often depicted animals. Torrey writes; “Every tribe had its particular standard, probably with the name of the tribe embroidered with large letters. It seems highly improbable that the figures of animals should have been painted on them, as the Jewish writers assert; for even in after ages, when Vitellius wished to march through Judea, their great men besought him to march another way, as the law of the land did not permit images (such as were on the Roman standard) to be brought into it.”\(^3\) Similarly Potok; “It is not clear that the Jews would have allowed images on their standards: In the time of Augustus, Roman legionaries would leave their standards in the Judean port city of Caesarea, so that the images drawn upon them would not offend the sensitive Jews”.\(^4\)

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\(^2\)The Latin term zōdiacus was derived from the Greek, and the Greek term comes from the word ζώδιον (zōdon), which is the diminutive of ζῷον (zōon), or animal, living creature.

\(^3\) Jos. Antiq., 18.5.3., See; R. Torrey, The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1995), Num. 2.2.

However, the images may have been offensive because they represented “gods” not because they were images per se. Josephus relates, “for that the laws of their country would not permit them to overlook those images which were brought into it, of which there were a great many in their ensigns.”  

After all, the tabernacle and temple were decorated with images including lions, oxen, and cherubim (Ex. 26:1; 36:8, 35; 1Kgs. 6.32; 7.29; 2Kgs. 16.17; 2Chr. 4.3-4, 15). Moreover, recent archaeological findings (although late c. 520 CE) show that synagogues actually used the Zodiac as a mosaic decoration.

In the square panel of the Beth Alpha mosaic was a zodiac wheel with all 12 symbols and names of the zodiac surrounded by four female figures at the corners, identifying the seasons of the year (Credit Art Resource, NY). Zanger, (citing Shanks et al) says;

“It is true that one who goes through Jewish literature with a fine-tooth comb can find a citation here and there that seems to recognize the phenomenon of mosaic decoration, presumably zodiac, in synagogues. “In the days of Rabbi Abun they began depicting figures in mosaic and he did not protest against it.” More to the point, we find a line in Aramaic translation, “… you may place a mosaic pavement impressed with figures and images in the floors of synagogue; but not for bowing down to it.” There is even a Midrash that attempts to justify the zodiac phenomenon: “The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him [Abraham]: just as the zodiac [mazalot] surrounds me, and my glory is in the centre, so shall your descendants multiply and camp under many flags, with my shekhina in the centre.”

7 From a Geniza manuscript of JT Avoda Zarah
8 In the Pseudo-Jonathan Targum to Lev. 26:1
How this imagery should be understood is still debated in scholarship. It is not likely that it should be understood as “astrology” but rather as “astronomy” in the scientific sense. With the twelve Zodiac signs representing the twelve tribes. The earliest mosaics are dated to 200 CE but they obviously portray the outworking of oral tradition that existed in a stream of Judaism from a much earlier period. The Zodiac has ancient origins going back to Egypt, Sumer, Babylon and Greece. The Sumerians called the twelve major zodiacal constellations the “Shiny herd”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sumerian</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Modern Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GUAN.NA</td>
<td>Heavenly Bull</td>
<td>Taurus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASH.TAB.BA</td>
<td>Twins</td>
<td>Gemini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUB</td>
<td>Pincers, Tongs</td>
<td>Cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UR.GULA</td>
<td>Lion</td>
<td>Leo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSIN</td>
<td>Her father was Sin</td>
<td>Virgo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZI.BA.AN.NA</td>
<td>Heavenly Fate</td>
<td>Libra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIR.TAB</td>
<td>Which claws and cuts</td>
<td>Scorpio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.ABIL (Archer)</td>
<td>Defender</td>
<td>Sagittarius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUHUR.MASH</td>
<td>Goat-Fish</td>
<td>Capricorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GU</td>
<td>Land of the waters</td>
<td>Aquarius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIM.MAH</td>
<td>Fishes</td>
<td>Pisces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KUMAL</td>
<td>Field dweller</td>
<td>Aries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Zodiac is probably very ancient as the 17,000 year old Lascaux cave painting (France) corresponds to stars in the main constellations as they appeared in the Palaeolithic era and is thought to depict Taurus the bull and the Pleiades (seven stars).
The Dendera Zodiac from Egypt dated to 50 BCE through an examination of the configuration as it shows of the five planets known to the Egyptians, a configuration that occurs once every thousand years, and the identification of two eclipses. Reconstructed with original colours:

Knowledge of the stars and the Zodiac was therefore prolific and cross-cultural in ancient times.
The Camp of Israel and the Zodiac

The order of the camp of Israel is described in Numbers 2 and each tribe was represented by an emblem or flag.

The arrangement of the tribes into “four camps” around the Tabernacle is thought to be connected with the four-faces of the cherubim and the four “fixed signs” of the Zodiac. Each group was to “camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father’s house” (Num. 2.2). The word for his own standard is דִּגְל [diglô], means “to put up the flag” and is used of “a troop with banners.” It is derived from the word דָגַל [dāgal] meaning look, behold. The standards provided a visual rallying symbol for each camp when stationary and on the move (Num. 2.2-3, 10, 17-18, 25, 31, 34; 10.14, 18, 22, 25). Ensign is אוֹת [ʾôt] “This is the general word for ‘sign,’ and it covers the entire range of the English term and the Greek word σήμειον. On the pedestrian end of the scale it includes what amounts to a ‘signboard’ or ‘standard’ (Num 2.2). It also includes such important concepts as the rainbow ‘sign’ to Noah (Gen. 9:12-13, 17).”

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12 Ibid.
Neither the Mosaic Law, nor the Old Testament generally, gives us any intimation as to the form or character of the standard (degel). According to rabbinical tradition, the standard of Judah bore the figure of a lion, that of Reuben the likeness of a man or of a man’s head, that of Ephraim the figure of an ox, and that of Dan the figure of an eagle; so that the four living creatures united in the cherubic forms described by Ezekiel were represented upon these four standards.\textsuperscript{13} The Jewish writers tell us, that the standard of each tribe of Israel took the colour of the stone which represented it in the high priest’s breastplate, and that there was wrought upon each a particular figure—a lion for Judah, a young ox for Ephraim, a man for Reuben, and an eagle for Dan.\textsuperscript{14} In the Targums\textsuperscript{15} of Numbers 2, the tribes are listed in the direction of motion of the sun, starting with the tribes under Judah on the East, and proceeding through the Reuben tribes on the South, then the Ephraim tribes on the West and finally the Dan tribes on the North.

**Tribal layout and the blessings of Genesis 49**

The underlying Zodiac layout of the camp of Israel can be reconstructed by comparing the camp layout with the blessings of Gen 49 (and Deut 33).\textsuperscript{16} Confusion exists in many of the proposed schemas and this is caused by a failure to correctly interpret the blessings or/and by a failure to recognise subsequent substitutions. By that we mean that the zodiac order (reflected in the camp layout) is the original order and this is sometimes disrupted in the blessings when a different “sign” (constellation) is given which is more pertinent to the prophetically revealed character of the tribe. In other words the Zodiac is the ideal and the blessings sometimes show deviation from the norm. The problem is that the camp layout was revealed to Moses long after the blessing bestowed by Jacob in Gen 49. However, the original identification of the tribes with the twelve constellations must have preceded Jacob’s blessings as indicated by Joseph’s dream – the blessings were therefore an innovation necessitated by the revealed characters of the brothers.

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\textsuperscript{13} Keil, Commentary on the Old Testament, 1:660.

\textsuperscript{14} J. A. Seiss, The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), 106

\textsuperscript{15} J. W. Etheridge, The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch, (1862, 1865). Online @ [HYPERLINK ”http://juchre.org/targums/targums.htm”] [Retrieved June 2017]. Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel, a pupil of Hillel, a doctor of the Law at Jerusalem in the time of King Herod. Its overall style is very similar to that of Targum Onkelos, though at times it seems to be a looser paraphrase. Although Targum Jonathan was composed in antiquity (probably in the 2nd Century CE) it is now known only from medieval manuscripts, which contain many textual variants. Even later tradition (Sefer ha-Zikhronot of Elazar ben Levi, ca. 1325 CE) has the tribes in camp order, with breastplate stones and star-signs.

\textsuperscript{16} See the digression on the Tribal Blessings.
The four faces of the cherubim reflect the four “fixed signs” of the Zodiac. These are the most reliable and the easiest to reconstruct. Even so, misunderstanding reigns by confusing the sign of Reuben with that of Ephraim.

Reuben is often identified with Aquarius (the water sign), as Reuben is “unstable as water” (Gen 49.4) and Ephraim is identified with Taurus (the bull), “horns like horns of wild bulls” (Deut 33.17). However, the theme behind the blessing of Reuben is power and strength with Reuben being the firstborn. The metaphor of a young bull usurping the mating rights of the dominant bull (Jacob) indicates that Reuben is “Taurus”. Furthermore, although Ephraim would be like “the firstling of his bullock” (Deut 33.17), the overriding theme of the Joseph blessing is “fruitfulness” --- euphemistically depicted as a man pouring out water (seed) depicted by Aquarius. The blessing of Balaam is enlightening in this context:

**Numbers 24:5-7** How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! 6 As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. 7 He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

We are not informed which tribe is depicted but there is a clear analogy between pouring water out of a vessel (Aquarius) and seed. The tribes are depicted here as camping on either side of a river and this is the “celestial river” or the “milky way” which dissects the twelve constellations (twelve trees). Similar imagery is picked up in Rev 22:2 “…on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits…” As Joseph receives the superlative double blessing of fruitfulness that is directly associated with the divine title El Shadday, it can confidently be stated that the tribe is Ephraim (whose name means fruitful). The Jewish Targums have therefore confused the issue – Ephraim is represented by the man pouring water (Aquarius) and Reuben by a bull (Taurus). The blessing of Balaam continues;

**NKJ Numbers 24:8** God brings him out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox; He shall consume the nations, his enemies; He shall break their bones And pierce them with his arrows.
This is the tribe of Reuben, where strength and power are emphasised – he is “Taurus” the “wild ox” (not Ephraim) who challenged the authority of the dominant bull (Jacob) in the same way that the nation did at the golden calf incident. Finally Balaam alludes to the tribe of Judah;

**KJV Numbers 24:9** He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.

In Jacob’s blessing Judah is called “a lion’s whelp” (Gen 49.9) the Zodiac constellation is “Leo”. In the same blessing the tribe of Dan is called a “serpent” a constellation found in Scorpio (Gen 49.7) because in its subsequent history the tribe would be the first to commit idolatry in the land and for that reason it is not found amongst the sealed tribes of Rev 7. However, the “serpent” can hardly have been the original ensign associated in the wilderness with the tribe of Dan and coincidentally (sic) we discover that the eagle is adjacent to the serpent in the constellation.17 The heavenly throne is depicted as situated at the centre of the “four faces” (with Scorpio substituted by the eagle). Thus the four faces of the cherubim are reflected in the four fixed signs of the Zodiac constellation and this is confirmed by the ascendency of the house constellation.

**The ascendant house constellation**

This is concerned with which “house” the sun resides in. It seems that for thousands of years the ancients were aware of the different equinoxes18 delineating the seasons and they would note what star sign (at night) was present at the time of the equinox. Therefore the sun was in a certain “house” (sign) and observation over time showed that the sun “moved” into another house. Of course, we know that the sun does not move; the phenomenon is caused because the earth “wobbles” like a spinning top around its axis and this “wobble” (precession) has a period of 25,925 years which means that every 2, 160 years (25,925/12) the sun “moves” into a different sign.

17 Serpens (“the Serpent”, Greek Ὄφις) is a constellation of the northern hemisphere. *Serpent*, is a northern constellation sitting above constellation *Scorpio*. One of the 48 constellations listed by the 2nd-century astronomer Ptolemy; part of the Milky Way's galactic plane passes through Serpens Cauda, which is therefore rich in galactic deep-sky objects, such as the Eagle Nebula. The head is marked by the noticeable group iota, kappa, gamma, phi, nu, rho, and the eight little stars all lettered tau, and consecutively numbered, 10° south from the Crown and 20° due east from Arcturus; the figure line thence winding southwards 15° to Libra, and turning to the southeast and northeast along the western edge of the Milky Way, terminating at its star theta, 8° south of the tail of *the Eagle* (*Aquila*) and west of that constellation's delta. Therefore the first decan of the constellation Scorpio introduces the most ancient symbol of wickedness — the serpent.

So every two thousand years or so the sun enters a different “sign” because a different part of the night sky is seen at the equinox; this is obviously not precise as the constellations are not evenly spaced and sometimes the sun is caught between two signs for a period as it “transitions” (so much for “astrology”). However, the ancients saw this as heralding different “eras”.

Over the last 26,000 years the night sky would have seen the following signs at the equinoxes:

In approx 2,000 BCE the Ascendant House Constellation was Taurus, and Reuben is therefore assigned the sign of Taurus. The following is a list of constellations and their rulers beginning with Taurus as the Ascendant House Ruler suggest by Dobbin¹⁹ –:

¹⁹ Rabbi Joel C. Dobin, Kabbalistic Astrology: The Sacred Tradition of the Hebrew Sages (Inner Traditions International, Canada, 1999), 34
It is interesting to note that the sun was in the “house” of the bull (Taurus) from about 4,000 to 2,000 BCE – the period traditionally assigned to the patriarchs and Moses. This approach has correctly identified Reuben, Judah and Dan but Naphtali in the above schema is not Aquarius. The schema is wrong because Joseph is not a tribe but is substituted by Ephraim and Manasseh. Moreover, the tribal order should rely on the camp layout not on the blessing sequence. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that three of the fixed signs still identify correctly.

Completing the sequence

With the four fixed signs correctly identified it is possible to reconstruct the remaining sequence although a measure of uncertainty remains. This is achieved by a process of elimination and by using the blessings as a guide while keeping with the original camp layout system. The blessings have been identified with the following constellations -- Reuben is the celestial bull Taurus, powerful and strong – the firstborn who will not excel; and he is adjacent to Aquarius, his ensign being a man – the “ten thousands of Ephraim” the fruitful one pouring out his seed in abundance. The Lion (Leo) is the sign of Judah, the king of beasts, the sign of royalty. Dan, (the serpent) in place of the venomous serpent (Serpens) in Scorpio substituted with the adjacent sign of the Eagle --- the sign of renewal and resurrection.\(^{20}\) The tribe of Dan (God judges/vindicates) had the weakest and strongest judge in the person of Samson typifying the worst and best characteristics (serpent/eagle) of the tribe. The Ram (Aires), house of Mars, chief of the Celestial Troop and of the twelve Signs, is the house of Gad, whom Jacob characterizes as a warrior, chief of his army. Cancer, in which are the stars termed Aselli, or little asses, is the sign of the flag of Issachar, whom Jacob compares to an ass. Asher (Libra) for its bounty and “fatness” and Naphtali is Sagittarius the gazelle set free from his wrestling, whose eloquence and agility Jacob magnifies. And the Gemini “twins” for the brothers Simeon and Levi united in purpose and destiny (often for the worse).

\(^{20}\) Isaiah 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.
Benjamin is Pisces – symbolised by two fish denoting Benjamin’s duality – at the same time a son of sorrow and a son of the right hand. Yet in the “blessing” of Jacob, Benjamin is associated with the “wolf” anticipating the incident at Gibeah and represented by Lupus (Latin for wolf) which does not lie in Pisces\textsuperscript{21} demonstrating that the natural order of the zodiac was sometimes modified to accommodate the prophetic blessing. Zebulun is identified by a process of elimination with Virgo and Manasseh with Capricorn. The constellation of Virgo houses a star with the meaning “child of the waters”\textsuperscript{22} and this reflects Zebulun dwelling by the shore of the sea. Manasseh’s association with Capricorn is enigmatic as it is one of the oldest constellations depicted as a hybrid goat with a fish tail. There seems to be no connection with Manasseh, however the stars that form the tail of the fish are named Al Muhanaim in Arabic (the two bending stars)\textsuperscript{23} and this resembles the Hebrew “Mahanaim” (two camps) of Gen 32.2 \textsuperscript{24} and may reflect Manasseh being the only tribe with two allotments of land on the east and west banks of the Jordan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>Tribal arrangement</th>
<th>Blessings Gen 49/Deut 33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aries:</td>
<td>Gad</td>
<td>Troop (army)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taurus:</td>
<td>Reuben</td>
<td>Bull=strength/Excellency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gemini:</td>
<td>Simeon</td>
<td>Twined=joined\textsuperscript{25}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer:</td>
<td>Issachar</td>
<td>Ass=beast of burden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo:</td>
<td>Judah</td>
<td>Lion=royalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgo:</td>
<td>Zebulun</td>
<td>Zebulun=Child of the waters?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libra:</td>
<td>Asher</td>
<td>Bounty/abundance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scorpio:</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Serpent substituted by Eagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagittarius:</td>
<td>Naphtali</td>
<td>Gazelle or running stag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capricorn:</td>
<td>Manasseh</td>
<td>Two camps?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquarius:</td>
<td>Ephraim</td>
<td>Seed pouring out/fruitful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pisces:</td>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td>Duality/symmetry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{21} Lupus is bordered by six different constellations, although one of them (Hydra) merely touches at the corner. The other five are Scorpius (the scorpion), Norma (the right angle), Circinus (the compass), Libra (the balance scale), and Centaurus (the centaur).

\textsuperscript{22} Moderns have no name for it, but in the Sūrya Siddhānta (ancient India) it was Apami-Atsa, the Child of the Waters and perhaps this was derived from the A.N.E.

\textsuperscript{23} Ideler said that these stars were Al Muḥibbain, the Two Friends, an Arabic allegorical title for any two closely associated objects; but Beigel differed with him as to this, and wrote it Al Muhanaim, the Two Bending Stars, — in the flexure of the tail, — for ”moral beings are foreign to the nomad sky.”

\textsuperscript{24} In Gen 32 the two camps are either Jacob/angels or the split of Jacob’s family into two divisions or perhaps the camp of Jacob and of Esau – the text is deliberately ambiguous and may refer to all the mentioned options.

\textsuperscript{25} Levi was spread all around the tabernacle
Although Joseph is not a tribe (represented by Ephraim and Manasseh); the blessing of Joseph refers to arrows (Sagitta),\textsuperscript{26} branches (Spica),\textsuperscript{27} and a crown (Corona Borealis),\textsuperscript{28} cf. “who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above” (Gen 49.25).

Jewish folklore describes the encampment of the tribes in the desert as forming a Star of David, twelve focal points being connected one to another, and all of these arranged around a central, thirteenth, focus--the Tabernacle and the tribe of Levi ministering the sacred service.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{26} Sagitta in Capricorn is a dim but distinctive constellation in the northern sky. Its name is Latin for “arrow” or it might be represented by Orion a gigantic, supernaturally strong hunter of ancient times (Nimrod). In the centre of Orion lie the three stars of Orion’s Belt—Alnitak, Alnilam and Mintaka cf. Job 38.31 (“Can you loosen Orion’s belt?”).

\textsuperscript{27} The binary star Spica is the brightest star in the constellation of Virgo. Spica derives from Latin spīca virginis “the virgin’s ear” of [wheat] grain often referred to as the virgins “branch”.

\textsuperscript{28} It was the only stellar crown known to Eratosthenes and the early Greeks they called it Stephanos. The Arabs called the constellation Alphecca (a name later given to Alpha Coronae Borealis), which means “separated” or “broken up” a reference to the resemblance of the stars of Corona Borealis to a loose string of jewels, cf. \textit{Genesis} 49:26—“and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren”.

\textsuperscript{29} T. Nussblat, \textit{Der Mogen David Ufstamm, Yalkut ha-Moadim - Unsere Yomim Tovim} (ed., Z. Y. Rabinowitz), Buenos Aires, 1942, 1131-1140.
Conclusion

Some of the reconstructions are perhaps speculative but it is nevertheless obvious that the twelve tribes and the four faces of the cherubim are related. The prophet Isaiah (66.1) says that heaven is Yahweh’s throne and the earth is his footstool which is used in 1 Chron. 28.2 as a synonym for the Ark of the Covenant. Therefore, the twelve constellations (Zodiac) look towards the “footstool” (earth). In similar fashion the twelve tribes surround the Ark of the Covenant – it is a cosmological image of heaven descending to earth such as depicted at the end of the Apocalypse with the descent of the heavenly New Jerusalem and the “river” with twelve trees on either side. It represents the realization of the divine will being performed on earth “as it is in heaven” --- where God dwells in the midst of his people. The twelve tribes of Israel typified this principle in their camp arrangement and in their blessings. The cherubim faces typify the “living creatures” looking towards the glory residing on the mercy seat. The constellations are not objects of worship but the purpose of God is writ large in the “book of nature” and the lore of the stars has been demythologized to teach Israel an object lesson about their destiny. No matter what stories or superstitions man has attached to the stars it is Yahweh who “counts the number of the stars and calls them all by name” (Ps 147.4).
Babylonian Rabbanism

It is instructive to examine the role that Babylon played qua the Jewish people in the post-exilic period. In order to accomplish this recourse will be made to historical data, which is a valid undertaking as long as it is supplementary to intertextual study. The already/not yet format points to the characteristic short term/long term dualistic fulfilment of prophecy, indicating that prophets (and people) expected a short term (almost immediate) primary outworking. This was necessary in order to establish the prophet’s credentials. However, the short term (already) outworking did not make the prophecy redundant – instead it establishes a pattern, a prism through which the long term (not yet) accomplishment can be viewed. Such a prophecy, concerned with the return from Babylonian exile, is Zechariah 5 which relates to wickedness in Shinar (Babylon).

Zechariah 5

The visions in Zechariah 1-8 were probably received between 518 and 516 BC and are set during the return from Babylonian exile – the reestablishment or worship and rebuilding of the temple are the background to these chapters. Andrew Perry¹ understands the vision in Zechariah 5 concerning the ephah transported to Shinar as describing resistance to the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple such as the challenge issued by Tatnai et al (Ezra 5.6) who probably sent delegations to Babylon.² The two unclean women with stalk wings represent two cities that wanted to retain their cultic duopoly and resented religious centralization in Jerusalem. Opponents such as Sanballat (best known from the Book of Nehemiah) were one of the chief opponents of the Jewish governor Nehemiah during the latter’s efforts to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and carrying out his reforms among the Jews. In Jewish tradition, he was called “the Horonite,” (another possible “the Harranite”) and was associated with Tobiah the Ammonite and Geshem the Arabian. His home was evidently at Samaria. There was also a petition to Bagoas the Persian governor of Judea (Sayce-Cowley collection) in a letter written in 407 appealing for assistance in rebuilding the Jewish temple in Elephantine (Egypt), which had recently been badly damaged. The Elephantine community also appealed for aid to Sanballat I (the Samaritan potentate), and his sons Delaiah and Shelemiah, as well as Johanan ben Eliashib (both Sanballat and Johanan are mentioned in the Book of Nehemiah, 2.19, 12.23).

² The appeal was probably sent to the Persian king Darius I (Darius the Great 522-486) who established a new capital in Persepolis. Administration of the Achaemenian Empire was overseen from Susa, from Babylon or from Ecbatana during the cold seasons and it was most likely for this reason that the Greeks never knew of Parsa until it was sacked and looted by Alexander the Great in 330 BC.
It is therefore entirely feasible that the two unclean women represent the resistance of rival city-temples such as those situated at Samaria and Elephantine. According to Perry the “base” (wickedness) established in Babylon by the two women symbolises the diplomatic pressure brought to bear to thwart the building of the Jerusalem temple. Their attempt to sabotage the rebuilding efforts was cursed by the “flying scroll” and would ultimately fail. This can be understood as the already or first fulfilment of the vision but application of the vision is by no means complete as it is reapplied by Jesus during his ministry (ca.30-33 AD).

**Not yet/long term fulfilment**

The Hebrew word used in Zechariah 5 for “establish” and “base” is closely related to the Jerusalem temple. The ephah with its lead cover and two women with stalk wings is a parody of the cherubim of Ark of the Covenant which contained within the law tablets – instead this “ark” contains “lawlessness” and is established at Shinar (Babylon). Jesus’ condemnation of temple worship and his warning concerning the coming destruction (not yet) of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70 alludes to the vision of the ephah transported to Shinar:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zechariah 5</th>
<th>Matthew 21-24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.4: The house of the thief</strong></td>
<td>A den of thieves (21.13).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stealing (23.23-25).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corban (Mark 7.11).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.3: Swearing</strong></td>
<td>Swearing (23.16-22).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v.4: Timber and stones of the house consumed</strong></td>
<td>Your house left desolate (23.28).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not one stone upon another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(24.1-3).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the synoptic accounts Jesus’ alludes to the scapegoat wandering in “dry places” and returning from exile in a worse state than before expulsion. This in fact describes the state of the nation after the return from Babylonian exile. The nation (typified by Legion) was wearing the chains of Roman occupation, was ritually impure, and was driven completely insane by exacting “law keeping” (traditions of men) and feared further exile or extinction (John 11.49-52). The nation had in fact never left Babylon.

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From Pharisaism to Rabbinism

“There is one who accuses you, even Moses.... And if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe my words?” (John 5:45-47). Showing that they only made pretence of following Moses, Jesus reproved them, saying, “Did not Moses give you the Law, and [yet] not one of you is [genuinely] practicing the Law?” (John 7:19). Moreover, on several occasions Christ upbraided the Pharisees for “teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.” He said, “Full well do you reject the commandment of God, so that you may observe your own tradition” (Mark 7:7-9; also Matt. 15:3).

The famous Jewish Rabbi, Louis Finklestein, in the foreword to his book The Pharisees: The Social Background of Their Faith, said: “... Judaism ... Pharisaism became Talmudism, Talmudism became Medieval Rabbinism and Medieval Rabbinism became Modern Rabbinism. But through all these changes in name ... the spirit of the ancient Pharisees survived unaltered ... From Palestine, to Babylonia; from Babylonia to North Africa, Italy, Spain, France and Germany; from there to Poland, Russia, and Eastern Europe generally, ancient Pharisaism has wandered ...”

Judaism traces its origin directly to the dominant sect of the Pharisees. “The Jewish religion as it is today traces its descent, without a break, through all the centuries, from the Pharisees [with their scribal leaders]. Their leading ideas and methods found expression in a [mass of] literature of enormous extent, of which a very great deal is still in existence [as the Talmud]”.

(Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, “Pharisees,” p.474; emphasis added)

Robinson writes that the Pharisees were the “foremost exponents of the idea of the Oral Torah, which would [by about 500 AD] become the Talmud, as an adjunct to the Written Torah.” Through their oral law, the Pharisees “brought the [ritual] purity laws, [which] previously applied only to the priestly caste, into the Jewish home [and established] boundaries of behaviour, setting themselves apart from the general Jewish population in areas as diverse as food, dress, commerce, marriage and worship” (pp. 320-321).

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4 Information in this paragraph is a summary from Philip Neal, Judaism-Revelation of Moses or Religion of Men? (York Publishing Company, 2010); recommended; available as a PDF download
In a rather telling comment, historian Paul Johnson writes that there “have been four great formative periods in Jewish history: under Abraham, under Moses, during and shortly after the Exile, and after the destruction of the Second Temple. The first two [under Abraham, then Moses] produced the religion of Yahweh”—that is, the true way of life defined by God's laws and commandments—” the second two developed and refined it into Judaism itself” (A History of the Jews, pp. 83-84; emphasis added). Johnson admits here that Judaism dates from the time just after the Babylonian Exile, and differs from what he calls the original “religion of Yahweh” formed under Abraham and Moses.

With a similar perspective, American rabbinical scholar Stephen S. Wise has stated, “The [Jews'] return from Babylon ..... [marked] the end of Hebrew-ism and the beginning of Judaism” (The Other End of the World, Roger Rusk, p. 182).

Ernest L. Martin, widely recognized for his scholarly research on Judaism, writes: “History shows—and the Jews themselves admit—that their religion had drifted far away from the simple doctrines of Scripture, commonly called the 'Old Testament.' The Jews had modified God's law and even instituted laws and commandments of their own which were, in many instances, diametrically opposite of the precepts of Moses” (Is Judaism the Religion of Moses?, p. 1; emphasis added).

In Exploring the World of the Jew, John Phillips writes that while Jewish life had for centuries revolved around the written Torah, by the first century AD the Law had been “buried beneath vast accumulations of tradition and encrusted with enormous deposits of human interpretation. The Torah itself has been largely superseded in Judaism by the Talmud. The five books of the Torah can be written out in 350 pages. The Talmud takes up 523 books printed in 22 volumes” (p. 55; emphasis added).

Phillips adds: “The Torah is clear and concise, part of the inspired Word of God. The Talmud is wordy, rambling, argumentative, inconsistent, sometimes witty, sometimes boring, sometimes brilliant, sometimes inane. The laws of the Talmud constitute cold concrete poured over Jewish life and hardened by time into a rigid prison for the soul.... [For the Jew] the chief instrument of ..... blindness to biblical truth has been the Talmud” (pp. 55 and 57; emphasis added).
Michael Hoffman has spent decades researching the Jews' religion. He concludes that “everything about Orthodox Judaism is either a distortion or a falsification of the Old Testament because it is based on .... traditions that void the Old Testament.....” (Judaism Discovered, p. 145). Jesus Himself noted that the Jews' orally-derived traditions had a nullifying effect on the Scriptures (Mark 7:13). Arguing that Judaism only poses as the “religion” of Moses, Hoffman adds: “Talmudic texts can be minefields of deception and pits of derangement and bogus reasoning, as befits those who would replace the Bible with their own authority. Most of the laws of the religion of Judaism have no biblical warrant; they contradict and nullify the Word of God”. (p. 146; emphasis added) Indeed, Judaism's predecessors had to violate the Scriptures in order to reject Jesus—for the Scriptures testified of Him as the Messiah (John 5:39).

Rabbinism in the period 70CE -200 CE

In the period 70-200 CE Babylonia had not yet emerged as a competitor to Palestine for pre-eminence in the rabbinic world of late antiquity. Babylonia emerges as a major competitor only during the Amoraic period which refers to the Jewish scholars of the period from about 200 to 500 CE, who “said” or “told over” the teachings of the Oral Torah. The period that is of interest to us is the generation of Bar Kokhba’s revolt (3rd generation of Tannaim). The Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10-220 CE. The Tannaim lived in several areas of the Land of Israel and the third generation represents the generation of Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues.

Jacob Neusner observes, “Before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 c.e., Babylonian Jewry may have had academies and learned men, but to our knowledge contemporary Tannaitic Judaism in Palestine was represented in the east only by Judah b. Bathya (I) in Nisibis and Nehemiah of Bet Deli in Nehardea. It is entirely possible that Palestinian Tannaim such as Hillel and Nahum the Mede came from Parthia, but, as has been noted, we have no information about any education they may have received before migrating to Jerusalem. Between 70 and the Bar Kokhba war, Hananiah the nephew of Rabbi Joshua and Judah ben Bathya (II) were the only Tannaim in Babylonia who are known to us. The real beginnings of the movement, therefore, date from the Bar Kokhba war, when numerous Palestinian Tannaim were forced to flee the country because of the war and consequent danger to their lives...Between 70 and the bar Kokhba war, Hananiah the nephew of Rabbi Joshua and Judah ben Bathya (II) were the only Tannaim in Babylonia who are known to us.
The real beginnings of the movement, therefore, date from the Bar Kokhba war, when numerous Palestinian Tannaim were forced to flee the country because of the war and consequent danger to their lives. Two groups fled to the east. The students of Rabbi Akiba went to Nisibis, where they remained for a time with R. Judah b. Bathyra (II) before returning to Palestine after the cessation of the war and subsequent pacification of the country. The students of Rabbi Ishmael went to Hual, where they settled permanently. During the time of Rabbi Judah the Prince, several Tannaim came to Palestine from Babylonia, having already received part of their education at home, and by the end of the Tannaitic period, as we shall see, Babylonia contained several resident Tannaitic teachers and at least one permanent academy.”

However, until the Bar Kochba War the Palestinian Rabbi’s remained dominant, particularly in the region of Galilee (where Jesus cast out the unclean spirit of Legion into the Abyss), even after the last revolt Palestinian Rabbi’s remained influential, but their influence gradually waned and was overtaken by Babylonian academies of Torah learning. The entry in the ISBE states that, “Since Josephus was a general of Jewish forces located in “both Galilees” (BJ ii.20.4 [568]), we could easily lose our objective if we were to track down his many references. Furthermore, for this article it would serve no useful purpose. Suffice it to say that Vespasian quickly conquered Galilee, taking Josephus prisoner in the process. Jotapata, Sepphoris, and Gischala were already important Jewish cities. After the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, the religion of the Jews might have come to an end. But Johanan ben Zakkai escaped from Jerusalem, according to tradition smuggling a copy of the Holy Scriptures with him, and obtained permission from Vespasian to set up an academy at Jabneh (Jamnia, the OT Jabneel in the Sharon plain). He organized a Beth Din to take the place of the Sanhedrin, which had ceased to exist. After the defeat of Bar Cochba in a.d. 135 the council moved to Sikhnin N of Jotapata, and due to the persecution under Hadrian other schools that had developed moved to Galilee, with locations at Usha, Peqi’in, Sepphoris, Beth-shearm, and Tiberias. Galilee thenceforth became a strong center of Judaism. The teachings of the Tannaim were gathered, the codification of the Mishnah was accomplished by Judah ha–Naši, and the traditional pronunciation of the Hebrew Bible was preserved by the Tiberian masoretic pointing. Thus the foundations of modern Judaism were securely laid — in Galilee of the Gentiles.”

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Schiffman summarises, “As if history were repeating itself, recovery and the reinstitution of Jewish self-government ensued once again. With the accession of the emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161 C.E.), virtually all of Hadrian’s decrees were rescinded. The patriarchate and the high court were reconstituted at Usha, in the Galilee. Indeed, the two revolts contributed greatly to encouraging the Jewish population of Palestine to move from Judea to the north, settling primarily in the Galilee. Under Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel II, (first half of the second century c.E.) and later under Rabbi Judah the Prince (latter half of the second and beginning of the third century c.E.), the editor of the Mishnah, the patriarchate and the other institutions of the Jewish community reached their height. Taxes poured into the patriarchal coffers even from the Diaspora, where the emissaries of the rabbis of Palestine attempted to foster the spread of tannaitic Judaism. …

Cohen says, “The center of Jewish life moved from Judea to towns and villages in Galilee that had survived the war unscathed. … With the emergence of Galilee as a major center of Jewish life, the rabbinic leaders also moved there. From places like Yavneh and Lydda in Judea, they migrated north. Indeed, the first rabbinic literary works were redacted (that is, compiled and edited) in Galilee, not Judea.”

Rabbi Akiva lived from ca. 50CE to 136 CE in the Tannaic period. This makes R. Akiva a contemporary of the apostles. During this period Palestinian Rabbi’s still had supremacy over their Babylonian counterparts although travel ensured exchange of knowledge and influence between Palestinian and Babylonian Tanaím. The Sifre Deuteronomy (and other tannaitic literature) uses the word (u) kevar to introduce accounts of rabbis gathering or travelling together (sections 38, 43, 118). Catherine Hezser states that, “It seems that at least some segments of the Jewish population of Roman Palestine and Sasanian Babylonia were quite mobile. Rabbinic scholars’ mobility seems to have increased from tannaitic to amoraic times. Rabbinic narratives present rabbis as travelling within the Land of Israel and — less often — to Diaspora locations such as Syria, Egypt, Babylonia and Rome….In Judaism the development from a centralized to a decentralized system was mainly brought about by the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, that is, the loss of the central holy place.

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What remained and even increased in significance was the Torah and its study and application to daily life. This practice united post-70 scholars at various locales. The exchange of halakhic knowledge enabled them to become aware of each other and see themselves as part of a movement. This exchange was possible on the basis of mutual visits and hospitality only⁹.

**Rabbi Akiva (Akiba)**

Rabbi Akiva journeyed from Israel to Nehardea¹⁰ and as far as Gazaka in Medes and visited the exilarch.¹¹ The Jewish Encyclopedia comments, “Rabbi Akiba's journeys to Nehardea (Yeb., end) and Gazaka (Gen. R. xxxiii.5) were undoubtedly connected with preparations for revolt (Rapoport, in “Bikkure ha-'Ittim,” 1823, p. 70), and it is a fact that Jews of the Diaspora enrolled themselves under Bar Kokba (“Gola,” in Saadia ibn Danan, in “Pe'er ha-Dor,” No. 225).¹²

Holtz sums up Akiva’s foundational importance to Judaism as follows; “As important as these early sages were, I suspect that if today you asked someone with even a moderate connection to Judaism to name one rabbi from ancient times, it is unlikely that he or she would come up with any name aside from Akiva...He is the interpreter of Torah so acute that every detail of the text holds secret meanings. If he was not the very first to push interpretation to such heights, he surely was one of the first, and he is certainly the most well-known and imaginative. He becomes the model for Jewish intellectual creativity, at least in its religious form, for almost two thousand years. More than that, Akiva is the teacher par excellence, the image of what it means to be a rabbi. And, finally, in the manner of his dying -tortured to death by the Roman authorities for his insistence on teaching Torah in public - he became the model for the rest of Jewish history of what it means to be a martyr".¹³

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⁹ Catherine Hezser, Jewish Travel in Antiquity, (Mohr Siebeck,2011),113

¹⁰ Nehardea or Nehardeah was a city of Babylonia, situated at or near the junction of the Euphrates with the Nahr Malka. As the seat of the exilarch it traced its origin back to King Jehoiachin. It became one of the earliest centres of Babylonian Judaism


¹³ Barry W. Holtz, Rabbi Akiva: Sage of the Talmud, (Yale University Press, 2017),p., 3-4
The situation in Shinar (Babylon)

It is important to examine the post-exilic history of the Jewish Diaspora in Babylon. In the first century AD, Judea, and those who lived there who had become known as Jews, were under Roman control, and Babylonia was a province in the Persian (Iranian) Empire. But the day-to-day governing of the Jewish people was left in the hands of a Jewish authority who, when holding the title, was called the *exilarch*. The Greek term has continued to be applied to the position, notwithstanding changes to the position over time, which was at most times purely honorific. The origin of this dignity is not known, but the princely post was hereditary in a family that traced its descent from the royal Davidic line. It was recognized by the state and carried with it certain prerogatives. This meant he was the ruler of the Jewish community while they were in exile from the Holy Land. He was recognized by the Parthians and the Romans because he served the purposes of Rome.

Not everyone accepted the authority of the “sages” and the Babylonian Talmud – the Jewish Karaites sect is distinct from mainstream Rabbinic Judaism, which considers the Oral Torah, as codified in the Talmud and subsequent works, to be authoritative interpretations of the Torah. Karaites maintain that all of the divine commandments handed down to Moses by God were recorded in the written Torah (Old Testament) without additional Oral Law or explanation. As a result, Karaite Jews do not accept as binding the written collections of the oral tradition in the Midrash or the Babylonian Talmud.

Meira Polliack concludes; - In sum: the Karaites attempted to redefine the Jewish canon and reform Jewish religious practice by reviving the unhindered, direct, and individual study of the Hebrew Bible, and by rejecting the interpretive authority of oral tradition, as codified in the Mishnah, Talmud, and midrashim. A balanced expression of their ‘credo’ is reflected in the

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14 Rome never conquered Parthia and diaspora Jews who never returned home after the exile made Babylon their base establishing religious academies that rivalled and eventually superseded the Palestinian schools. See the maps appended to the article from Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Atlas of Jewish History, (Routledge:NY, 1994),62-63


16 Gill traces the Karaite sect to the split between the schools of Hillel the Elder and Shammai in 30 BCE. Gill noted that in the times of John Hyrcanus, and Alexander Janneus his son, sprung up the sect of the Karaites, in opposition to the Pharisees, who had introduced traditions, and set up the oral law, which these men rejected. In the times of the said princes lived Simeon ben Shetach, and Judah ben Tabbai, who flourished AM 3621. These two separated, the latter from the former, because he could not embrace his inventions which he formed out of his own brain; and from him the Karaites sprung, who were first called the society or congregation of Judah ben Tabbai, which was afterwards changed into the name of Karaites. Gill, John. A Collection of Sermons and Tracts... To which are Prefixed, Memoirs of the Life, Writing, and Character of the Author, Volume 3. London: George Keith, (1778): 538-542, 529
commentary on Zechariah 5: 7-8, by the Karaite exegete Yefet ben Eli, who lived in Jerusalem during the second half of the tenth century. Yefet offers an allegorical reading of the prophet’s vision of a wicked woman who is thrust into the ‘ephah (= a container), which is then sealed by a leaden weight and carried to the land of Shin’ar, where its house will be built. The wicked woman entombed alive in the ‘ephah is interpreted as a complex symbol for rabbinic Judaism and its destiny:

And he [= the prophet] said: ‘This is wickedness’ [Zech. 5: 8] and he compared it (= the ‘ephah) to a wicked woman in order to demonstrate that they [the Rabbanites] are sinners before God, for they composed these [talmudic] books, and compelled the nation to believe in them and to act according to them, and condemned to death those who disagreed with them. They did not say: ‘so we reason and so it occurred to us and search yourselves O Israel as we have searched’. Had they done so, they would have been saved from the condemnation of the Lord of the Universe. For this is what ‘Anan did, who said: ‘search diligently in the Torah and do not rely on my opinion’ and Benjamin said in concluding his words: ‘I Benjamin am one of thousands and scores of thousands and am not a prophet (nor a) son of a prophet’ etc. So all the Karaite scholars used this method and established what appeared to them as the truth and encouraged people to search [= for themselves], so much that a man is entitled to disagree with his father and the father will not say to him: ‘why have you disagreed with me’ and a student with his Rabbi. This is why God forgave them when error befell some of their opinions, and they were absolved because they opened the eyes of men and brought them out of darkness into light. 17

Polliack18 comments, “The sayings reflect, therefore, the Karaite self-perception and historical consciousness, as it was consolidated during the tenth century. They are quoted in support of Yefet’s overall rebuke of the ‘sealing’ of the live, inquisitive, and open tradition in the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, and its replacement with what he sees as a fixed, transmitted tradition, whose ‘house’ (i.e. establishment) was installed in Babylonia”.

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18 Ibid, 315
Daniel Boyarin\textsuperscript{19} observes, “With the exile of Jeconia\textsuperscript{20} in 597 BC, the Jews took with them stones and sand from the destroyed Temple in Jerusalem and used them to build their synagogue in Babylonia. According to the Talmud, this synagogue was where the Shekhina\textsuperscript{21} dwelled in Babylonia. Babylon replaces Palestine, and this synagogue is the new Temple, albeit a reduced one, \textit{“The Synagogue that Slid and Settled”}\textsuperscript{22}, which, as Elhanan Reiner has pointed out, is not mere metaphor. A striking text from the late geonic period\textsuperscript{23} evinces this point in the context of an argument of one of the last geonim for maintaining the absolute primacy of the Babylonian centre over-against the new ones in the West, as figured in the story of the four captives […] ;

Several matters support this: The legacy of the parents is the merit of the ancestors [the parents leave to their children their own merits; that is, my illustrious ancestors render me worthy to be the leader of the Jews worldwide]. And also the place [where it is said] that the Shekhina removed to Babylonia provides support, as it is said: “For your sake, I sent to Babylonia” [ Isa. 43:14], and the Sages interpreted: Beloved is Israel that in any place to which they are removed, the Shekhina is with them. And now she is in Babylonia, standing on her foundation, as it is written: O Zion, save yourself, O dweller with the daughter of Babylon [Zech. 2:7=11, in Hebrew]. Behold the Talmud testifies to you [when it asks]: In Babylon, where is the Shekhina? Rav said, in the synagogue of Hutzal; and Shmuel said, in \textbf{the Synagogue That Slid and Settled in Nehardea}. And don’t say that it is [only] here or [only] there, but sometimes it is here and sometimes there. And there [in Babylon], the yeshiva is established to augment the Shekhina. They bless always also in the Synagogue the Prophet Ezekiel and Daniel the greatly beloved and Ezra the Scribe and Barukh ben Neriah and the rest of the Sages of the Talmud [all Babylonian Jewish luminaries], the memory of all of them for a blessing.


\textsuperscript{20} Jeconia, Jeconiah or Jehoiachin, according to the chronology of the exilarchate, the last of the Davidic kings of Judah mentioned in Jer.29.2

\textsuperscript{21} Shekinah, Shechinnah, or Schechinah (Biblical Hebrew: \textit{נשיה}), is the English transliteration of a Hebrew noun meaning "dwelling" or "settling" and denotes the dwelling or settling of the divine presence of God and his cosmic glory.

\textsuperscript{22} I have omitted the Hebrew in this citation and substituted Boyarin’s English translation of the Synagogue name

\textsuperscript{23} The period of the Geonim began in 589 CE (Hebrew date: 4349), after the period of the Sevora’im, and ended in 1038 (Hebrew date: 4798). The first gaon of Sura, according to Sherira Gaon, was Mar Rab Mar, who assumed office in 609.
One of the last of the geonim, the leaders of the Babylonian yeshivot,\(^24\) defends here the proposition that Babylonia is the Holy Land—that the Divine Presence, the Shekhina, came with them to Babylonia, settled there (like the synagogue itself), and established it as a new Holy Land. Zion is now in Babylon, and detaching from Babylon is detaching from the Holy Land. The proof from Zechariah is brilliant. Simply from the fact that “Zion” personified as the Shekhina is called “dweller with the Daughter of Babylon,” we see that the Shekhina moved with the Jews to that place and selection of Babylonian Jewish holy men going back to Ezekiel and Jeremiah’s scribe and forward to the men who produced the Talmud. In indicating that the Shekhina, the Divine Presence in the world, came with them to Babylonia and established herself in a holy place there, the Talmud and its Babylonian rabbinic tradents are reorienting our sense of what a diaspora is, providing us with a new conception of diaspora, transforming it in our conceptual apparatus from a contrast between centre and periphery, from homeland and exile, to a process of the establishment of ever-new centres and locating it in cultural practice—not ancient trauma or loss. It is the study—the yeshiva—that augments the presence of the Shekhina in Babylonia. The legend of the building of this synagogue out of actual sand and stones brought by Jeconia from the Temple in Jerusalem renders graphic the status of this building as a new Temple.” Boyarin also refers to Pirkoi’s argument\(^25\) based on Micah 4.10:

“We shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued; there the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies” [Mic. 4:10]. The redemption comes first to the yeshiva in Babylon, for just as Israel will be redeemed owing to their virtue, therefore shall the redemption come first to them; for this reason, it says, “There you shall be rescued; there the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.” (Text apud Brodie)

This remarkable utterance (extreme and controversial even in its day, to be sure) simply replaces the Land of Israel with Babylonia as Zion via a pun in which \textit{sion} (Zion) is read etymologically as the place of excellence (mešuyan). Moreover, it is the Talmud that is taught and studied in the yeshivot (talmudic academies) of Babylonia that confers this status on the place and on the community. It is the daughter of Zion who, according to the prophet, will go to Babylon and there shall she be rescued, there shall she be redeemed. Those Jews who stayed behind in Palestine will have to wait their turn for redemption, after the Jews of Babylonia, who are the reason for the redemption; because of their Talmud, which they have created and studied, they will be rescued and redeemed first.\(^{26}\) (emphasis mine)

\(^{24}\) yeshivot “sitting”; pl. \\כ\תי, yeshivot (or yeshivos) is a Jewish institution that focuses on the study of traditional religious texts, primarily the Talmud and Torah study. Study is usually done through daily shiurim (lectures or classes) and in study pairs called chavrutas (Aramaic for “friendship” or “companionship”).

\(^{25}\) Ibid, 45
The last point is the most extreme and controversial of Pirkoi’s argument. The Jews of late antiquity had built Jerusalem in Babylonia’s green and pleasant land; but for most, their orientation toward the old Zion was vital through all of late antiquity. Indeed, the same passages of the Talmud that tell us of the synagogue that had literally slid from the Holy Land to Babylonia, bringing the Shekhina with it, also informs us that all the synagogues of Babylonia will return (this time, for sure, miraculously) to Palestine when the Messiah comes”.

Mystery Babylon

The history (so far) can be summarised (and simplified) as follows--; When the Jews returned from Babylonian exile (deported 586 BC) they brought back the seeds (Pharisaism) that would develop into a virulent strain of Rabbinism that placed the authority of the Babylonian Talmud above that of Torah (Scripture), effectively making the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition (Matt.15.6). This was already a problem in the first century as attested by Jesus but would (as Jesus warned) become much worse; “Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first” (Lk.11.26). They had established their “base” in Shinar (Babylon) and would poison the well for centuries to come. Even the removal of the temple in AD 70 did not hinder “progress” as they had a new “house” in Babylon.

If anything, apostasy accelerated over time as novel doctrines (such as Kabbalism) supplemented Babylonian Rabbinism as it expanded to the global Diaspora; “The Kabbalists developed a form of Jewish Magic. Demonology […] occupies an important position in the works of many Kabbalists; for the imps are related to those beings that are generally designated as demons, being endowed with various supernatural powers and with insight into the hidden realms of lower nature, and even occasionally into the future and the higher spiritual world. Magic may be practised with the help of these beings, the Kabbalists meaning white magic in contrast to the black arts.” (Jewish Encyclopaedia). The true character of “Babylonian religion” emerged in the in the thirteenth century when the Zoar was published by a Jewish writer named Moses ben Shem-Tov de Leon (though often attributed to Moses the same as the “oral law” recorded centuries later in the Talmud). This despite the warnings of the Old Testament and in Revelation-; “Let no one be found among you who . . . practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritualist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to Yahweh” (Deut. 18. 10-11) --- “For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” (Rev.22.15).
The “holy book” (the Zohar) of the Kabbalists promises hidden knowledge and the unlocking of mysteries. The Zohar is a mystical commentary on Torah which purports to give the Torah’s true meaning. This ‘true meaning’ was deemed only worthy of being taught to a select few. Scholem points out that in some Zoharic texts there is some degree of fusion between the figure of “Shekhinah” and “Lilith” (Adam’s first wife according to some, who later became demonic). Likewise there is at least one text of the Zohar (page 190-191) wherein the figure of Shekhinah is, at least partially, fused with the whorish “alien woman” (—who in Proverbs stands in stark contrast to Lady Wisdom—) of Proverbs. They have exchanged the indwelling glory of Yahweh (Shekhinah) for a whorish woman (Rev 17.1).

Mother of Harlots

Few realise that the Babylonian influence of Rabbinism goes beyond the corruption of the Old Testament but like any disease it spreads its malignancy and corruption as everything it touches becomes unclean. In 1833 Abraham Geiger (who was a Rabbi) wrote the essay, “What did Muhammad borrow from Judaism?” As the title suggests, Geiger believed that the Quran was a human rather than divine product and that much of it was a reshaping of Judaism. Of Wansbrough’s work the author observes; “He (Wansbrough) correctly notes the much greater overlap with Jewish scriptural rather than Christian scriptural references, an observation that had been explained previously by Islamic tradition through the history of Muhammad’s interaction with the Jews of Yathrib/Medina”. Safiy Al-Rahman Al-Mubarakfoury writes of the Jews in Medina (Yathrib), Taima’a and Khaibar, that their religion arrived in Arabia during the Babylonian and Ashorian conquests in Palestine and the pressure and persecution of the Jews there, which made them flee to various areas. A similar migration by the Jews came to Arabia from Palestine when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Judaism spread amongst the Arabs of Hijaz from the contact they had with the Jewish tribes that settled in Arabia. Judaism also entered into Yemen through Tabban Asad Abi Karb. The Jews set up villages in the areas that they inhabited and worked in agriculture and some trades.29

27 It was subsequently translated into English by F. M. Young in the hopes that it would draw Muslims closer to Judaism and therefore Christianity with title Judaism and Islam (1898: repr., New York: Ktav, 1970). For a recent and excellent summary of Geiger’s personal history and his contribution to the field of Islamic studies, see Jacob Lassner: Abraham Geiger, “A Nineteenth-Century Jewish Reformer on the Origins of Islam”, in The Jewish Discovery of Islam: Studies in Honor of Bernard Lewis (ed. M. Kramer; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1999), 103—35.
29 Safiy Al-Rahman Al-Mubarakfoury, Al-Rabheq Al-Makhtoom (1418 A.H.)
Maududi writes: “In the matter of language, dress, civilization and way of life they had completely adopted Arabism, even their names had become Arabian. Of the 12 Jewish tribes that had settled in Hejaz, none except the Bani Zaura retained its Hebrew name. Except for a few scattered scholars none knew Hebrew. In fact, there is nothing in the poetry of the Jewish poets of the pre-Islamic days to distinguish it from the poetry of the Arab poets in language, ideas and themes. They even inter-married with the Arabs. In fact, nothing distinguished them from the common Arabs except religion (my emphasis). Because of this Arabism the western orientalists have been misled into thinking that perhaps they were not really Israelites but Arabs who had embraced Judaism, or that at least majority of them consisted of the Arab Jews.”

For obvious reasons many Muslim apologists downplay the importance and the number of the Jews of Medina. They are often portrayed as treacherous and hypocritical but the only source available for these claims is the Qur’ān and early Muslim writings.

It is important to understand that the evolution of shari’ah, similar to the evolution of Islamic theology, did not occur in a vacuum or in isolation from other religious movements. It was particularly during the flourishing Abbasid caliphate that the Islamic post-scriptural oral tradition was formed, and Muslim jurisprudence, theology and science made significant advances. It is generally acknowledged that Islamic theology was influenced by Greek philosophy transmitted by the Nestorian churches, but few realize the influence that Talmudic Judaism must have exercised on the formation of shari’ah. The Persian Empire became the place of learning and codification of the Jewish law, not only was the institution of the exilarch to be found there, but also the various geonim; the heads of the famous law academies. The final edition of the 2,500,000 words Babylonian Talmud was completed in the fifth century. The era following the conclusion of the Talmud until shortly before the Arab, conquest is known as the Savoirite era. According to Jewish tradition, the scholars (savoraim) who lived during this period were concerned with explaining Jewish law. The Jewish obsession with law, manifested in centuries of debate and codification must have influenced the Islamic view of law. Early Muslims wholeheartedly followed the lead of their Jewish counterparts establishing law schools and a scribal class; the fuqaha (experts on the Shari’ah) and the ulama (the Muslim religious scholars, or literally “those who know”). The Jews had Moses as their prophet-lawgiver the Muslims had Mohammed. The Old Testament prophets and Jesus himself warned against the very human need to self-justify on the grounds of law.

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30 Maududi, in his comments on the Surah 59 of Quran reporting from Kitab al-Aghani, [a book of songs, an important source for information on medieval Islamic society, vol. xix, p. 94, by Abu al-Faraj Ali of Esfahan (897-967)]
Even more subtle and subversive is the influence of Judaism (Rabbanism) on Christianity. There was a concentrated Judaist effort in the first century to undermine the primitive church as witnessed by the writings of Paul. It was particularly the introduction of the Gentiles and issues around Halakha\textsuperscript{31} that forced the matter. The greatest point of difference and the most divisive issue separating Jews and Christians is the doctrine of the Trinity. If one could design a doctrine to drive a wedge between Jews and Christians, one could do no better than Trinitarianism. In the teaching of Maimonides and other medieval sages, unlike the Judaism of other eras, belief in correct doctrine was what ensured a Jewish person of life in the world to come.\textsuperscript{32} The origins of the Trinity doctrine are sought in Neo-Platonism and Hellenism largely ignoring the fact that the Trinity is a perversion of Jewish doctrine.

Rhodes et al comments,\textsuperscript{33} “There is one further set of considerations that is important for our assessment of the degree to which Judaism was paganised in the first century. It is argued that certain intertestamental texts demonstrate that significant portions of Second Temple Judaism had embraced a “flexible monotheism” that allowed for mythological figures to play a God-like role next to Yahweh. We find many examples of high-ranking angels (e.g., Michael, Metatron), exalted patriarchs (e.g., Enoch, Moses), and personified divine attributes (e.g., Wisdom, etc.) being spoken of in terms what were commonly associated with Yahweh himself. All indications are that these texts were circulated widely and reflect general Jewish sentiments in the century leading up to the time of Jesus. On top of this, we have a number of examples of Jews referring to various heroes as supernaturally empowered “divine men” (theios aner), a concept that was sometimes used in Greco—Roman contexts to refer to people who were believed to be both human and divine”.

The Jews of the first century (mostly descendants of Babylonian exiles) were wont to personify and mythologize aspects of the divine. For example, the Jewish Targums\textsuperscript{34} speak of the “Memra” (literally the speech or voice) creating the world in Gen.1.1 and this is picked up in John 1.1-3 with the use of “Word” (i.e., Memra) although it is usually attributed to Philonic Platonism the Jews had a long pedigree of personification, manifestation and agency (not incarnation). The angel of the Exodus personified Yahweh and acted as his agent (Ex.23.21).

\textsuperscript{31} Halakha is the collective body of Jewish religious laws derived from the Written and Oral Torah.
\textsuperscript{32} See especially Menachem Kellner, Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought: From Maimonides to Abravanel (Oxford; Portland, OR: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1986).
\textsuperscript{33} Paul Rhodes Eddy, Gregory A. Boyd, The Jesus Legend: A Case for the Historical Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition,(Baker Academic, 2007),106
\textsuperscript{34} The expression is used 314 times in Targum Neofiti
However, the Jews took this to extremes and in the second century. Gieschen\(^{35}\) sums the situation up as follows; “…..Alan Segal has carefully documented evidence of the controversy that the existence of a second enthroned being or “Power” brought to early rabbinic circles. He points to the following second or third century CE rabbinic text involving Rabbi Akiba (ca. 110-135 c) that sheds more light on the controversy that Daniel 7 and a second figure on God’s throne could cause:

[b. Hag. 14a] One passage says: “His throne was fiery flames’ (Dan. 7:9); and another passages says: ‘Till thrones were placed, and One that was ancient of days did sit—there is no contradiction: One (throne) for Him, and one for David. This is the view of Rabbi Akiba. Said Rabbi Yosi the Galilean to him: Akiba, how long will you treat the Divine Presence as profane! Rather, one for justice and one for grace. Did he accept (this explanation) from him or did he not accept it—come and hear: One for justice and one for grace; this is the view of R. Akiba [cf. b. Sanh. 38b].

This text shows that Rabbi Akiba had linked Dan 7.13 with the enthronement of the Davidic Messiah in Ps 110.1. However plausible this may have been, Akiba’s colleagues did not agree”.

Akiba’s apostasy demonstrates that the move towards Binitarianism or, “Two Powers” was already surfacing in Judaism at the same time as primitive Christianity was being formed. Apparently under pressure Akiba retracted his position. It was Akiba who supported the false messiah during the ill fated bar Kochba revolt. We note that the texts (Dan.7 and Ps.110) are alluded to by Jesus who even challenged the Pharisees (forerunners of the Rabbi’s) with a question concerning the relationships in Psalm 110 (in Matt.22:41-46) with the conclusion that no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions. Jesus was not promoting Binitarianism but simply pointing out that their own Scriptures emphasised a special relationship between the Father and the Son (Davidide) promised in 2 Samuel 7. Although Judaism rejected Binitarianism it is but a small step to develop Trinitarian doctrine by including the Spirit. The Fourth Gospel is the most Jewish of the Gospels and employs Jewish idiom (personification, manifestation and agency) current in John’s day - it is not based on Neo-Platonism. The sublime language of the Fourth Gospel and Pauline pre-existence idiom provided fertile ground for Judaists to deliberately twist the interpretation of the New Testament (especially for novice Gentile converts) in order to introduce a Trinitarian doctrine that they knew would cause a schism. Paul warned against those preaching “another Gospel” (2 Cor.11.4).

\(^{35}\) Charles A. Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence (Brill, 1998),86
If the goal was to stop the haemorrhage of Jews to the new “sect” of Christianity, what better way than to espouse a doctrine among Christians that was anathema to monotheistic Jews? The first attempt at destabilisation was to introduce law keeping (Jewish Halakah) into Christianity. When this was unsuccessful due to Paul’s push-back, the second attempt was to make Christianity doctrinally unpalatable to Jews. The Judaist (Rabbinic) strategy of constructing “another gospel” was largely successful and gave birth to false Christianity leading to a predominantly Gentile Trinitarian church.

Conclusion

The contention of this chapter is that Rabbinism which was established in Babylon (and originated with first century Phrasaism) had corrupted the interpretation of the Jewish Old Testament. It seeded the birth of the Islamic obsession with law (Shariah) and most likely initiated the corruption of monotheistic Christianity --- centuries later Judaism expanded to incorporate hidden interpretations (sorcery and magic known as cabbalism) and truly became “Mystery Babylon”. Rabbi Akiva (Akiba) is acknowledged as a foundational figure of Rabbinical Judaism – he had extensive contacts with Babylon and supported the Bar Kochba revolt, even recognising Kochba as the “messiah”. Akiva was partially contemporary with the apostles. He would have been aware of their preaching and witnessing.

Shariah is the law of the Qur’an and literally means “A path to life giving water.” In fact, the word Yarrah (i.e. the root of the Hebrew word Torah) means precisely the same thing. Therefore, Shariah is actually ingrained in Abrahamic tradition. [HYPERLINK "http://www.huffingtonpost.com/qasim-rashid/shariah-law-the-five-things-every-non-muslim_b_1068569.html" (top Google search of term Shariah, retrieved March 2017)]

1520s, from Medieval Latin cabbala, from Mishnaic Hebrew qabbalah “reception, received lore, tradition,” especially “tradition of mystical interpretation of the Old Testament,” from qibbel “to receive, admit, accept.” Cf. Arabic qahala “he received, accepted.” Define Cabbalism at Dictionary.com [top Google search of the term Cabbalism retrieved March 2017]
Digression 5

Jews in Babylonia and Other Lands

Jewry in Babylonia in the Period of the Mishnah and Talmud
The Post 70 CE history of the Jews

In order to reach any conclusion the interpreter must be familiar with the Jewish history of this period. Most commentators focus on the imperial cult of Rome and Roman history completely neglecting the Jewish aspect. The Jewish nation did not just disappear into the Diaspora after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Other events occurred that were equally, if not more devastating than the first Roman war and the cataclysmic fall of the temple in 70 CE. Much is known about the first Roman war from the works of Josephus but unfortunately we have no Josephus for this later period.

Evidence must be sought from fragmentary sources which include Roman and Greek historians, comments of the early church fathers, rabbinical writings, and epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological evidence. It is difficult to evaluate the worth of some of the sources as they are often written for propagandistic or apologetic reasons. Certain sources prove to be contradictory and therefore a judgement must be made regarding the weight given to the evidence. It is no surprise then that we cannot speak of scholarly consensus, especially regarding the sequence of events during the bar Kochba revolt. Jesus warned in Matthew 24:7-8 that,

“[...] nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows”.

This is a perfect summary of the period leading up to and including the Kitos War (115–117 CE). The word for “nation” is the Greek ethnos meaning peoples rather than nations. This was a period when numerous uprisings and pogroms occurred against Jewish communities living in the Roman Empire (more on this anon). A natural precursor to these wars was the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE which was one of the most catastrophic volcanic eruptions in European history. Interestingly, Mount Vesuvius is again building for another giant eruption. The period is bracketed by a great earthquake at Antioch\(^1\) that nearly killed the Emperor Trajan at the start of his Parthian campaign and was interpreted as a bad omen.

\(^1\) Noah Webster observes, “In the reign of Trajan, the city of Antioch was almost totally demolished by an earthquake. This emperor was in the city at the time, and narrowly escaped with his life. Some authors place this event in the year 114; others in 115; but Baronius has proved by an ancient inscription, that it happened under the consulate of P. Vipstanus Messala and M. Virgilianus Pedo; which brings the event to the year 117. A comet was visible the same years. The earthquakes of this period were extremely violent—many cities were overthrown, mountains sunk, rivers were dried up and new fountains appeared”. Noah Webster, *A Brief History of Epidemic and Pestilential Diseases* Vol. 1, (Hudson & Goodwin, 1799),70
After Trajan created new provinces - Armenia, Mesopotamia and Assyria - and believed he had been victorious, several Messianic revolts\(^2\) broke out simultaneously. The reasons are unclear to us, but the appearance of a comet, a Messianic symbol, may be the explanation; it is referred to in Chinese sources (and perhaps Juvenal, Satires, 6.407). The diasporic Jews of Egypt, Cyrenaica and Cyprus were among the rebels, but the newly conquered region of Mesopotamia was unquiet too.\(^3\) In Cyprus (for example) Cypriot Jews massacred 240,000 Greeks. A Roman army was dispatched to the island, soon reconquering the capital. After the revolt had been fully defeated, laws were created forbidding any Jews to live on the island. This certainly fits the prophetic words of Jesus concerning, “peoples (ethnos) rising against peoples (ethnos)”.

Segall notes that, “In 116 CE, as Trajan was about to extend his campaign against the Persians, an uprising began against the Roman garrisons left behind to hold down territory already conquered. The uprising was led by Babylonian Jews and set of a revolt that eventually spread to Judea, Cyprus, Egypt and Libya. While Trajan was occupied attacking the Persian Empire, an army of 20,000 Jews from Alexandria was organized and sent to the land of Israel where the led another 100,000 Galilean Jews in an uprising against the Romans”\(^4\).

The “Kitos War” (115–117) is summarised as follows “The \textit{Kitos War} (Hebrew: מרד הגלויות: mered ha’galuyot or mered ha’tfutzot (מרד התפוצות:); translation: rebellion of the diaspora. Latin: \textit{Tumultus Indaius}) occurred during the period of the Jewish-Roman Wars, 66–136. While the majority of the Roman armies were fighting Trajan’s Parthian War on the eastern border of the Roman Empire, major uprisings by ethnic Judeans in Cyrenaica, Cyprus and Egypt spiralled out of control, resulting in a widespread slaughter of left behind Roman garrisons and Roman citizens by Jewish rebels. Some of the areas with the heaviest massacres were left so utterly annihilated that others were made to settle these areas to prevent the absence of any remaining presence. The rebellions were finally crushed by Roman legionary forces, chiefly by the Roman general Lusius Quietus, whose nomen later gave the conflict its title, as “Kitos” is a later corruption of Quietus.\(^5\)

\(^2\) Matthew 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.
\(^3\) Trajan’s War, Livius, accessed March 2017@ \{HYPERLINK "http://www.livius.org/articles/concept/roman-jewish-wars/roman-jewish-wars-7/"\}
\(^4\) S. B. Segall, \textit{Understanding the Exodus and Other Mysteries of Jewish History},(Etz Haim Press, 2003),169
Segall describes the situation as follows: “In spite of the great carnage of the Jewish population in the land of Israel and the rest of the Roman Empire, resistance to Roman rule continued in the land of Israel in the form of guerrilla warfare. The most successful leader of these guerrillas was Shimon bar Kochba, a person famous for his strength and charisma. Bar Kochba’s victories against the Romans enhanced his reputation and brought volunteers to his forces. In 132 CE in a series of battles he reconquered the Galilee, recaptured Jerusalem and declared the establish intent of an independent Jewish nation in the land of Israel. Bar Kochba believed he was a messiah, a person anointed by God to lead the people. The small Christian community would not support his revolt because they said they already had a messiah, so he exiled them to Transjordan. This caused a rift between the Jewish Christians and the rest of the Jewish community, but may have saved the Christians’ lives in the battles that followed.

Hadrian sent General Julius Severus, who had helped the Romans conquer Britain, to lead the war against Bar Kochba. The Jews inflicted heavy casualties on the Romans, but Severus pursued a scorched earth policy against the rebels. He burned the crops and uprooted the fruit and olive trees in areas supporting the rebels forcing the population to flee. The entire population of any city that resisted his army was massacred when his forces conquered the city. Bar Kochba was finally defeated and killed defending the fortress of Betar near Jerusalem. About 580,000 Jews were killed in this uprising and many thousands more were sold into slavery. Most of the Jewish population of the Galilee was either killed or fled. Those who fled mostly left for Babylonia. There is evidence that a few refugees from the war travelled as far away as North America. The Jewish population remaining in the Galilee was too small and weak to rebel against the Romans again.

The Roman army lost the better part of six legions as well as hundreds of thousands of Syrian and other support troops in the war against Bar Kochba and his forces. The Emperor Hadrian described the Bar Kochba rebellion to the Roman Senate as the greatest war in the history of the Roman Empire. Had the Jews fought the Romans with the same unity and ferocity as in the Bar Koch ha rebellion during the first war against the Romans, when their population and resources were greater, there was a large Jewish population in the diaspora of the Roman Empire, and the Romans themselves were engaged in a civil war, it is most likely that they would have won the war. Between the first war against the Romans that began in 66 CE and the end of the Bar Kochba rebellion in 135 CE most of the Jewish population of the Roman Empire had been killed. Most of those who were not killed either fled or were sold into slavery.
Only the Jewish communities in the north-eastern Mediterranean, that existed as minorities among much larger Gentile populations and did not revolt against the Romans, were left relatively unscathed. The only major centre of Jewish civilization left in the world after this series of wars was in Babylon, which remained under Persian rule. As a result of the destruction of the major population centres and institutions of Jewish society, fringe groups emerged that would otherwise have remained at the margin of Jewish society. The two groups that benefited most from this national disaster were the rabbinic Jews and the Christians.

The Jewish–Roman wars include the following:

- First Jewish–Roman War (66–73 CE) — also called the First Jewish Revolt or the Great Jewish Revolt, spanning from the 66 CE insurrection, through the 67 CE fall of the Galilee, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple and institution of the Fiscus Judaicus in 70 CE, and finally the fall of Masada in 73 CE. Emperor Vespasian (69-79 CE).


- Bar Kokhba revolt (132–136 CE) — also called the Second Jewish–Roman War (when Kitos War is not counted), or the Third (when the Kitos War is counted). Emperor Hadrian (117-138 CE)

The Bar Kochba Revolt

The above post-70 CE Jewish historical summary gives us an impression of a period that encompassed constant wars, revolts and genocides interspersed with natural disasters. It does not however do justice to the complexities of the Bar Kochba revolt. Questions and debates remain among the scholarly community. Did Bar Kochba recapture Jerusalem from the Romans? Did Bar Kochba re-establish a form of temple worship? Was Bar Kochba as benevolent towards Christians as Segall suggests? These and other questions will be examined in the following section.

The Romans had a legion garrisoned at Jerusalem and some scholars suggest that Bar Kochba never captured the city but waged an incredibly hard fought guerrilla war in regional Judea (as he held most of Judea except Jerusalem). The coins that he struck celebrating the freedom of Jerusalem were in anticipation of his victory as he never captured the city.

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6 Ibid, p.,171-172
The revolt in Judea was instigated because Hadrian “ploughed” the city and banned circumcision. Bar Kochba was finally cornered in his fortress in Betar where he was killed after a siege. A second scenario proposed by scholars has Bar Kochba capturing Jerusalem because Hadrian “ploughed” the city in anticipation of erecting new building works. Bar Kochba’s response was to drive out (or besiege the Roman garrison) and he re-established temple worship in that part of the city not under occupation (or he liberated the entire city) and struck coins to celebrate this victory. The Romans forced him out the city and he fled to his fortress at Betar where he made his last stand. It was only after the defeat of the rebels that Hadrian banned the Jews from entering Jerusalem and banned circumcision.

**Ploughing the city**

Ploughing is a foundation ceremony --- a coin of Aelia (Jerusalem) shows Hadrian performing the age-old rite of *circumdactio*, guiding a plough drawn by a cow and a bull round its circuit to mark out the *pomerium*. Usually a single furrow is ploughed around the city to establish the boundary – the city would have a new status, certain laws (regarding taxes etc) and certain protections from Rome. It was also a precursor to new building projects in the city. It is unlikely that Hadrian himself actually “ploughed” but the coins themselves had a propagandistic value wherever they were used – they demonstrated throughout the empire that Jerusalem was a Roman city. Sacha Stern contends that ploughing was an act of *construction* not *destruction* (this is obviously not to be confused with the ploughing of Carthage with salt). According to Stern the act of ploughing was culturally misunderstood. Stern observes that, “It is tempting to believe that rabbinic sources would have seen the ploughing of Jerusalem as the fulfilment of Micah’s prophecy that ‘Zion will be ploughed like a field’ (Micah 3:12; also cited in Jer. 26: 18). This rather obvious association, indeed, is made by Pseudo-Rashi (ad b. Taan. ib.) (12th century?) and again, quite independently from him, by Maimonides (late twelfth century) in his code (Laws of Fast Days 5. 3). One wonders why it was not made in earlier rabbinic sources”.

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7 See, BMC, Pal, 82, no. 2; Kadman, Aelia, 80, no. 1. The type is purely symbolic, and need not imply Hadrian’s presence at the ceremony. It recurs under M. Aurelius—Kadman, Aelia, 88, no. 43.

Midrash Rabba has a story that explains the act of ploughing as a desire by the Roman Emperor Hadrian to rebuild Jerusalem and the Jewish temple from the wreckage. He considered reconstructing Jerusalem (in CE 130) as a gift to the Jewish people. However, when he visited Jerusalem the Samaritans told him that rebuilding the Second Temple would encourage sedition.¹ However, Mor considers this account as polemic, “In my view, this text belongs with a number of Jewish anti-Samaritan sources that try to present the Samaritans as the schemers behind most of the calamities that befell the Jews.”¹⁰ Even so, the fact is that Hadrian (who was hated) is initially shown as offering construction work as a gift to the Jews. Obviously, something changed his mind after this initial “generous” offer. Johnson has a pertinent observation, “According to the Midrash, Emperor Hadrian at first permitted the rebuilding of the Jewish temple but then revoked his decision and the Jews were disappointed. This legend may be dismissed as a fantasy but I would point out that the Jews would not give even a half compliment to Hadrian who they referred to as “the wicked” or “may his bones rot” in their literature. The real reason for the Jewish revolt was that during the early part of Hadrian’s reign, Hadrian released the conquests of Trajan beyond the Euphrates. The political liberation of the Armenians, Parthians, and Assyrians left the Jews in a state of exhilaration at the thought that they too might know freedom from the Romans. When they learned that they were not to be released the Jews once again felt bitterness at Emperor Hadrian. The stories in the Midrash and Haggadah represent the hard feelings of the Jews toward Hadrian. It is more than Hadrian’s failure to build the temple, but his failure to liberate Palestine which earns Hadrian the enmity of the Jewish people”.¹¹

Mor comments, “Therefore, if it was not the prohibition of circumcision or the founding of Aelia Capitolina that caused the revolt, and if the emphasis is laid on the leader of the revolt, the question then arises as to the time of the uprising. Why did Ben Kosiba launch the revolt in the year 132 in particular? In my opinion, the date of the revolt should be linked to Hadrian’s visit to the region, which extended from the autumn of 129 to the summer of 130. In his itinerary, Hadrian visited Phoenicia, the Land of Israel, and Arabia. From Gaza he took the sea route to Alexandria, from where he returned to Syria. After another visit to Provincia Asia he visited Athens in 131-132.

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¹ Midrash Rabba, Genesis Rabba 64
¹⁰ Menahem Mor, Are there any new factors concerning the Bar-Kokhba revolt? Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica XVIII, 2012, 161-193,p.163 @ {HYPERLINK “http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/Mor_SAA.pdf”}
The urgent visits of Hadrian in the eastern provinces were political attempts to unify the Roman Empire. These visits were accompanied by building and development enterprises, and there is no doubt that these were an economic burden on the inhabitants of the Provinces. In the past I have rejected any suggestion that the erection of Aelia Capitolina in the years 129-130, CE during Hadrian’s visit to the region, was an intentional anti-Jewish measure. The founding of the city was part of the general policy of the Caesar to strengthen the Hellenistic foundations in his empire, and resulted from an examination of the status and function of Provincia Judaea within the system of eastern provinces, and its readiness to become culturally, socially, and religiously integrated into this system.

Did the rebels capture Jerusalem?

Yoram Tsafrir, has the following to say, “The foundation of Aelia Capitolina has been discussed in numerous studies and publications. A reconstruction of the order of events is presented by Cassius Dio, as epitomized by Xiphilinus. A contradictory version of the order of events is presented in Eusebius’ Historia, Ecclesiastica. In Dio’s account the Jewish revolt against Hadrian followed and resulted from the emperor’s building of a new city by the name of Aelia Capitolina and the building of a temple to Zeus which replaced the old Jewish Temple. Many scholars understand from Dio’s statement (via Xiphitinus): “kul es ton ton naou ton teou topon tw Dii eteron antageirantos”, that the temple of Zeus (or Jupiter) was located on the site of the ancient temple i.e., on the Temple Mount. Other scholars suggest a different interpretation namely, that the temple was built not “on the site” of the ruined temple but “instead of it” and in some other place in the newly founded colony.”

Two sources that support the capture of Jerusalem by the rebels are Eusebius and possibly Appian. The former, “But who would not be surprised at the fulfilment of a prophecy which revealed that the Jewish people would undergo these sufferings in the days of the Lord? For as soon as Jesus our Lord and Saviour had come and the Jews had outraged Him, everything that had been predicted was fulfilled against them without exception 500 years after the prediction: from the time of Pontius Pilate to the sieges under Nero, Titus and Vespasian they were never free from all kinds of successive calamities, as you may gather from the history of Flavius Josephus. It is probable that half the city at that time perished in the siege, as the prophecy says.

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12 Ibid, p., 187-188
13 Ibid,p.,171
And not long after, in the reign of Hadrian, there was another Jewish revolution, and the remaining half of the city was again besieged and driven out, so that from that day to this the whole place has not been trodden by them.” And the latter, “In this way the Romans, without fighting, came into possession of Cilicia and both inland Syria and Cæle-Syria, Phoenicia, Palestine, and all the other countries bearing the Syrian name from the Euphrates to Egypt and the sea. The Jewish nation still resisted, and Pompey conquered them, sent their king, Aristobulus, to Rome, and destroyed their greatest, and to them holiest, city, Jerusalem, as Ptolemy, the first king of Egypt, had formerly done. It was afterward rebuilt and Vespasian destroyed it again, and Hadrian did the same in our time. On account of these rebellions the tribute imposed upon all Jews is heavier per capita than upon the generality of taxpayers”.

Yehoshua Zlotnik comments that, “There is a Roman tendency for silence with regards to Bar-Kokhba. It pertains throughout the Roman-pagan period, to anything relating to Bar-Kokhba, and may very well likely attest to the reason and necessity to forget his memory and achievements. We see this tendency come into play with Cassius Dio and Appian who are silent in their essays according to this tendency in regards to mentioning the history of Aelia Capitolina as well and the possibility of the conquest of Aelia Capitolina by Bar Kokhba or its re-founding. The silent tendency however, stopped with the beginning of the rise of Christians to rule the empire. Eusebius that was the bishop of Caesarea and lived 100 years after Cassius Dio shows more transparency with regards to the events during the revolt and details in a hostile way the history of Bar Kokhba and the fall of Beitar”.

Johnson observes, “The Building of the Aelia Capitolina would be pointless during a revolt as it would cost too much and just enrage the Jews further in their fight. Once the revolt was suppressed, however, the building of the Aelia Capitolina, would serve as punishment for the rebellion. What is likely to happen here that some call the compromising of history is that the Aelia Capitolina was ordered to be built before the war but the outbreak ceased its construction and after the revolt was put down the Romans started to build again”.

16 Chapter 8.50 in Appian, Syrian Wars (ed. Horace White, English; Greek, ed. L. Mendelssohn)
18 Ibid, p. 20-21
Hanan Eshel notes the Mishnahic sequence, “The Mishnah, the earliest rabbinic classic, redacted in about 200 C.E., seems to support Eusebius. In Ta’anit 4.6, the Mishnah lists five disasters that occurred on the ninth of the Hebrew month of Av, including the Babylonian destruction of the First Temple and the Roman destruction of the Second Temple. The fourth item in the list is the fall of Betar, the last stronghold of Bar-Kokhba’s warriors, which ended the Second Jewish Revolt. The final item in the Mishnah’s list is the plowing of “the city”—that is, Jerusalem”.

Of course, the destruction of a “third temple” (built by Bar Kochba) is absent from this list. The question will be examined in the next section. Nevertheless, the sequence that emerges so far is possibly the following:

1. Hadrian “ploughs” issues ceremonial coin – offers to repair Jerusalem as a gift to the Jewish people and possibly considers allowing the erection of a Jewish temple. Of course the caveat is that Jerusalem does not regain her freedom (unlike Trajan’s eastern provinces that he liberated) but Judea remains a Province of Rome.
2. The response is a revolt and Bar Kochba captures Jerusalem
3. The rebels are defeated and flee to Betar where they are crushed on 9 Av
4. Hadrian issues new coinage on 9 Av showing the “ploughing” of Jerusalem and builds pagan temples and forbids circumcision etc.

The question is whether it is likely that all these events happened on the same date (9 Av) or whether it is mythical typology. It would not be beyond the Romans to consider the date as auspicious to launch a final breach on Betar on this very date or issue new coins (a year later?) on the same day. It certainly had propagandistic value.

**Did the rebels establish temple worship?**

Because written sources are fragmentary and often contradictory this part of the revolt has to be reconstructed from numismatic evidence. The question becomes one of interpretation and also reliability as some coins are not found on site but sourced from antiquities dealers or illegal archaeological sites. Not all coins were minted or cast, many were “struck” --- an impression could be made over an old Roman coin. Eshel, states that, “If an Aelia Capitolina coin had been found overstruck with a Bar-Kokhba impression, this would provide clear evidence that Aelia had been founded before the revolt. However, since no such coin has been found, some scholars have assumed that Aelia was established after the revolt, as punishment”.

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20 *Ibid*, Eshel
Mor observes that, “The numismatic evidence is double proof that the rebel fighters did not reach Jerusalem. In excavations in Jerusalem only four Bar Kokhba coins have been found thus far, a tiny number in comparison with the 15,000 that were found throughout the region.”  

However, Yehoshua Zlotnik counters as follows, “According to sources from the Mishna and Rabbinical sources, the written sources referred to the disqualified Bar Kokhba coins as “false Jerusalem coins”, “a disqualified dinar”, “danger money”. Disqualifying the coins was done by the Roman authority and it was forbidden to hold them as coins. This was done because the Bar Kokhba rule ceased to exist and after the oppression of the revolt the Romans did everything they could to remove his coins from circulation and obliterate his memory. Most of the silver coins were melted and recycles and anyone that continued to hold them as decoration punched holes in them or chopped them to disqualify them”. Moreover, he notes that, “The results and examining the findings show that the quantity of Aelia Capitolina coins is almost identical to the quantity of Bar Kokhba coins found in Jerusalem” [p.9]. He also notes two models of Aelia founding coins (before and after the revolt) [p.13] and concludes, “The ‘small’ quantity of Bar Kokhba coins found in regulated excavations in Jerusalem is almost identical to the ‘small’ quantity of Aelia coins found in regulated excavations in Jerusalem and in fact attest that Aelia existed before the beginning of the revolt and its activity as a city stopped at the beginning of the revolt while it was conquered by the rebels who controlled it for two and a half years”[p.17].

The above shows a Bar Kochba silver Shekel with the obverse side displaying the Jewish Temple facade with the rising star surrounded by the name “Shimon” with the reverse image a lulav with the inscription “to the freedom of Jerusalem”.

Johnson remarks on the similarity between the coins of the revolts against Antiochus and Hadrian, “Hasmonean and Bar Kokhba coins have the symbols of Ethrog and Lulab to recall dedication of the Temple after their victory. Also, a palm branch with clusters of dates to represent the land of Israel is found.

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21 Ibid, Mor, SSA,p.177  
22 Ibid, Zlotnik, p.,12. See his footnotes for sources
The vine which represents the people of Israel, of Jerusalem, Sanhedrin and the Sages of Israel; and finally the jug which represents the Hanukkah miracle are found on coins from both periods. The messages also are similar in each period; freedom and redemption of Israel and Jerusalem are found in both. The first revolt served as an example of the heroics for the second revolt. One of the main driving motives that gave Bar Kokhba the leadership position was the belief that he was the messiah that was destined to lead the Jews to freedom”.

Commenting on Yeivin’s observations regarding the inscription Eleazar the Priest on some of the coins Mor argues, “According to Yeivin: Without the renewal of the sacrifices it is difficult to understand why the rebels found it necessary to appoint a high priest, and without this appointment one cannot understand the minting of coins with the name of Eleazar the Priest just during the period of this revolt. This remark emphasizes all the difficulties involved in the assumption that the inscription Eleazar the Priest on the coins of the revolt testify to the renewal of the sacrificial cult in the Temple built by Bar Kokhba. This assumption is based on a number of suppositions, most of which are hard to accept. The central one among them is the assumption that Eleazar fulfilled the function of high priest in the temple that was erected. On the inscription on the coin of the revolt, only Eleazar the Priest is mentioned, not Eleazar the High Priest. By comparison with the coins of the Hasmoneans, their inscriptions always include a name plus High Priest, and we have no examples among them for the inscription with a name plus Priest. Moreover, if Eleazar did serve as high priest in the Bar Kokhha temple, and it was destroyed in the second year of the revolt, why does his name and title appear in inscriptions of coins of the third year of the revolt? Without dealing at this stage with the difficulties in the identification of Eleazar, it is clear from the inscription that Eleazar belonged to a family of priests and fulfilled a central role in the leadership of the revolt. But the inscription does not constitute evidence of any kind for the claim that he served as a high priest in a temple in Jerusalem that had been erected by Bar Kokhba and his lighters”.

Although his coins display the desire, the evidence does not suggest that Bar Kochba built a temple. The time was too short and building materials were probably not available (even salvaging from the wreckage of Jerusalem), he had a war to fight and a city to defend so it is unlikely. However, it is likely that a temporary altar was erected and sacrifices offered. This could even have occurred while the rebels were still prosecuting the siege against the Roman garrison stationed in the city.

23 Ibid, Johnson, p.,22
24 Menahem Mor,The Second Jewish Revolt: The Bar Kokhba War, 132-136 CE,(Brill, Leden:Boston,2016),281-282
Mor notes the study of Yaron Zvi and his conclusion that Aelia Capitolina did not include the Temple Mount, and that it therefore remained in its state of desolation. Is it possible that when the rebellion commenced in the countryside that troops were lured out of the Jerusalem garrison to quell the supposedly limited insurrection? Many of the Bar Kochba guerrillas had underground lairs. This would leave a token number of troops in Jerusalem. Our sequence of events would now looks like this:

1. First “ploughing” coins struck (gift – benevolent purpose)
2. Revolt in countryside, Roman troops sent from Jerusalem garrison to quell insurrection
3. Kochba siege of Roman garrison in Jerusalem, sacrifices on temple mount, coins struck
4. Rome reinforces Judean legions who fight their way into the country
5. Defeated rebels in Jerusalem flee to Betar, fortress falls in the fifth month
6. Final pockets of hidden rebels cleared out, second “ploughing” coin struck (punishment)
7. Total period 2.5 years (2 to 5) or 3.5 years (1 to 7)?

The fact that Rome threw so much of her might at this rebellion and is relatively silent about Bar Kochba’s exploits demonstrates the seriousness of the revolt. This was asymmetrical war, guerrilla fighting and terrorism by fanatics.

**How did Bar Kochba treat Christians?**

A short survey of the literature produces the following:

(1) “The Jewish belief that the parting of the ways came not at Stephen’s martyrdom but after Bar Kochba’s war against Hadrian [132-135 A.D.] is now gaining ground. Previously there had been no event sufficiently striking to sever the ties. Christians frequented the synagogues: they were still a Jewish sect. But Bar Kochba was hailed by Aqiba as the Messiah. This the Christians could not condone and they stood aside. .... The Jews regarded the Christians as renegades: the Christians would not fight for Aqiba’s Messiah. The die had fallen and there was no recalling the past.”

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25 *Ibid*, Mor, SSA, p.,177
(2) “(A.D. 132-135). A pseudo-Messiah, Bar-Cochba (son of the stars, Num. 24:17), afterwards called Bar-Cosiba (son of falsehood), put himself at the head of the rebels, and caused all the Christians who would not join him to be most cruelly murdered.”

(3) “It was the generation following the destruction of the Temple which brought about a final rupture between Jews and Christians...In the third rebellion against Rome [132-135 A.D.], when the Christians were unable to accept bar Kochba as their Messiah, they declared that their kingdom was of the other world, and withdrew themselves completely from Judaism and everything Jewish. The alienation process was completed. Judaism and Christianity became strangers to each other.... A wall of misunderstanding and hate was erected by the narrow zealotries of the two faiths”.

(4) “Cochba [bar Kochba] ... tortured and killed the Christians who refused to aid him against the Roman army...Another Christian apologist, Justin [Martyr], tells how ... Bar Kochba, the leader of the insurrection, ordered Christians alone to be executed if they would not deny and curse Jesus the Messiah.”

(5) “Not everybody agreed to Aqiba’s [rabbi sage] view that Simon [Bar Kochba] was the Messiah. The Jewish Christians refused to accept this claim; the Christian author Justin Martyr tells that Simon commanded Christians ‘to be lead away to terrible punishment,’ unless they denied Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and cursed the man from Nazareth”.

(6) “[The] rift caused by the destruction of Jerusalem [70 C.E.] proved to be a temporary one, and a partial reconciliation did come about despite Hebrew Christian opposition to the new Judaism of the rabbis.”

30 Justin Martyr, First Apology 31.6
31 According to Fruchtenbaum 132-135 C.E. was the key period, the 2nd Jewish revolt against Rome under Bar Kochba. When the revolt broke out, the Jewish Believers joined the revolt with their rabbinic brothers. However, Rabbi Akiva made the sad error of declaring Bar Kochba to be the Jewish Messiah. This is where the real rift occurred. If anyone can be accused of turning Christianity into a Gentile religion, it is not Paul, nor the church leaders in Asia Minor, but rather Bar Kochba. Dr., Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History, and Philosophy, (Canon Press, 1974),41
Of course, some of the older literature is tendentious or polemical but the *Birkat ha-Minim* (The Birkat ha-Minim is often translated “the Heretic Benediction.”) was introduced during this period. Because a precentor had to recite this curse precisely, one who was a heretic or sectarian would not only curse himself, but the “amen” of the gathered community would affirm the curse. The effect was to exclude these minim from serving as precentor and hence from participating in the prayer community. The so-called *Birkat ha-Minim* is the exclusionary benediction or blessing—but more properly understood as malediction or curse—directed against heretics.

Wilson explains, “It is the Twelfth Benediction of the set daily prayer commonly referred to as the Shemoneh Esreah (the Eighteen Benedictions) or Amidah. Along with the Shema, the Shemoneh Esreah is one of the most important rabbinic prayers. Thus the Mishnah refers to the Shemoneh Esreah as simply ba-tephillah, “the Prayer.” It is to be recited three times a day by every Jew, including women, slaves, and children (Berakot 3:3; 4:1)...The Twelfth Benediction of the Genizah text (the Palestinian recension) reads: “For apostates [*meshumaddim*] let there be no hope, and the dominion of arrogance do Thou speedily root out in our days; and let Christians (*re-ba-Notzrim*) and minim perish in a moment, let them be blotted out of the book of the living and let them not be written with the righteous.” 32

Philip L. Mayo states that, “As many scholars have suggested, it is more likely that notsrim was added to the BH sometime between the end of the Bar Kokhba revolt (135 c.e.) and the fourth century. The Bar Kokhba revolt seems to have marked a significant downturn in Jewish-Christian relations and, therefore, certainly could be a point after which the BH took a more anti-Christian tone”.33

Isaac W. Oliver presents a balanced view 34 of the relations between Jewish-Christians and Bar Kochba, some excerpts are reproduced below:

32 Scholars believe that Notzrim stands for Nazarenes and minim for heretic. Marvin R. Wilson, Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith, (Wm. B. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids Michigan & Center for Judaic-Christian Studies:Ohio,1990),65
[p2.] It is becoming clearer, however, that we should not exaggerate the immediate import and impact of the two Jewish revolts as watershed moments for all Jews and Christians from this period (Schwartz and Weiss 2012). Even Dunn subsequently recognized the complexity of this matter, in the preface to the second edition of his book (2006, xxii–xxiv). The question of the “parting of the ways” has often been analyzed with a disproportionate attention given to doctrinal disputes, to the detriment of appreciating social, political, and economic factors (Tomson 2003, 5).

[p7.] It is impossible to believe that Jewish followers of Jesus living in Palestine would have been the only group singled out by Bar Kokhba for persecution, because of clear evidence indicating otherwise. For example, the Bar Kokhba letters reveal that strong measures were applied against people who refused to participate in the war.

[p9.] In hindsight, of course, few would wish to be associated with a failed campaign, and it is understandable that some would seek ways to distance themselves from such events in the aftermath of failure. Thus, in a late rabbinic text from the Babylonian Talmud (b. Sanh. 93b), Bar Kokhba appears before the rabbinic sages and claims to be the messiah, but the rabbis actually find him to be an imposter and have him killed! Obviously there is no authentic historical recollection regarding Bar Kokhba in this anecdote. Instead, as the Babylonian rabbis looked back at Bar Kokhba, who from their angle was a false messiah and leader of a failed and misguided revolt, they wrestled with the issue of how one of their greatest rabbinic sages (R. Akiva) had offered his support for this “messianic pretender.” As a result, the Babylonian sages polished their heritage by claiming that their rabbinic predecessors actually killed Bar Kokhba, thereby putting an end to the revolt they felt uneasy being associated with (Oppenheimer 1984, 156–57)........... Nevertheless, the evidence from Justin Martyr, despite the theological issues highlighted above, suggests that some Jewish followers of Jesus could not negotiate and embrace a simultaneous allegiance to their Christ, Jesus, and the political messianism ascribed to Bar Kokhba and his movement. Bauckham (1998, 228) rightly claims that “it is unlikely that Justin should have cited this single instance of Jewish persecution of Christians unless he knew it to be true” (similarly Wilson 1995, 6).
The Apocalypse of Peter (Apoc. Pet.) is most pertinent for our study because of Richard Bauckham’s claim that this work is a “Jewish Christian” book written during the Bar Kokhba Revolt (1998, 288). Bauckham identifies two themes in chapters 1 and 2 of this apocalypse: 1) the distinction between the true and false messiah and 2) the theme of martyrdom. For Bauckham, the false messiah described in the Apoc. Pet. cannot be a Roman emperor, because Christian apocalyptic texts always make much of the imperial cult when depicting emperors. The false messiah of the Apoc. Pet., by contrast, does not demand worship (this complies with the portrait of Bar Kokhba suggested by Oppenheimer), but merely claims to be the messiah.
Digression on the book of Malachi

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. It is difficult to establish the dating of the book but the terminus a quo (starting point) is usually sought sometime in the Ezra-Nehemiah period. Internal evidence points to sacrificial worship, priests and Levites, tithing etc. The priesthood is corrupt and seems to be influenced by foreigners or possibly priestly intermarriage with aliens. The Evidence indicates the Ezra-Nehemiah period. This would make Malachi the last OT prophet with no more prophets occurring until John the Baptist hundreds of years later.

Dating Malachi using language

Davis divides Malachi into two different sources. The following section is reproduced from Dating the Old Testament:

A second, older source appears to be present in Mal 3:1-6 and 3:16-4:6, and this source bears a striking resemblance to Isaiah. This source may have been included by Malachi in his own work, or it may have been folded in by the individual who pulled together all of the Minor Prophets into one scroll. We will refer to this source as Malachi-Isaiah. This is the first of several texts outside the book of Isaiah that we believe can ultimately be traced to Isaiah.

Once again, a clue to the author is found in a New Testament book. Mark 1:2-3 says, “As it is written in Isaiah the prophet…,” then quotes from Mal 3:1 followed by Isa 40:3. Some have suggested that Mark chose to name only the latter of his sources, while others have suggested an error on the part of Mark or a later scribe. It is instructive to compare all the texts using Mal 3:1:

1 This used to be available as a PDF download: Craig Davis, Dating the Old Testament, (RJ Communications, 2007), but as far as I am aware is now only available for purchase in book form. Pages 298-302 including headings and notes have been substantially reproduced. I have taken the liberty to insert the Hebrew from the unpointed MT as my version of the PDF did not reproduce the Hebrew fonts correctly. Any mistakes are therefore my own and not attributable to Davis. A comparison of the Hebrew from the Micah-Isaiah table that Davis produces has been compiled by myself (See Supplement (2) Analysing the Hebrew of the Micah-Isaiah table) as a help in the supplementary notes section using screenshots from the Interlinear Scripture Analyzer (ISA basic 3.0) available for free from {HYPERLINK "http://www.scripture4all.org/"}

2 The Greek Textus Receptus from which the King James Version was translated does not name Isaiah here. The Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament (Fourth Revised Edition), from which most modern translations are made, puts the reading naming Isaiah in its “A” category, meaning that the committee that produced this Greek New Testament believes the text mentioning Isaiah is certain.
Mark 1:2, Matt 11:10 and Luke 7:27 agree closely with each other, less with the MT, and still less with the Septuagint. Although the connection is obvious, it is clear that Mark is not quoting from either the Masoretic Text or the Septuagint. Given the fact that the prophet’s name and the text both differ from what we have in the Old Testament today, we might consider the possibility that Mark had a different text that connected this passage to Isaiah. Malachi-Isaiah has a Messianic tone matching that of Isaiah, the most Messianic of the prophets. The following table shows some of the topical and linguistic similarities between Malachi and Isaiah.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase or Subject</th>
<th>Malachi</th>
<th>Isaiah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My messenger whom I send (only occurrence in the Old Testament)</td>
<td>3:1</td>
<td>42:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear the way (done by the messenger – Hebrew הַדִּשֹּׁת). This appears also in Isa 62:10. These are the only occurrences of this phrase in the Old Testament.</td>
<td>3:1</td>
<td>40:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleansing fire (using יָצָר).</td>
<td>3:2</td>
<td>1:25 and 41:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of the righteous being recorded in a book (using יִשֵּׂרָאֵל).</td>
<td>3:16</td>
<td>4:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evil doers are chaff, burned up</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>5:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strike the land</td>
<td>4:6</td>
<td>11:4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is a limited amount of text to use for analysis, yet some connection to Isaiah can be seen. It appears that Joel quotes from Malachi, as Mal 4:5b matches Joel 2:31b, “before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.”

4.2.16.1 Linguistic Analysis
Mal 1:6 (twice) and 1:14 use the pronoun “ani” in the construction “I am a Father,” “I am a Master” and “I am a great King.” In earlier Hebrew, “anoki” would have been preferred in these phrases (see Appendix B, section B.3.7). The absence of “anoki” here is a feature of Late Biblical Hebrew.

On the other hand, the early pronoun “anoki” does appear in 4:5 (Heb 3:23). An earlier word, “pen” (بش), meaning “lest” appears in 4:6 (Heb 3:24). These features hint at a pre-exilic text for the Malachi-Isaiah portion of Malachi.

4.2.16.2 Oldest Texts
There are seven scrolls of Minor Prophets among the Dead Sea Scrolls, two of which (4Q76 and 4Q78) contain portions of Malachi.

4.2.16.3 Conclusion
Malachi was written between 500 and 450 B.C., after the temple had been rebuilt, but before the reforms of Nehemiah. Malachi 3:1-6 and 3:16 – 4:6 likely are drawn from earlier material and quite possibly from Isaiah, allowing a date range of 740-680 B.C. for these passages.

Discussion

One can more or less speak of a scholarly consensus --- everyone accepts that Malachi is post-exilic and therefore “late” and it is placed in the Nehemiah-Ezra time frame. This is supposedly supported by the use of a Persian loanword for governor (pehâ) found in Malachi 1:8:

Malachi 1:8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

David Barker notes that, “Several other historical, theological, and philological points have been brought to bear on the dating question. Malachi 1:8 mentions a pehâ (‘governor’ which some suggest is Nehemiah), a proposed Akkadian loanword (bēl pīṭād).”

3 David W. Baker, Joel, Obadiah, Malachi, (Harper Collins, 2009), 208
The term does refer to an official in other Old Testament texts, including a functionary from Assyria (2 Kings 18:24), and indicates a governor or delegated ruler during the Persian period (e.g., Ezra 8:36; Neh. 5:14; Jer. 5:1:28; Hag. 1:1). The term, even if borrowed, does not help chronologically, however, since it is used of functionaries from as early as the Old Babylonian period.” Therefore, the term “governor” does not necessarily point to the Persian period of Nehemiah-Ezra. Both Daniel and Nehemiah lived in Susa during the Babylonian captivity of the 6th century BCE. Susa was an ancient city of the Proto-Elamite, Elamite, First Persian Empire, Seleucid, and Parthian empires of Iran. However, Parthia (Persia) was still influential particularly during the priestly Hasmonean dynasty. The Hasmonean King Antigonus, was on the throne of Judea with the military assistance of the Parthians. Louis Ginzberg, describes Parthian influence toward the end of this period as follows;

“The state of affairs in Judea, as well as general conditions prevailing throughout the Roman Empire, was most propitious. The excessive taxation wrung from the people to pay for the extravagances of Antony and Cleopatra had awakened so deep-seated a hatred against Rome that Antigonus had only to show himself to the people to win their allegiance away from Herod and other creatures of the Roman power. He gained the adherence also of the aristocratic class in Jerusalem, such as the "Bene Baba," and probably also assured himself of the hearty cooperation of the leaders of the Pharisees. Moreover, the Parthians invaded Syria in the year 40, and they much preferred to see an anti-Roman ruler on the throne of Palestine. Antigonus, who was genius enough to make use of such an excellent opportunity, promised them largesums of gold, and, according to common report, five hundred female slaves besides, so that they immediately put a troop of five hundred warriors at his disposal. The appearance of these Parthians at the gates of Jerusalem, where daily riots took place between the partizans of Antigonus, who held possession of the Temple fortress, and those of Hyscanus, or more correctly of Antipater, caused the balance to turn in favor of the former. Hyscanus and Phasael in vain endeavored to win over the Parthians. The former was sent a captive to Babylon, after suffering the mutilation of his ears, which rendered him henceforth unfit for the office of high priest. Phasael beat out his brains against a stone wall. Herod, too weak for open resistance, fled from Jerusalem, and in the year 40 Antigonus was officially proclaimed king and high priest by the Parthians. His three years' reign, however, was one continuous struggle. His antagonist, Herod, succeeded in having himself declared king of Judea by Rome”.

A power struggle is depicted between Rome and Parthia (Persia) with Hasmonean priests supported by Persia (about a million Jews still lived in Persia) – therefore it is not at all unusual to find a “Persian loanword” used for a Judean official in Malachi. The dating of Malachi cannot be hung on a single loanword, nor on the circumstantial evidence of priestly corruption, which (as we shall see anon) was not limited to the Nehemiah-Ezra period. In conclusion, in agreement with the scholars, Malachi is post-exilic, but just how late is it?

How late is Malachi?

A close reading of the book may indicate another period altogether. The book is a “revelation” (oracle) of “My messenger” for that is the meaning of Malachi. This leads scholars to speculate that Malachi is a pseudonym (pen name) employed in order to support the motif of “the messenger of the covenant”, which occurs throughout the book.5

No scholars (to my knowledge) seem to ask why Malachi begins with the nation of Edom.

Malachi 1:2-4 2 "I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' *Was not Esau Jacob's brother?*" Says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved; 3 *But Esau I have hated*, And laid waste his mountains and his heritage For the jackals of the wilderness." 4 **Even though Edom has said,** "We have been impoverished, But we will return and build the desolate places," Thus says the LORD of hosts: "They may build, but I will throw down; They shall be called the Territory of Wickedness, And the people against whom the LORD will have indignation forever.

A prophecy directed at Israel (probably Judah) and the priesthood opens with a comparison followed by a prophetic tirade against Edom? The nation of Edom was destroyed during the time of the Babylonian Empire, before the return from exile and the context indicates this is technical covenant vocabulary in which “love” and “hate” are synonymous with “choose” and “reject” respectively (see Deut 7:8; Jer 31:3; Hos 3:1; 9:15; 11:1), language that goes back to Jacob and Esau. So God compares his “love” of Jacob with his “hate” for Esau and then continues with reprobation against Edom. This does not seem to fit the Ezra-Nehemiah period but it does reflect intertestamental history, where the priestly Hasmonean dynasty was replaced by Edomite kings (e.g. the Herod’s), *who even intermarried with priestly families to boost their legitimacy.*6

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5 In spite of the scarcity of evidence concerning the authorship of this prophecy, there are good reasons to believe that Malachi is the name of the author. The word mal’äkî is comparable to other Hebrew names that end in i, such as Beeri, “my well” (Gen. 26:34; Hos. 1:1) or Ethni, “my gift” (1 Ch. 6:41), and it is placed where one would expect to find the name of the author. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol.4 (ed G.W. Bromley) The Septuagint reads “his messenger”—not a proper name. Also, “Malachi” occurs again in Mal 3:1 and it is translated there as “my messenger”.

6 See Supplement (1) The descendants of Mattathias (Maccabean dynasty)
This period commenced with Antipater the father of Herod the Great. Though historians understand that Antipater’s family converted to Judaism in the second century BCE, different stories had circulated in the wake of his sons coming to power.⁷

Calmet et al says, “[Herod]’s father Antipater, according to some by nation an Idumean: others say by extraction a Jew, deriving from some of the Jews who returned from Babylon: others maintain that Antipater was a heathen, and guardian of one of Apollo’s temples at Ashkelon; and that, having been taken prisoner by some Idumean scouts, he was carried into Idumea, and brought up according to the manners of the Jews; for since the time of John Hyrcanus, the Idumeans had observed the law of Moses. Hardouin formed a system, entirely new, concerning Herod’s family, and contradictory to Josephus, &c. as if Herod were of Grecian extraction. Nicholas of Damascus, to make his court to Herod, to whom he was much obliged, derived his descent from the principal of the Jews, who returned from Judea after the captivity of Babylon. Josephus, being a Jewish priest, who lived almost in the time of this prince, his sons and grandsons, should be better informed of this matter: he charges that historian with infidelity in his account. Why should we not refer ourselves to Josephus? Herod was never able to win the hearts of the Jews. Neither the building of the temple, a work of very great charge; nor his infinite expenses, in procuring provision for the people during an extreme famine, could overpower their antipathy; which was founded on three reasons: (1) His not being a Jew, but a stranger, and by descent an Idumean (2) His cruelty, whereof he had given proofs on many occasions (3) His little zeal for the observance of the law of Moses, and his frequent violations of it in matters of a public nature, and of great consequence: e.g., he caused a theatre and amphitheatre to be built at Jerusalem, and appointed games to be celebrated there in honour of Augustus: He placed trophies around about his theatre in honour of the same prince and of his victories: He would have a golden eagle set up over the temple doors: He built a temple to Augustus and other deities, and affected to favour heathens and strangers.…”⁸

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⁷ Peterson, Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans, p.52-53
⁸ Augustin Calmet, Charles Taylor, Calmet’s Dictionary of the Holy Bible: With the Biblical Fragments, p.633
Herod the Great was known for his many building projects (including reconstruction of the Jewish temple) --- *they may build, but I will throw down* (Mal 3.4). During the Maccabean wars, the Edomites were subjugated by the Jews and Hyrcanus forced them to convert to Judaism. Through it all, the Edomites maintained much of their old hatred for the Jews. When Greek became the common language, the Edomites were called Idumaeans. With the rise of the Roman Empire, an Idumaean whose father had converted to Judaism was named king of Judea.

Antipater the father of Herod played off the two brothers (Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II) from the priestly Hasmonean (Maccabee) dynasty against each other in order to reach the object of his ambition, the control of Judea. The diplomacy and artful politics of Antipater, as well as his insinuation into the Hasmonean court, paved the way for the rise of his son Herod the Great, who used this position to marry the Hasmonean princess Mariamne, endear himself to Rome and become king of Judea under Roman influence. Marty Solomon sums up the ensuing history as follows:

"Josephus tells us that not long after the Maccabean revolt, the current leadership under the Hasmoneans became as Hellenistic as the Greeks. When this self-serving worldview came in contact with power, the situation was ripe for corruption. The Hasmoneans ruled for just over a century when they looked up to see the Roman Empire dominating the horizon. They knew that there would be no standing against this new world rule and began to position themselves politically for survival. The system of tithes and offerings had served this ruling elite quite well. Now that there were millions of Jews living in the land, and thousands of priests, the system that was built for a much smaller Israel wandering through the desert was now producing quite a bit of wealth for those in charge. The arrival of Rome threatened their very lifestyle.

9 Herod the Great is known as the greatest builder in Jewish history. Amongst other projects Herod began construction on Caesarea Maritima and its harbor. 23 BCE – Herod built a palace in Jerusalem and the fortress Herodion (Herodium) in Judea and of course began reconstruction of the Jewish temple. There are many more projects that can be mentioned in these areas and throughout the land, settlements and strongholds, many of which bore names honoring the emperor or members of Herod’s own family, such as Antipatris (on the road from Jerusalem to Caesarea), Cypros (at Jericho), and Phasaelis (west of the Jordan). Herod also built outside of Israel see --- {HYPERLINK "http://www.bible-history.com/herod_the_great/HERODHis_Buildings.htm"}


And so the Hasmonean family took their daughter and married her to a neighbouring ruler, the man we know as Herod the Great. Herod was the man who inherited from his father the Nabatean/Idumean kingdom that we spoke about in the book of Obadiah. This group of traders had become incredibly wealthy and powerful; to this day, scholars are baffled by the social and economic accomplishments of this nomadic group of people who began to build cities in the eastern desert.

According to some estimates, Herod was the richest man ever to live (including through today). According to history, his income sat at well over a hundred times his country’s GDP. If this is even remotely true, Herod could have bought the Roman Empire a few times over. This gave Herod incredible clout in a political conversation. Rome, however, had all of the power and might, so Herod feared for his safety. As long as the two agreed to play nice, the relationship would be incredibly beneficial for both parties. Herod would enjoy great regional power and immeasurable wealth; Rome would have a leader with enough influence to rule a very difficult and tumultuous region.

And so the Hasmoneans arranged for this brilliant political situation and positioned themselves to enjoy a dynasty under Roman rule. One of Herod’s first acts would be to find a new high priest for the Jewish Temple system. He held the office up for bid to the Hasmoneans. The Hasmonean leadership was made up of seven families who were directly descended from Zadok, the high priest from the days of Solomon. These descendants were called Zadoki or Zadokim, which we translate as “Sadducee.” While the term Sadducee originally referred to the direct descendants of Zadok, it eventually became used of the priesthood to describe any descendant of Aaron. The term became used more to speak of a “party,” rather than a descent. However, these seven families will be spoken of in Scripture as the “chief priests.” These seven families, or chief priests, were offered the high priesthood by Herod to the highest bidder. (Please understand, this was a total corruption of the system.) Amongst these seven families, the house of Ananus (we often translate as Annas) bought the high priesthood and his house would hold it until the destruction of Jerusalem. The corruption was well known and grew to such an extent that the best way to understand the chief priests would be to see them as a mafia. Here are some details we know from history (mostly from Josephus):
- The chief priests only paid the other priests for the two weeks they worked each year, keeping the remaining tithes for themselves.
- The chief priests owned the system of money-changers and merchants who sold on the Temple Mount; they were called “the booths of Ananus” and they were built off of a complete ownership of the economic system AND the regulations that oversaw the system.
- The chief priests had their own Temple Guard, who were notorious for carrying out behind-the-scenes executions of their enemies.
- The chief priests had their own “Sanhedrin,” who met in the private home of the High Priest and functioned outside the formal Sanhedrin, who were made up of both Pharisees and Sadducees.

And we need to clear up some terms, so that we understand the writings of the gospels:

- The “chief priests” are the leading families of the priesthood, descended from Zadok, who function as a mafia.
- The High Priest is their leader and continues to function as the leader described in the Books of Moses, although much of the public understands the system to be completely corrupt and no longer bearing any resemblance to the Levitical priesthood. The Mishnah is brutal in its description of the priesthood under Herod and the corruption of God’s Levitical standard.
- “Sadducee” is a term that refers to a party (think Republican/Democrat) and is any member of the serving priesthood who sees themselves as a part of the priestly system. While they may or may not share directly in the corruption of the chief priests, they are giving their passive nod to the system they oversee.

All of those mentioned above would be priestly descendants of Aaron. However, there would also be a portion of the general public that would approve of the Hellenistic lifestyle. They would rejoice in the world that the rule of Herod has ushered in. While they certainly would not rejoice in the corruption of the Temple, they turn a blind eye to it and continue to carry on with business as usual. This group of non-priests who share the same worldview are called Herodians.”
Will a man Rob God?

**Malachi 3:8-9**  
8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.  
9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

Corrupt priestly practices were actually “robbing God” well might Jesus reprimand them in John 2.16; “make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise” (den of thieves). Moreover, instead of giving the “first tithe” to the Levites it was given instead to the priests of Aaron’s lineage, after Ezra had fined the Levites for not returning in full force to the Land of Israel. By not being able to give the first tithe unto the Levites, as originally commanded by God, this made the avowal of Deuteronomy 26:12–15 null and void. 

John Hyrcanus the High Priest is remembered in rabbinic literature as cleaning up many of these practices including the sacrifice of animals injured (by stunning) during the process (therefore blemished). Nevertheless, despite cosmetic changes the priesthood had become essentially corrupt.

**Malachi 3:10**  
10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Famine was the consequence of neglecting tithes but probably also due to a sabbatical year, Mary Smallwood notes that, “There is no reason to doubt that the tradition that the city fell in 37 on the anniversary of its fall in 63 is substantially correct, even if the Jewish love of anniversaries (cf. the five calamities on 9 Ab: above. p. 459) eventually turned an approximate coincidence of date into an exact one. Secondly, Josephus says that the besieged suffered from famine because it was a sabbatical year—AJ xiv, 475; cf. xv, 7. This appears to mean that the year October 38/7 was sabbatical. But food shortages consequent on a sabbatical yea will normally have been felt, not in the actual year, when stocks from the previous harvest were available, but in the following year”.

Josephus dates the fall of Jerusalem to Pompey in 63 BCE and the fall to Herod in 37 BCE as both occurring on the eve of the Day of Atonement and the same feast features in the trumpet section of Revelation (repeat patterns). Ironically, Herod (not God) subsequently provided famine relief (when needed) out of his own vast funds, after all, the temple itself had become a lucrative enterprise drawing funds from the Diaspora and the priesthood was for sale.

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12 Jerusalem Talmud, Sotah 5:5, Maimonides’ Mishnah Commentary (Ma’aser Sheni 5:15), vol. 1, Mossad Harav Kook: Jerusalem 1963, p. 233
Psalm of Solomon 17 and the Edomite dynasty

The Pseudepigraphic Psalm of Solomon 17\textsuperscript{14} comes from this same period, Kenneth R. Atkinson analyses this pseudo psalm as follows: “The writer then condemns those who have ‘despoiled the throne of David’ (Ps. Sol. 17.5-6) who had also forcibly seized the government and established an unlawful monarchy (Ps. Sol. 17.5-6). This rather transparent historical allusion clearly refers to the Hasmonean dynasty, who ruled as kings although they were not of the Davidic line. Because of their sins, God permitted a ‘man foreign to our race’ (Ps. Sol. 17.7) to conqueror Jerusalem and exterminate this unlawful Hasmonean royal family (Ps. Sol. 17.7-10). Although the psalmist initially rejoices at this event (Ps. Sol. 17.10), the situation quickly becomes worse as this ‘lawless’ man (Ps. Sol. 17.11), after removing the Hasmoneans from power proceeds to oppress the city’s population and forces the author’s community to flee Jerusalem (Ps. Sol. 17.11-17). The psalmist reflects upon Jerusalem’s present situation and concludes that the entire population, from the leader to the common people, are immoral (Ps. Sol. 17. 18-20). With this oppression unbearable, the author feels that there is no hope unless God intervenes in human affairs and sends the lawful ruler, the ‘Son of David’ (Ps. Sol. 17.21) to purge Jerusalem of its Gentile and Jewish sinners (Ps. Sol. 17.21-46). This anticipated king is not an ordinary Davidic descendant, for the psalmist unambiguously proclaims that he will be none other than the ‘Lord’s Messiah’ (Ps. Sol. 17.32). Psalm of Solomon 17’s author portrays this Davidic Messiah as a righteous counterpart to the ‘man that is foreign to our race’ (Ps. Sol. 17.7), who had devastated Jerusalem and persecuted the psalmist’s community….Psalm of Solomon 17 reflects the tumultuous conditions that accompanied Herod the Great’s rise to power in 37 BCE when, with the assistance of the Roman general Sosius, he successfully attacked Jerusalem to seize the throne Herod, the ‘man alien to our race’ (Ps. Sol. 17.7)”\textsuperscript{15}.

\textsuperscript{14} See Supplement (3) Psalm of Solomon 17  
\textsuperscript{15} Kenneth R. Atkinson, ON THE USE OF SCRIPTURE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MILITANT DAVIDIC MESSIANISM AT QUMRAN: NEW LIGHT FROM PSALM OF SOLOMON 17 (p.107-108) in Craig A. Evans,The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity: Studies in Language and Tradition (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000);106-123.
Second Elijah and the adultery of Herod

Malachi 2:15-16  
15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.  
16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

The Herod dynasty was known for adultery and violent intrigue divorce, murder of spouses and even children. God would become a swift witness against the adulterers (Malachi 3.5). This was fulfilled in the witness of John the Baptist; “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (Malachi 4.5). “For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodia’s sake, his brother Philip’s wife. For John said unto him, it is not lawful for thee to have her” (Matt 14.3-4). The priests, who were meant to be the messengers of the Lord of hosts (Malachi 2.7) had failed, they lived in Jerusalem with their rich garments and were bought and paid for by Herod, but God had sent his own forerunner in the spirit of Elijah.

Conclusion

The book of Malachi can probably be dated sometime in the reign of Antipater (died 36/37 BCE) anticipating the rise to power of the Edomite Kings, with Herod the Great appearing about 33 years before the birth of John the Baptist. The suggested dating range is therefore 100-30 CE. It is a prophetic oracle condemning the corrupt priesthood of that time and looking forward to the messenger of the covenant, the forerunner - - John the Baptist- - - second Elijah.

Supplementary information see Below
Supplementary information

(1) The descendants of Mattathias (Maccabeans dynasty)\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{maccabean_dynasty.png}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{16} By Marshall46 (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0) or GFDL (\{HYPERLINK "http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.htm"\})], via Wikimedia Commons \{HYPERLINK "https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AMaccabean_dynasty.PNG"\}
(2) Analysing the Hebrew of the Micah-Isaiah table (see Davis)

Malachi 3.1  mlākî  shîch
messenger-of-me  sending

Isaiah 42.19  ashîch  k'mlākî
I-am-sending  as-messenger-of-me

Malachi 3.1  ṭāḇâ' -  u phnē
way  and-he-"surfaces"

Isaiah 40.3  ḥr -  phnu
way-of  "surface-you"!

Isaiah 62.10  ḥr -  phnu
way-of  "surface-you"!

Malachi 3.2  mîṯroph
one-"refining"

Isaiah 1.25  u-ṣṭroph
and-I-shall-refine

Malachi 3.16  u-kiḥb
and-he-is-being-written

Isaiah 4.3  e-khûb
the-one-being-written

Malachi 4.1  u-let  qāḥ
and-he-"sets-affame  straw

Isaiah 5.25  qāḥ
tongue-of  straw

Malachi 4.6  ṭāḇâ' -  u-ṣṭîthi
the-earth  and-I-smite

Isaiah 11.4  qāḥ -  u-ṣeke
earth  and-he-smites
A Psalm Of Solomon. With Song. Of the King.

1 O Lord, Thou art our King for ever and ever,
   For in Thee, O God, doth our soul glory.
2 How long are the days of man's life upon the earth
   As are his days, so is the hope (set) upon him.
3 But we hope in God, our deliverer;
   For the might of our God is for ever with mercy,
4 And the kingdom of our God is for ever over the nations in judgment.
5 (4) Thou, O Lord, didst choose David (to be) king over Israel,
   And swaredst to him touching his seed that never should his kingdom fail before Thee.
6 (5) But, for our sins, sinners rose up against us;
   They assailed us and thrust us out;
   What Thou hadst not promised to them, they took away (from us) with violence.
7 They in no wise glorified Thy honorable name;
6 (6) They set a (worldly) monarchy in place of (that which was) their excellency;
8 They laid waste the throne of David in tumultuous arrogance.
7 (7) But Thou, O God, didst cast them down and remove their seed from the earth,
   In that there rose up against them a man that was alien to our race.
10 (8) According to their sins didst Thou recompense them, O God;
   So that it befell them according to their deeds.
11 (9) God showed them no pity;
   He sought out their seed and let not one of them go free.
12 (10) Faithful is the Lord in all His judgments Which He doeth upon the earth.
13 (11) The lawless one laid waste our land so that none inhabited it,
   They destroyed young and old and their children together.
14 (12) In the heat of His anger He sent them away even unto the west,
   And (He exposed) the rulers of the land unsparingly to derision.
15 (13) Being an alien the enemy acted proudly,
   And his heart was alien from our God.
16 (14) And all things [whatsoever he did in] Jerusalem,
   As also the nations [in the cities to their gods.]
17 (15) And the children of the covenant in the midst of the mingled peoples
   [surpassed them in evil.]
   There was not among them one that wrought in
   the midst of Jerusalem mercy and truth.
18 (16) They that loved the synagogues of the pious fled from them,
   As sparrows that fly from their nest.
19 (17) They wandered in deserts that their lives might be saved from harm,
   And precious in the eyes of them that lived abroad was any that escaped alive from them.

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17 One of the Pseudepigrapha, the Psalms of Solomon is a group of eighteen psalms (religious songs or poems) that are not part of any scriptural canon (they are, however, found in copies of the Peshitta and the Septuagint). The 17th of the 18 psalms is similar to Psalm 72 which has traditionally been attributed to Solomon, and hence may be the reason that the Psalms of Solomon have their name. An alternate theory is that the psalms were so highly regarded that Solomon's name was attached to them to keep them from being ignored or forgotten. Psalms of Solomon. (2017, January 29). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 09:48, April 10, 2017, from {HYPERLINK "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Psalms_of_Solomon&oldid=762592739"}
Over the whole earth were they scattered by lawless (men).

For the heavens withheld the rain from dropping upon the earth, Springs were stopped (that sprang) perennial(ly) out of the deeps, (that ran down) from lofty mountains. For there was none among them that wrought righteousness and justice;

From the chief of them to the least (of them) all were sinful;

The king was a transgressor, and the judge disobedient, and the people sinful.

Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David,

At the time in which Thou seest, O Go that he may reign over Israel Thy servant

And gird him with strength, that he may shatter unrighteous rulers,

And that he may purge Jerusalem from nations that trample (her) down to destruction.

Wisely, righteously 26 he shall thrust out sinners from (the) inheritance,

He shall destroy the pride of the sinner as a potter's vessel.

With a rod of iron he shall break in pieces all their substance,

He shall destroy the godless nations with the word of his mouth;

At his rebuke nations shall flee before him,

And he shall reprove sinners for the thoughts of their heart.

And he shall judge the people of the nations that has been sanctified by the Lord his God.

And he shall not suffer unrighteousness to lodge any more in their midst,

Nor shall there dwell with them any man that knoweth wickedness,

For he shall know them, that they are all sons of their God.

And he shall divide them according to their tribes upon the land,

And neither sojourner nor alien shall sojourn with them any more.

He shall judge peoples and nations in the wisdom of his righteousness. Selah.

And he shall have the heathen nations to serve him under his yoke;

And he shall glorify the Lord in a place to be seen of () all the earth;

And he shall purge Jerusalem, making it holy as of old:

So that nations shall come from the ends of the earth to see his glory,

Bringing as gifts her sons who had fainted,

And to see the glory of the Lord, wherewith God hath glorified her.

And he (shall be) a righteous king, taught of God, over them,

And there shall be no unrighteousness in his days in their midst,

For all shall be holy and their king the anointed of the Lord.

For he shall not put his trust in horse and rider and bow,

Nor shall he multiply for himself gold and silver for war,

Nor shall he gather confidence from () a multitude () for the day of battle.

The Lord Himself is his king, the hope of him

that is mighty through (his) hope in God.

All nations (shall be) in fear before him,

For he will smite the earth with the word of his mouth for ever.

He will bless the people of the Lord with wisdom and gladness,

And he himself (will be) pure from sin, so that he may rule a great people.

He will rebuke rulers, and remove sinners by the might of his word;

And (relying) upon his God, throughout his days he will not stumble;

For God will make him mighty by means of (His) holy spirit,

And wise by means of the spirit of understanding, with strength and righteousness.

And the blessing of the Lord (will be) with him: he will be strong and stumble not;

His hope (will be) in the Lord: who then can prevail against him

(He will be) mighty in his works, and strong in the fear of God,

shepherding the flock of the Lord faithfully and righteously,
And will suffer none among them to stumble in their pasture.
46 (41) He will lead them all aright,
    And there will be no pride among them that any among them should be oppressed.
47 (42) This (will be) the majesty of the king of Israel whom God knoweth;
    He will raise him up over the house of Israel to correct him.
48 (43) His words (shall be) more refined than costly gold, the choicest;
    In the assemblies he will judge the peoples, the tribes of the sanctified.
49 His words (shall be) like the words of the holy ones in the midst of sanctified peoples.
50 Blessed be they that shall be in those days,
    In that they shall see the good fortune of Israel which God shall bring to pass in the gathering together of the tribes.
51 May the Lord hasten His mercy upon Israel!
      May He deliver us from the uncleanness of unholy enemies!
      The Lord Himself is our king for ever and ever.

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Jewish-Christians in the period 70 CE - 135 CE

The term Jewish-Christians is a misnomer (although they were sometimes called Jewish-Christians or “believers” even in ancient sources), which is much discussed in scholarship. Suffice to say that they are Jews who kept the law but regarded Jesus as the messiah. These were the first and second century Christians in the land of Israel (this chapter does not focus on Diaspora Christians). As far as law-keeping is concerned we think here of the apostle Paul (a Jewish Rabbi), who had Timothy circumcised and performed vows in the temple. Jewish-Christians (we use the term loosely) did not reject the law but like Paul they put it into perspective and saw Christ as the fulfilment of the law and the prophets. In contrast, the Rabbis rejected Christ as the messiah and doubled down on Law-keeping as a means of salvation. The extension of the gospel to the gentiles by Paul caused friction (even amongst Jewish-Christians) but was accepted by the Jerusalem council with caveats concerning ritual purity etc. In the end Jewish-Christians were just Jews who believed that Jesus was the messiah. They did not become a separate “religion” until later and even when Christianity separated from its roots Jewish believing (Christian) communities remained in Syria-Palestine and developed their own unique forms of Christianity with the law etc still central to some extent.

The situation after 70 is therefore complex. Some Jewish-Christians fled to Pella during the Roman siege of Jerusalem during the first revolt (more on this anon). Others remained in Galilee, where the family of Jesus dwelt (half-brothers, cousins etc) and many priests retired to the same region after the fall of the temple. Apparently, despite the descriptions given by Josephus, the region of Galilee was not as ravaged by the first revolt as regional Judea and particularly Jerusalem bore the brunt of Roman wrath, Jewish-Christians who hid in the Galilee region could have avoided much of the troubles. We do not know whether the returning priests were friendly or hostile but they became neighbours of Jesus’ family. Jesus’ family was investigated by the Roman emperors at least on three occasions ostensibly to nip any nascent messianic movement in the bud (more on this anon) but were deemed harmless. After the death of James the brother of the Lord, Simeon the son of Clopas, first cousin of Jesus and James became the successor in the leadership of the Jerusalem church.

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1 The term Christians is first found in Antioch among Latin-Greek speakers (Acts 11.27) the Semitic (Aramaic) term became “Nazarenes”.
2 Acts 6:7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.
3 Hist.eccl.3.11
During this time Mary was under John’s care and may have accompanied him to Ephesus where he is thought to have resided for some time. Many Jewish and Gentile Christian converts (again a false distinction) had perished in the Nero persecution of ca.65 and much of the first generation (including most of the apostles) had already perished by the time the temple fell. The generation after the fall of the temple was therefore mainly the second generation of Christians with perhaps some youngsters (Timothy?) surviving this transition.

The Bar Kochba revolt in ca 132 CE saw Judea completely devastated but the region of Galilee largely untouched (again). Some ancient sources suggest another flight of Christians (to Pella?) during this period but the Galilee region would probably have been a safe-haven for Christians. The persecutions wrought against Jewish-Christians recorded by patrician sources have been much discussed by scholarship and it seems undeniable that some form of persecution was instigated by Bar Kochba during the revolt in Judea.

A section from Philip S. Alexander’s chapter on Jewish Believers in Early Rabbinic Literature4 has been included here to clarify the background,

“There are no good grounds for believing that the group of rabbis who gathered at Yavneh5 to begin a reconstruction of Judaism in the aftermath of the fall of the temple in 70 CE represented anything more than a sect, or party within Judaism. They may have been well organised, and ably led by respected scholars, but they were only one of a number of sects or parties within Palestinian Judaism at the time, and in no sense can they be regarded as at this stage representing Jewish orthodoxy. This party over the next one hundred and fifty years was to make a successful bid for power within Judaism. It was to claim, with increasing emphasis and success, that its position did represent normative Judaism and that the views of its ideological opponents constituted heresy, which put them in some sense outside the community of Israel (Kelal Yisra’el). This was a new and momentous development within Israel, which stood in marked contrast to the broad pluralism of the Second Temple period... [pp., 665-6]....The struggle between the rabbinic party and the Jewish Christians was probably publicly fought out in the synagogue. There were other important communal institutions in Judaism, but they were unlikely to have been a battleground, largely because Jewish Christians would have had little involvement in them. They held a narrowly religious view of Judaism, which effectively meant that they withdrew from much of the political life of the community. They would have had no interest in dominating the law courts, or even the schools.

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4 Philip S. Alexander, Jewish Believers in Early Rabbinic Literature (2d to 5th Centuries) in Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries,(eds., Oskar Skarsaune,Reidar Hvalvik,Hendrickson Publishers,2007);659-709
5 Ed: One of the major ancient cities in the southern coastal plain, situated 20 km (12.43 mi) south of Jaffa
They were deeply sectarian. By way of contrast, the rabbis, though probably a minority party in Palestinian Judaism down to the mid third century CE., aspired from the outset to control every aspect of Jewish communal life and to bring it into conformity with their understanding of the Torah. They were a much more political movement, with a broader view of Judaism. In the end they dominated the law courts (bateidin) and applied rabbinic law in them. Their power-base was their academies (batei midrash) where they trained their followers and then sent them out into the community to act as arbitrators (dayyanim) and to teach the rabbinic way of life. They probably increasingly influenced the lower levels of the educational system, such as it was, from which they recruited students to their Yeshivahs. The seeds of its failure were sown in the narrowness of Jewish Christianity. It is hardly surprising that it found itself increasingly isolated within Jewish society. It conceded too much ground to the rabbinic party without a fight. In retrospect its elimination looks almost inevitable [pp., 676-8]. And Alexander’s conclusion: “The classic rabbinic literature of the Talmudic period reveals less about the concrete details of Jewish Christianity than one might have hoped. More information can doubtless be squeezed out of the evidence that we have considered, if we correlate it fully and systematically with Christian sources, but this study has deliberately limited itself to the rabbinic texts. Yet even if we invoke the comparative material the yield of hard historical and social data is still likely to be meagre. We catch a glimpse here and there of Jewish Christians in Palestine living side-by-side with rabbinical Jews, socializing at various levels, attending the same synagogues in the early period, buying and selling, participating in the same communal occasions such as marriages, frequenting the same communal baths, discussing and arguing in the Street about the interpretation of Torah. We hear of Christian healers who healed rabbinical Jews in the name of Jesus. But the picture remains fuzzy. One reason for this, as we argued, was the deliberate decision of the rabbis to ignore Christianity as much as they could. From the Tannaitic period they adopted the strategy of trying to separate rabbinical Jews and Christians, to acknowledge as little as possible the existence of Christianity as a living movement in their environment. Nevertheless, the rabbinic evidence, such as it is, is vital for understanding the fate of Jewish Christianity. It shows how the rabbinic movement politically out-manoeuvred Jewish Christianity within the Jewish communities, first in Palestine and then in the Diaspora, till by the fifth century Jewish Christianity seems virtually to have disappeared, and Rabbinism to have triumphed comprehensively. The rabbinic movement entered the post-70 period as only one of a number of parties bidding for power in Israel. It set out to define itself as Jewish orthodoxy. It categorized the groups which opposed it, including the Jewish Christians, as heretical. By the beginning of the third century it probably had largely stamped its authority on the synagogues, on the law courts, on the educational system and more generally on Jewish society. Jewish Christianity, as a result, was increasingly marginalized.
Curiously, however, from the late third century onwards, just when the triumph of rabbinism was beginning to look assured, at least in Palestine, the rabbinic sources become more open about Christianity, more directly engaged with it. This may well be a measure of the rabbis’ confidence, but it would also have become more and more difficult to ignore Christianity, especially after the time of Constantine, when the Roman empire “went over to minuti” [ed., heresy]. However, this engagement with Christianity was probably largely with Gentile Christianity, rather than with Jewish Christianity. Increasingly pressurized by rabbinic Judaism, effectively abandoned by the Gentile churches who doubted its orthodoxy, Jewish Christianity as an identifiable entity seems by the fifth century to have all but disappeared, at least in the main centres of Jewish population in the Mediterranean world and the Levant [pp., 708-9]. Aspects of the above summary will be examined in more detail in the next section.

The flight to Pella ca 70 CE

The Christian historian Eusebius relates a story of the Jerusalem Christians fleeing to Pella, a gentile city across the Jordan (Hist. eccl. 3.5.3). However, S.G.F. Brandon questioned whether the Pella episode is authentic and argued that Eusebius may have told the story in order to authenticate a later Christian community in that area and his hypothesis has been accepted by some scholars.

There is a tradition that attests to the flight of the Jerusalem Church, just before or during the siege of city, into a town called Pella in the region of the Decapolis across the Jordan River.7

In the past the veracity of this tradition was held without question. Then in the middle of the twentieth century, S.G.F. Brandon in his book The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church provided some arguments against it that led most scholars to abandon their belief in its historicity. Today, scholars take diametrically opposite positions on this, many of them due to pre-set theological agenda.8 Here we will survey the available evidence and make our own decision.

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6 [HYPERLINK "http://www.rejectionofpascalswager.net/pella.html"] [Accessed April 2017]
7 Gerd Ludemann, who is rather skeptical of the Pella tradition, suggested another flight tradition, one in which the relatives of Jesus fled from Nazareth to Cochaba, in Batanae. (See the map) The evidence is one cited by Eusebius in History of the Church 1:7:14 which, on provide an excerpt from the writings of Julius Africanus, a second century CE Christian writer (c.160-c240). Africanus in that excerpt tied the relatives of Jesus (the despoyyn) to Cochaba after Nazareth. This led Ludemann to conclude that there is some tradition tied into the fleeing of Jesus’ relatives to Cochaba to escape the effects of the war. Ludemann, Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity: p123-128
8 Most fundamentalists/evangelicals tend to accept the historicity of the tradition since it allows continuity between the Gentile Jerusalem church that was established after the second Jewish revolt in Aelia Capitolina. [Aelia
• It is important to first line out the primary documents that mentioned this flight.
• We will then analyse these document for the possible source (or sources) underlying them.
• We will then look at the various arguments as to the plausibility of such a flight.
• We conclude that the flight to Pella was historical

Primary Documents on the Pella Flight
The extant explicit references on a flight to Pella are those by the Church Fathers Eusebius (c260-c340) in his History of the Church (c325 CE), Epiphanius (c315-403), Bishop of Salamis in his books Panarion (c374-376) & On Measures and Weights and the so-called Pseudo-Clementines (c 4th century CE).9 We give them all below:

History of the Church 3:5:3
But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella.

Panarion 29:7:7-8
The Nazoraean sect exists in Beroea near Coele Syria, in the Decapolis near the region of Pella, and in Bashan in the place called Cocaba, which in Hebrew is called Chochabe. That is where the sect began, when all the disciples were living in Pella after they moved from Jerusalem, since Christ told them to leave Jerusalem and withdraw because it was about to be besieged. For this reason they settled in Peraea and there, as I said, they lived. This is where the Nazoraean sect began.

Panarion 30:2:7
Their sect began after the capture of Jerusalem. For when all those who believed in Christ settled at that time for the most part in Peraea, in a city called Pella belonging to the Decapolis mentioned in the gospel, which is next to Batanaea and the land of Bashan, then they moved there and stayed...

On Weights and Measures 15
For when the city was about to be captured and sacked by the Romans, all the disciples were warned beforehand by an angel to remove from the city, doomed as it was to utter destruction. On migrating from it they settled at Pella, the town already indicated, across the Jordan. It is said to belong to Decapolis

Capitolina was the name given to Jerusalem by the Romans after the second Jewish revolt in 135 CE. Significantly no Jews were allowed there.} Others, intent on proving that the second century Jewish Christians in the Transjordan region (which includes Pella) could not had been descended from the original Church, have taken the opposite position.

9 The Pseudo-Clementines is a collection of works that was circulated under the name of Clement of Rome (fl c. 96 CE). Works generally grouped under these include the Clementine Homilies, the Clementine Recognitions and two epistles (Peter to James, including James' response and Clement to James) The Pseudo-Clementines are generally dated to the fourth century CE. But it is generally agreed that they used sources dating from earlier centuries. Ferguson (ed), Encyclopedia of Early Christianity: p964
Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1:39:3

Subsequently also an evident proof of this great mystery is supplied in the fact, that every one who, believing in this Prophet who had been foretold by Moses, is baptized in His name, shall be kept unhurt from the destruction of war which impends over the unbelieving nation, and the place itself; but that those who do not believe shall be made exiles from their place and kingdom, that even against their will they may understand and obey the will of God.

Various scholars claim to find indirect allusions in the New Testament to the flight from Jerusalem. These include Mark 13:14, 16:7; Matthew 10:23; Luke 21:20 and Revelation 12:6.\textsuperscript{10} Some have suggested the witness of the Toldoth Jesu, a fifth century Jewish anti-Christian polemic.\textsuperscript{11} While it may be possible that some of these additional sources actually do refer to the flight, they are just too garbled or vague to be used as proof that it actually occurred. We will limit our analysis to the traditions recorded by Eusebius, Epiphanius and the anonymous author of the Pseudo-Clementines.

The Source of the Tradition

First let us look at the patristic evidence. It has been pointed out that the similarities between the words and phrases used between the Epiphanius and Eusebius accounts mean that the former is dependent on the latter as the source of his information. So for citations from the church fathers, we basically have the story as it is given in Eusebius' History of the Church 3:5:3.\textsuperscript{12}

So the next question is; where did Eusebius get this information? The most obvious candidate would be, of course, Hegesippus (c110-180). We find that Eusebius quoted Hegesippus for his story on James leadership in the Jerusalem Church (History of the Church 2:23:3) and about the succession of Symeon to that position (History of the Church 4:22:45). However Gerd Ludemann had pointed out several strong arguments against Hegesippus being the source of the Pella tradition:\textsuperscript{13}

- The tradition seems to presuppose the use of Pella as a permanent location for the remnants of the Jerusalem Church, not just a place for a temporary stay before returning to Jerusalem.
- Eusebius would normally indicate when he was quoting from Hegesippus. For this passage there was no such specification of Hegesippus as a source.
- Pella was not mentioned in any of the many citations of Hegesippus in History of the Church although we would have expected such references.

While these do not prove Hegesippus was not the source, it does make him an unlikely candidate. A possible candidate is Aristo of Pella (fl. c 150 CE). Eusebius mentioned him as a source for his story on the Bar Kochba Revolt (the second Jewish War; 132-135 CE) in History of the Church 4:6:3. Some considerations make him a likely source. He was from Pella. He described the second Jewish War, thus it is reasonable to think that he would have mentioned something about the preceding one and, in doing that, would have mentioned the flight to his hometown.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{10} Ludemann, op. cit.: p206-207
\textsuperscript{11} Schonfeld, Saints Against Caeser: p130-141
\textsuperscript{12} Schonfeld, Saints Against Caeser: p130-141
\textsuperscript{13} ibid.:204-205
\textsuperscript{14} ibid.:205-206
Based on source critical analysis too detailed to go into here, the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1:33-71 is generally recognized to be based on a mid-second century source, also probably based east of the Jordan river.15 Whether it was based in Pella, as suggested by Gerd Ludemann, is not conclusive. So it may be a source that is independent to the one used by Eusebius, or it may not. For the purposes of our analysis we will take the conservative stance and assume that it did have the same source (Aristo of Pella).

What does all this analysis show us? I think we can have some confidence in the source.16 The reasons are as follows:

- Only the Jewish Christians would have an interest in preserving traditions relating to their ancestry from Jerusalem. Yet we know from Epiphanius (Panarion 29:7:7, 30:18:1) that Jewish Christian groups (Nazarenes and Ebionites) lived not only in Pella but the whole strip from Syria in the North through Peneas, Cochaba in Batanaea/Bashan, Pella and the surrounding region around Decapolis and finally to Moab and Nabatea in the South. [See the map below] Thus there were many locations that would had had the incentive to call themselves the final home of the Jerusalem Church. Yet there was no competing tradition from other Jewish Christian locations.17

- Thus the timing of the source (circa 150 CE), although admittedly rather late, actually goes some way towards strengthening the conclusion that the Pella immigration was historical, for there was certainly ample time for rival traditions to be brought forward if the Jewish Christian communities in the Transjordan did not feel the story of the Pella flight had merit. And certainly had Epiphanius or Eusebius been aware of conflicting traditions they would have been more than happy to include in their works as just another example of the deceit practiced by the heretics. That the single tradition is so firmly entrenched means that the tradition, when it was told by Aristo of Pella around 150 CE had already attained the status of a strong unchallenged tradition.

- There is not necessarily a conflict between this tradition and that of Hegesippus, who had fourteen Jewish Jerusalem "bishops" after James. As Ray Pritz pointed out, it is possible for a group to keep the name of its original location in its title although they may no longer be based there (citing Gibbons Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire); e.g. the Patriarch of Alexandria kept his title although he had long ago moved to Cairo, the "Roman pontiffs" stayed in Avignon, France for seventy years. The prestige of Jerusalem among the Jewish Christians would have certainly made them keep the title related to the city somehow,18 even though they were then residing in Pella.19

15 ibid.:182
16 Gerd Ludemann, (ibid.:209-211 )whose analysis I had followed closely actually came to the opposite conclusion; i.e. that the sources are not reliable. His reasons are:
   - The evidence is scarce and limited only to the region from Pella.
   - The sources are relatively late.
   - There is conflict with other evidence-by which he meant that the detail about the successors of James returning to Jerusalem as "bishops" conflict with the Pella tradition of permanent residence there.

17 This includes the Cochaba tradition mentioned above. For that tradition if historical merely speaks about the migration of some of the despoyvov from Nazareth to Cochaba but does not necessarily conflict with the migration tradition from Jerusalem to Pella.
18 Of course, the title "bishop" is in itself anachronistic. The titles were probably given retroactively by the Jewish Christians. The point is that they would have retained the connection with Jerusalem, whatever they called them.
19 Pritz, Nazarene Jewish Christianity: p123
Thus the relative lateness of the source and the presence of ostensibly conflicting traditions do
not cast a fatal blow to the reliability of the tradition. The absence of any conflicting tradition is a
strong indication of the historicity of the tradition.

Plausibility of the Flight

The argument about the implausible conditions for the flight, first proposed by S.G.F. Brandon
in *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (1957), has been influential in causing many scholars
to abandon the historicity of the Pella tradition. Brandon pointed out three (in his opinion
insurmountable) difficulties: 20

- **The difficulty in the choice of Pella as the final destination.**

  According to Brandon, Pella was a Gentile city and on *a priori* grounds an improbable
  selection for pious Jews. Furthermore Jewish insurgents attacked Pella and other surrounding
cities as revenge for the Gentile massacre of Jews in Caesarea in 66 CE. (Jewish War 2:18:1).
Eusebius said that the Jerusalem church left the city "before the war". This could mean one
of two dates: before the failed expedition of Cestius Gallus in 66 CE or before the campaign
of Vespasian in 67 CE. Thus had the Jerusalem group left before Gallus's expedition and
arrived before the aforementioned Jewish attack on Pella they would have been killed in this
massacre by the marauding Jews. If they had arrived *after* the attack, before the Vespasian
campaign, the surviving Gentile inhabitants of Pella would have taken revenge on them.

- **The difficulty of actually leaving Jerusalem.**

  If the members of the Jerusalem church had tried to leave after the failed expedition of
Gallus, the trek would have been mortally dangerous. For the locations outside Jerusalem
would have been patrolled by the Jewish revolutionaries. We know from Josephus that they
did not treat deserters kindly—they slit their throats (Jewish War 5:10:1). If they had left later,
during the final siege of Titus in spring of 70 CE, the same territory around Jerusalem would
have been controlled by Roman soldiers and their auxiliaries. And these, just like the
insurgents, did not have much compassion for Jewish deserters—they slit their bellies. (Jewish
War 5:13:4-5).

- **Lack of Any Evidence of the Influence of the Pella Church**

  Finally, Brandon argued, why was there no sign of any continuing influence of the
community in the Christian church after the war; during the (remainder of) first and second
centuries CE. This is surprising in view of the obviously unchallenged prestige of the
Jerusalem church headed by James.

Brandon added that the Jewish Christians known to be in Pella from early in the second century
must have been refugees *Galilee* ("since it was closer to Pella than from Jerusalem") who fled
there during "the suppresion of the revolt, or shortly after." It was these Jewish Christians who
concocted the Pella tradition as a foundation legend for their congregation. However there are
several serious flaws in Brandon's analysis; as we shall see below:

20 Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*: p168-173
It should be noted that there is a discrepancy in Brandon's analysis here. He claimed that the Pella's tradition arose because of Jewish Christians who came to Pella after escaping from Galilee, since this was "much closer to Pella than was Jerusalem".21 Yet this contradicts one of his major arguments, that Pella would not have been a safe refuge for any group of Jews. (See his argument above) If it was possible for Galilean Jewish Christians to settle in Pella, it would also be possible for Jerusalem Jewish Christians.

Brandon's argument on the inhospitality of Pella was based on a single passage in Josephus' Jewish War 2:18:1 22 which mentioned that the Jews "sacked" cities such as Gerasa, Pella and Scythopolis. It is unclear whether "sacked" implies complete devastation or something less. We do not know whether the devastation inflicted on all these cities were the same. However, we do know that the reaction from the Gentiles in these cities were not uniformly violent. While many cities, such as Scythopolis, certainly did take out their revenge against Jews (see Jewish War 2:18:4-5), others such as Gerasa (Jewish War 2:18:5) did not harm the Jews that stayed with them. The reaction of the inhabitants of Pella was not specifically mentioned by Josephus. 23

### Escaping from Jerusalem

Although it was true that leaving Jerusalem during those times form 66-70 CE would have been extremely dangerous, it was by no means impossible. Indeed we find Josephus recounting, on quite a few occasions, the escape of many Jews from Jerusalem during that time. As we can see from some of the excerpts below,24 many of the Jews were able……….. .... continued

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21 ibid.: p172-173

22 Josephus 2:18:1 Upon which stroke that the Jews received at Caesarea, the whole nation was greatly enraged; so they divided themselves into several parties, and laid waste the villages of the Syrians, and their neighboring cities, Philadelphia, and Sebonitis, and Gerasa, and Pella, and Scythopolis, and after them Gadara, and Hippos; and falling upon Gaulonitis, some cities they destroyed there, and some they set on fire, and then went to Kedasa, belonging to the Tyrians, and to Ptolemais, and to Gaba, and to Cesarea; nor was either Sebaste [Samaria] or Askelon able to oppose the violence with which they were attacked; and when they had burnt these to the ground; they entirely demolished Anthedon and Gaza; many also of the villages that were about every one of those cities were plundered, and an immense slaughter was made of the men who were caught in them.

23 Pritz, op cit p124-125

24 Some of the examples of people escaping from Jerusalem in the period 66-70 given in Josephus' Jewish War are:

- **[c. November 66]**
  Jewish War 2:20:1
  After this calamity had befallen Cestius, many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city...

- **[c. Winter 67/68 before Passover]**
  Jewish War 4:6:1
  The Idumeans complied with these persuasions; and, in the first place, they set those that were in the prisons at liberty, being about two thousand of the populace, who thereupon fled away immediately to Simon
  Jewish War : 4:7:3
  These things were told Vespasian by deserters; for although the seditious watched all the passages out of the city, and destroyed all, whosoever they were, that came thither, yet were there some that had concealed themselves, and when they had fled to the Romans, ... Vespasian did indeed already pity the calamities these men were in...

- **[c. June 70]**
  Jewish War 5:10:1
  As Josephus was speaking thus with a loud voice, the seditious would neither yield to what he said, nor did they deem it safe for them to alter their conduct; but as for the people, they had a great inclination to
to flee the city right up till the end. Of course many of those who escaped died either from famine, from over-eating(!) from the food supplied by the Romans, or slaughtered by the Jewish insurgents or Roman auxiliaries looking for gold in their bellies. But by no means did the accounts by Josephus show that all who managed to leave died. As we can see from the excerpt below, on one occasion as many as 2000 people escaped (Jewish War 4:6:1). Difficult as it may be it certainly was "do-able" as Josephus reminds us. However we would not expect that the whole congregation from Jerusalem managed to get away. As Josephus' writings had shown, many would have died trying to break out and, from what we can see from the devoutness of the Jerusalem church to their ancestral religion, many may have chosen to stay back (and perhaps fight). Thus we do not expect the number of escapees to be very large.

**Influence of the Pella Church**

It is certainly extremely likely, whatever the size of the band of Jerusalem Christians that managed to escape to Pella, they must have been in a pretty destitute state. It is unlikely that they would be able to assert any authority on the whole church so soon after the war. Furthermore, the fact that they had escaped to Pella may not be well known to the church at large, thus asserting any authority by sending emissaries would be quite difficult. Thus given time the Gentile Church evolved their own version of Christianity which eventually did away with the influence of the original Jerusalem church in Pella.

Additionally, it should be noted that Pella did have some influence on the development of Jewish Christianity, since, as we have noted above, it is probable that the source document for the Pseudo-Clementines came from there.

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Jewish War 5:13:4

Hereupon some of the deserters, having no other way, leaped down from the wall immediately, while others went out of the city with stones, as if they would fight them; but hereupon they fled away to the Romans. But here a worse fate accompanied these than what they had found within the city; and they met with a quicker dispatch from the too great abundance they had among the Romans, than they could have done from the famine among the Jews; for when they came first to the Romans, they were puffed up by the famine, and swelled like men in a dropsy; after which they all on the sudden overfilled those bodies that were before empty, and so burst asunder, excepting such only as were skillful enough to restrain their appetites, and by degrees took in their food into bodies unaccustomed thereto.

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25 *ibid.*: p126
As for Brandon's remark that the Pella tradition functioned as a foundation legend for the growing Jewish Christian community there, the simplest retort is that by Robert M. Price in his book *Deconstructing Jesus*: "Right enough, but this needn't mean they did not actually make such an exodus". 26

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26 Price, Deconstructing Jesus: p109
Discussion and Conclusion

We have done a pretty in-depth survey of the Pella tradition. Arguments against historicity include the relative lateness of the source (circa 150 CE) and the implausibility of the scenario of escape from Jerusalem and into Pella.

However we have seen that these objections are not necessarily fatal to the tradition. The unchallenged position of the story of the Pella immigration (even after taking into account a parallel Cochaba tradition) provides confidence that it attained its status as a strong tradition early—certainly earlier than the source used by Eusebius and (probably) the author of the Pseudoclementines.

The implausibility argument by Brandon is not as formidable as it first appears and contains within it certain contradictions. Certainly if Galilean Jewish Christians could settle in Pella during that time (as Brandon himself conceded), so too could Jerusalem Jewish Christians. Conditions in Pella may or may not be as bad as in some of the other cities—since we have Josephus' report that the Jews in a few (albeit a minority) of the cities were left more or less unmolested despite the recent sacking there by Jewish insurgents. The loss of influence of the Jerusalem church is indeed to be expected from the circumstances of the escape and not something in need of an explanation.

Finally we note that the parallel Cochaba tradition, which probably states that some of Jesus' relatives escaped from Nazareth to the town in Bashan/Batanea during the Jewish War, does not contradict the Pella flight and may even supplement it. In other words during the time when Symeon was leading the Jerusalem Nazarenes out to Pella, some of Jesus' other relatives were doing the same out of Nazareth. The presence of these two traditions point to the fact that many Jewish Christians fled to the east of the Jordan River during the war.

In conclusion, the balance of evidence favours the historicity of the Pella tradition.

The following section, including sources is reproduced (with minor cosmetic adjustments) from the 2008 article (draft version) by Glenn Miller at the Christian Thinktank: Did the Jewish War eliminate all the possible counter-witnesses to the life of Jesus in the NT? 27

The Aftermath of the first Revolt (70 CE)

Consider this summary statement by Levine:

“Nevertheless, it is easy to overstate the effects of the year 70. Contrary to popular opinion, the exile did not commence in that year—most Jews were already living in the Diaspora before the destruction—nor did the year 70 signal the loss of Jewish independence. In reality, Judea had been conquered 130 years earlier by Pompey in 63 B.C.E. Although much autonomy had been granted to Herod (37-4 B.C.E.), it had already been greatly curtailed following Judea's annexation as a Roman province in 6 C.E. ... Moreover, the continuum between the pre-70 and post-70 periods was maintained by the ongoing rule of Rome; culturally, economically and even socially much of Jewish life was not seriously interrupted between the pre- and post-destruction era. Indeed, large parts of the Jewish people were unaffected or only marginally affected by the revolt and its aftermath. Few Jewish communities in the Galilee were destroyed—Jotapata and Gamla were the exceptions. The Roman military march had little, if any, effect on the large Jewish settlement in Perea east of the Jordan, on the communities along the coastal plain or even on many areas in Judea itself. Thus, beyond Jerusalem and some parts of Judea, the upheavals of the First Revolt were not all that widespread, either demographically or economically.”

And Schwartz:

“And Schwartz:

“For many, or even most, Palestinian Jews, especially those outside Judaea proper, the revolts had caused less drastic disruptions. Here the main changes, aside from an influx of Judeans of unknown extent, were produced by the collapse of the central institutions—no more pilgrimages, no enforced deference to representatives of the Temple and Torah, no obligatory gifts to the priests.”

The First Jewish War was devastating for Jerusalem and parts of Judea, but not for Galilee. Similarly, the Bar Kochba Revolt (131-135), which resulted in the expulsion of Jews and Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, but had no impact on Galilee. The Galileans neither participated nor were affected by it (except for the migration of rich and/or learned Judeans to Galilee which followed).

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“Galilee scarcely took part in the Bar Kochba revolt of a.d. 131 to 135. Bar Kochba (see Simon bar Kosiba) tried to involve the Galileans, but perhaps the memories of a.d. 66 to 70 burned too brightly. Galilee seems to have mainly stayed quiet, although tunnels in which Jews hid during the revolt have been discovered. It was after the revolt, perhaps after a.d. 160, that Sepphoris became known by its Greek name, Diocaesarea”. 30

“No texts, coins, or archaeological excavations indicate that Galilee was involved in the second great Judean revolt against Roman rule, the Bar Kokhba Revolt of 132-135. The extensive disruption and devastation were confined to Judea. Following the first revolt, however, Roman military presence increased in the area, as did the economic burdens that entailed…. The major impact of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and Judea came after the Bar Kokhba Revolt with the migration of prominent Judean families to Galilee and the resulting development of rabbinic academies in Sepphoris and Tiberias. Indeed, by late antiquity, Galilee and Tiberias in particular had become perhaps the most important centers of nascent rabbinic Judaism, with influence reaching far and wide in the Roman empire and into the Babylonian Jewish communities…. After the further Roman devastation of Judea in suppressing the Bar Kokhba Revolt, many of the sages moved to Galilee, establishing academies first in Usha and Beth Shearim and then in Sepphoris.” 31

“Why Galilee, so far as we know, had played no significant part in the Bar Kochba revolt, and why the Jewish villages of the former Idumaean zone play only a small role in rabbinic literature, it is not possible to say. …32

“Until relatively recently, scholars have assumed that the entire province of Judea and most Jews living there were mobilized and actively supported the Bar-Kokhba revolt. This view is based on highly exaggerated accounts that magnified the suffering, tragedy and loss of life during the revolt. Later rabbinic tradition adopted a generally critical attitude toward Bar-Kokhba—referring to him as Bar Kosba (Son of Lies); it sought to discredit him and to demonstrate the futility of armed rebellion. Similarly, the Church Fathers saw the Bar-Kokhba revolt as a futile attempt to restore the Jewish independence that had been taken away by God as punishment for the Jews' denial of Jesus. Even the Roman historian Dio Cassius greatly exaggerated the scope of the violence, thereby enhancing the significance of the Roman victory; he speaks of the destruction of some 50 fortifications and 985 villages and the loss of 585,000 lives!

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All these claims notwithstanding, there is practically no description of hostilities except in southern Judea (the biblical area of Judah). The archaeological material clearly corroborates this picture. All remains of the Bar-Kokhba revolt, whether coins, caves of refuge, papyri or fortifications, have been found in that region. The Galilee, the second major area of Jewish population at the time, remained virtually untouched by the devastation of the revolt and thus was able to assume a position of leadership as it absorbed refugees from the southern part of the country after the hostilities ended.”  

**Events and Damages of the First Jewish War on Galilee (ca.70)**

We should note at the outset that there were two historical accounts of the Jewish War written: one by Josephus and one by his political rival Justus of Tiberias. The one by Justus is only known through Josephus’ unflattering remarks about his rival’s account, so we don’t have it to use. References to the Jewish war in classical historians are summaries mostly (e.g., Tacitus) and coins commemorating the War give precious little data. With this in mind, we have to recognize—with most historians—the ‘exaggerated’ accounts of Josephus, with regard to his personal ‘importance’ in the war and with regard to (alternately) the brutality and the clemency of the Roman military leaders! In our data quotes, we will see very strong statements by scholars on his exaggeration, while most will give some credence to the basic outlines of his story. Most of the time, it seems like Josephus is inflating his numbers by an order of magnitude:

“The first impression we have, once we recognize that Josephus’s accounts of the Galilean phase of the Jewish War constitute one long self-glorification of his own exploits as the great Jewish general worthy of engaging in war with the future emperor Vespasian, is that there was not much of a war… Again, while we cannot trust the details, including the exaggerated numbers, we must take seriously the basics of his account of Japha’s resistance to the Roman reconquest (BJ. 3.289-306; he even gives the date, 13 July 67). That is, persisting in their insurrection, the villagers offered stiff resistance to the Roman troops, the "women as well as the able-bodied men doing whatever they could to fight back. In reaction to such resistance the angered Roman commanders became all the more vicious in retaliation. As Josephus reports, virtually the whole population (thousands, but not 15,000) was massacred.”

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33 Levine in Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of Their Origins and Early Development, Hershel Shanks (ed), Biblical Archeology Society: 1992,141f

Galilee seems relatively passive, and the majority of natives seem uninterested in the war at all. There are very few actual battles described—but lots of fleeing and hiding... Summary accounts in the secondary literature typically only mention/describe a couple of battles, with most of the large cities only marginally involved/affected.

“During the first revolt Galilee formed one military command under the leadership of the general Josephus, later known as a historian. Vespasian, the Roman commander sent by the emperor Nero, marched south from Tyre to Acco-Ptolemais and set up a headquarters. From there he routed any Jewish defenders in Galilee on his way eastward to Sepphoris. The city fathers of Sepphoris met him in the field and declared their loyalty to Rome and their abhorrence of the revolt, petitioning Vespasian for a garrison to protect them from their more warlike neighbors (Josephus J.W. 3.2.4 §§30–34; Life 74 §411). Josephus and the few defenders he could gather entered Jotapata in the mountains about 10 miles north of Sepphoris. Vespasian besieged the city for forty-seven days, then took it in a fearsome slaughter. He discovered Josephus, arrested him and saved him for later. After the surrender of Tiberias and the defeat of the Jewish rebels in a pitched battle on the Sea of Galilee, Vespasian had secured Galilee and needed only to march to Jerusalem to prosecute the siege there and finally at Masada.”

“In the spring of 67 the Roman general Vespasian, sent by Nero, and his son Titus arrived with an army of nearly 60,000 men (J.W. 3.4.2 §69). Using friendly Sepphoris as a base in Galilee, Vespasian encountered little resistance in that district except from the fortified places where most of the resistance had moved. His first sustained opposition came from the hilltop fortress Jotapata under Josephus’ command. After a seven-week siege it fell in July 67 (J.W. 3.7.5–31 §§150–288; 3.7.33–36 §§316–39). Josephus surrendered and was taken prisoner (J.W. 3.8.8 §392; cf. 4.10.7 §§622–29). Then the Roman forces took the port of Joppa (J.W. 3.9.7–8 §§445–61) in late July to protect the supply routes, Tiberias in August (J.W. 3.9.2–4 §§414–31), Tarichaea in September (J.W. 3.10.1–5 §§462–502), the fortress of Gamala in October after a four-week siege (J.W. 4.1.3–7 §§11–53; 4.1.9–10 §§62–83) and finally Gischala. There the rebel leader John of Gischala escaped for Jerusalem with his band of followers (J.W. 4.2.1–5 §§84–120). Having subdued the district of Galilee, Vespasian set up garrisons throughout the area during the winter months to maintain control.

“Once Sepphoris received him with open arms the other cities also remained quiet, and Caesennius’ only engagement was against ‘all the rebels and brigands’ (...) who had fled to an unidentified mountain near Sepphoris called Asamon, and more than 2000 of these perished. The account of this excursion of Roman troops into Galilee concludes: ‘Gallus, seeing no further signs of revolt in Galilee returned with his troops to Caesarea’ and Cestius was able to continue his march on Jerusalem (War 2.510-13).

“In assessing the situation in Galilee up to this point, therefore, one can only be struck by the relative passivity of the area. At least the indications are that it did not cause the Romans any undue anxiety. Strategically, it was unlikely that Cestius would march south, and more especially on Jerusalem itself without making his presence felt in Galilee also, since as we have seen, it was always the first objective of armies invading from the north. Even after Cestius’ defeat and withdrawal there does not appear to be any immediate worsening of the situation, for Josephus recounts his own involvement with another of Cestius’ generals, Placidus, again in the region of Chabulon, who had been sent ‘with two cohorts of infantry and a squadron of horse to burn the Galilean villages in the neighborhood of Ptolemais’. However, both sides seem to be prepared to play a ‘wait-and-see’ game, and the impression one gets is that Josephus is more concerned about his Jewish enemies than his Roman foes (Life 213-215)” 36

“When the Romans finally launched their massive expedition to reconquer greater Judea in 67, starting as usual with Galilee, they met with little resistance. For all of the pages the great general Josephus writes about his own supposedly brilliant preparations for and strategy in battle against the Romans, he cites precious few incidents of actually engaging in combat. The one major exception is Jotapata. Of all the sites he claims to have fortified, this one now has at least some credibility. It has finally been excavated. The Romans did indeed besiege and destroy this town, although the scale of the conflict was nowhere near what Josephus claims. In the midst of the battle, of course, Josephus found a way of deserting to the Romans and thereafter assisted the enemy in reconquering the land and people. The other principal resistance came in Upper Galilee, at the refortified village of Gischala.” 37

The Roman army DID use their standard ‘terrify through pillage’ (‘scorched earth’ approach, selectively applied) tactics in the countryside (and ad hoc strongholds), but the actual depopulation effect (of Jewish Galileans—possible witnesses/objectors) was minimal, because the Galileans were smart enough to flee!! Most of the villages Josephus says they plundered, pillaged, or burned, were empty of people when they got there—even if the Roman army had intended to kill the economic base of the country.

36 Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323BCE to 135CE: A Study of Second Temple Judaism, Sean Freyne, T&T Clark:1980, 80f; note—the ‘burning’ didn’t happen; they played ‘wait and see’ instead
37 Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee—the Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis, Richard A. Horsley, Trinity Press: 1996. 38-40; note: after this quote, Horsley takes Josephus’ statement that the Romans enslaved ‘tens of thousands’ at face value—which is not at all consistent with how he treats other numbers in BJ…]
“Vespasian recognized that Sepphoris afforded an excellent springboard from which he could control the whole of Lower Galilee (War 3:30.34), and so the tribune Placidus is stationed there with 1,000 cavalry and 6,000 infantry as reinforcement for the garrison already sent by Cestius (Life 394; cf. War 2:510). This force was adequate to overrun the surrounding countryside. Josephus' 'army' was not able to take the city which he himself had so strongly fortified as to render it practically impregnable! The Romans adopted a scorched earth policy: 'they never ceased, night or day, to devastate the plains and to pillage the property of the country folk, killing those who might be able to carry arms, and reducing the weak to slavery' (War 3:59-63.110f). This seems an altogether likely tactic if Galilee was as thickly populated as Josephus reports. He prides himself on the fortresses he had provided as the only source of refuge for the country folk, and while we have already voiced certain misgivings about the list, undoubtedly there must have been great numbers of refugees leaving the villages and attempting to dig themselves in in the more easily defended centers. Vespasian's first arrival in Galilee is told as though it were a triumphal journey already. As he proceeded from Ptolemais to the borders of Galilee, Josephus' army deserted before even catching sight of the enemy. They fled from the camp at Garis near Sepphoris, willing to capitulate, and Josephus himself retired to Tiberias with a few loyal supporters (War 3:127-31). Vespasian was not about to expose his troops to possible attacks in the open country after Cestius' defeat, so instead he turned north-west to Gabara (one of the three largest cities in Galilee), and though there was no resistance there he slaughtered all the inhabitants of age, and burned all the small towns and villages in the neighborhood, finding some completely deserted and reducing the inhabitants of others to slavery (War 3:132-4).”

“The peasants in Chabulon and neighboring villages bore the brunt of the Roman attempt to intimidate the Galileans and of the first assaults in the Roman campaign of reconquest (B.J. 2.503-5; Vita 213-14). Situated along the frontier with Ptolemais, Chabulon had houses of the same style as those in the Phoenician cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Berytus. The villagers having fled, the Roman troops pillaged and burned Chabulon and the other villages near the frontier. … Galilean villagers, however, were not suicidal. Faced with the overwhelming might of the Roman army in the open country or in indefensible villages (as at the village of Garis, near Sepphoris, B.J. 3.129), they usually fled to what seemed more defensible sites.”

“1. (132) So Vespasian marched to the city Gabara, and took it upon the first onset, because he found it destitute of any considerable number of men grown up and fit for war. (133) He came then into it, and slew all the youth, the Romans having no mercy on any age whatsoever; and this was done out of the hatred they bore the nation, and because of the iniquity they had been guilty of in the affair of Cestius. (134) He also set fire, not only to the city itself, but to all the villas and small cities that were round about it; some of them were quite destitute of inhabitants; and out of some of them he carried the inhabitants as slaves into captivity.”

38 Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323BCE to 135CE: A Study of Second Temple Judaism, Sean Freyne, T&T Clark:1980, 84-86
Indeed, the major/large cities of the region were spared much of the possible damage and loss of life. The native Galilean folk were almost universally ‘spared’, while the minority rebels and foreigners bore the brunt of Roman fury. Let’s look at the major cities/towns of the area and see how many of them were depopulated and/or abused. The major cities of Lower Galilee were: Sephoris, Tiberias, Tarichaeae, Gamala (in Gaulan), Jotapata, Gabara, and perhaps the fortresses of Gishala (Upper Galilee) and Itabyrion (at the base of Mt. Tabor).

**Sephoris.** We have already noted that they actually fared well in this deal. After the war their administrative power was actually increased. The large influx of people from the south (and villagers from the surrounding areas looking for protection from Rome) increased their economic base.

**Tiberias.** Tiberias actually was under the jurisdiction of Agrippa, and was not really Vespasian’s ‘responsibility’. It was actually pro-Roman, but some rebels virtually forced them to resist the Romans. The Romans, however, understood the situation, so when the city was eventually captured, only the outsiders/Greeks were killed/enslaved. The city was not even plundered.

“First Tiberias and then Tarichaeae had revolted at the instigation of Jesus son of Sapphias, and Vespasian 'wishing to repay his hospitality' decided to restore both cities to their allegiance to the king (...) In other words, Vespasian did not consider these cities his personal responsibility, and obviously he does not regard the disturbances in either as the continuation of the struggle that he had completed at Jotapata. Once Jesus and his followers left Tiberias the peace party there quickly prevailed and there were no undue reprisals on the part of the Romans (War 3:453-61).”

“Yet despite this influential group in Tiberias the facts are that the city did revolt eventually, and paid a certain price for its behaviour. The (minority) Greek population was massacred, and Herod’s palace burned down… Through the mediation of the elders the Romans were received by the people at large as saviours, and Vespasian forbade any looting by his soldiers, merely destroying one section of the wall (War 3:445-61).”

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40 Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323BCE to 135CE: A Study of Second Temple Judaism, Sean Freyne, T&T Clark:1980, 84-86
41 Ibid, Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 131-132
**Tarichaeae.** This town also offered resistance, but received a similar result:

“At Tarichaeae matters were slightly different. It had accepted Josephus' position in the earlier period, and stood solidly behind him in his dealings with Tiberias - possibly because of jealousy towards its more prominent neighbor (Life 158f. 174.276.304.404). It seems that the city was an accepted refugee center (...) for people from the countryside despite the obvious exaggeration of *Life* 142, which speaks of vast numbers having come there to throw in their lot with Josephus. Presumably, these earlier refugees were from Agrippa's territory or from the Syrian cities in the Dekapolis (War 3:541f), but these would now be joined by people from Galilee, who were on good terms with the city and its inhabitants (cf. *Life* 981. 304-6). In view of the earlier attitudes it seems a little surprising to hear that after a preliminary skirmish 'the native population, intent on their property and their city, had from the first disapproved of the war, and were now more opposed to it than ever' (War 3:492f). Yet there is nothing inconceivable about such a change in the light of the Roman presence and apparently they recognize the difference in their handling of the affair, by separating the aliens and selling them into slavery while the natives were left unmolested (War 3:532-42).”

“Though Tiberias and Tarichaeae were in rebel hands, pro-Roman feeling was known to be strong in Tiberias and Vespasian could hope to recover that city for his ally Agrippa without difficulty. In August he reassembled his three legions at the loyal city of Sepphoris and advanced on Tiberias, which opened its gates at the mere threat of force and welcomed the Romans as saviours and benefactors, while the rebels, after offering token defiance, made good their escape to Tarichaeae. There the war-party was stronger even before it was stiffened by the refugees from Tiberias, but the city's resistance was brief; the rebel army was defeated, and when dissension then broke out, the Romans took advantage of it to enter the city from its unwalled side facing the Sea of Galilee. Vespasian recognized the distinction between citizens of Tarichaeae, Agrippa's subjects, who had been caught up in the war involuntarily and were now handed back with their city to the king, and non-resident insurgents, who were massacred or sold as slaves, with the exception of six thousand who were shipped to Greece to work on Nero's Corinthian canal.”

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42 *Ibid*, Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 84-86
Gamala (in Gaulan). According to Josephus, many of the able-bodied people fled the town during the siege (War, 4.52f, 63f), and he states that more committed suicide than were killed by the Romans (4.80ff). The Romans are described here as killing all the remaining inhabitants except for two women.

Jotapata. This, as has been noted, was the only significant battle in the war. In this case, Josephus was one of the only two survivors (who broke a suicide pact). Most of the rebel forces were concentrated here, in an act of desperation. Presumably, all were killed. Josephus gives the number of slain at 40,000—which, when you divide by 10 (smile), gives about 4,000 casualties. “The one major exception is Jotapata. Of all the sites he claims to have fortified, this one now has at least some credibility. It has finally been excavated. The Romans did indeed besiege and destroy this town, although the scale of the conflict was nowhere near what Josephus claims.” 44

Gabara. We have already seen how this town was ravaged, but also that many (most?) of the inhabitants had already fled.

Gishala (Upper Galilee). This was actually a fortress imposed by John on the unwilling townspeople. In any event, the people were spared, once John had escaped.

“One final phase of the Galilean campaign remained, the reduction of various 'strongholds' throughout the country. Most of them 'surrendered' as soon as Jotapata had fallen, Josephus admits (War 4:1); only Gischala and Itabyrion remained and the narration of these events allows him to honor Titus, Vespian's son who reduced Gischala. It is difficult to estimate the proper extent of either operation, given the highly anti-John polemic of the War account, and the fact that the description of the size and quality of the Itabyrion fortress is blatant exaggeration, presumably to extol his own achievements. It is noteworthy that John did not appear at any of the lower Galilean centers to aid his fellow countrymen in their hour of need. Of course, his absence may be explained by the antipathy that had grown up between himself and Josephus and the failure of the Jerusalem delegation to unseat his great rival. Even so, it is unlikely that John would have openly revolted after the treatment meted out to Lower Galilee by the Romans. John would be known to them as a potential threat to peace in the north, since his attack on the imperial granaries (Life 71), and so it was decided to bring him to heel before turning all the attention to the south. The sequel paints John as a traitor to his fellow townsman fleeing by night to Jerusalem with some followers, whereas Titus, sated with bloodshed, spared the masses with typical Flavian sympathy (War 4:92-120). The probabilities are that capture of John rather than the rebelliousness of the people (cf. War 4:102) was the real purpose of Titus' mission, and therefore no drastic measures were taken”. 45

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44 Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee—the Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis, Richard A. Horsley, Trinity Press: 1996, 38-40 Miller arrives at the 'divide by 10' factor by calculating the amount of exaggeration that appears in Josephus' description of the height of Mount Tabor, in IV.54ff. He gives the 'absurdly inaccurate' (Loeb footnote term) height of 19,800 feet, when the actual height is 1,843 feet above the plain… a factor of ten.

45 Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323BCE to 135CE: A Study of Second Temple Judaism, Sean Freyne, T&T Clark: 1980, 87-88
Itabyrion (fortress). Same as Gishala—natives spared.

“Itabyrion, which bordered on the Great Plain, might well have been a center of some resistance, for it was in this very neighborhood that the highwaymen of Dabaritta had waylaid Herod's steward's wife early in Josephus' command (Life 126; War 2:595ff). However, as noted, the area of the enclosed rampart is impossible, and this reduces the vast multitude considerably. Presumably some did escape to Jerusalem, there to join (?) John and the 2,000 Tiberians who are also supposed to have fled to the capital (Life 354). However, their numbers must have been small since 600 calvary had been sent against them by the Romans, and again the natives were left unmolested as at Tarichaeae and Gischala.” 46

So, the two largest cities were spared altogether (Sepphoris and Tiberias), and several of the others were dealt with mildly. Two seem to have been completely annihilated (probably due to the amount of investment that was required to subdue them)—Jotapata and Gamala.

Summary: The depopulation of the Galilee is nowhere near ‘catastrophic’, and even the devastation of select villages is relatively contained. The major urban centres fared very well, and the native Jewish Galilean population (except for the rebels) maintained their property and means of livelihood. The migration of peoples into the area (see below) would have actually added to the economic base of the region. People who lived there before the War – and perhaps witnessed the ministry of Jesus and knew His family and friends—probably survived the Galilean part of the War.

46 Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323BCE to 135CE: A Study of Second Temple Judaism, Sean Freyne, T&T Clark:1980, 87-88
The situation in the Land between the Jewish War (ca 70 CE) and the beginning of the 3rd century (ca 200-230 CE)

Here I want to focus on the evidence for continuity between the pre-War and the post-War settings, and to discuss the nature of the major changes in the area during the post-War and post-Revolt period. To the extent the data suggests continuity, to that same extent the likelihood of families and communities having group memories of Jesus’ life goes up. First, let’s look at the data for change: migration of Judean families into Galilee. There is a fairly strong consensus that many wealthy people (i.e., landed individuals, Priestly families) from Judea and many learned (i.e. scribes, rabbis) people from Judea moved into Galilee. Galilee became the center of Jewish life, and grew strong and prosperous during 70-200AD.

“At the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 the priestly family of Jedaiah settled at Sepphoris. Another twenty-three priestly families settled at other Galilean cities and villages, including Nazareth. …The Sepphoris of the second century a.d. was a great Jewish intellectual center. It was at Sepphoris that the work of Rab Juda, also known as the Prince, culminated in the compilation of the oral law, or the Mishnah, at the beginning of the third century of the common era.”

“Since Josephus was a general of Jewish forces located in “both Galilees” (BJ ii.20.4 [568]), we could easily lose our objective if we were to track down his many references. Furthermore, for this article it would serve no useful purpose. Suffice it to say that Vespasian quickly conquered Galilee, taking Josephus prisoner in the process. Jotapata, Sepphoris, and Gischala were already important Jewish cities. After the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, the religion of the Jews might have come to an end. But Johanan ben Zakkai escaped from Jerusalem, according to tradition smuggling a copy of the Holy Scriptures with him, and obtained permission from Vespasian to set up an academy at Jabneh (Jamnia, the OT Jabneel in the Sharon plain). He organized a Beth Din to take the place of the Sanhedrin, which had ceased to exist. After the defeat of Bar Cochba in a.d. 135 the council moved to Sichnin N of Jotapata, and due to the persecution under Hadrian other schools that had developed moved to Galilee, with locations at Usha, Peqi’in, Sepphoris, Beth-shearim, and Tiberias. Galilee thenceforth became a strong center of Judaism. The teachings of the Tannaim were gathered, the codification of the Mishnah was accomplished by Judah ha–Naši, and the traditional pronunciation of the Hebrew Bible was preserved by the Tiberian masoretic pointing. Thus the foundations of modern Judaism were securely laid — in Galilee of the Gentiles.”

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“Another fact was also of considerable consequence: after the revolt had been crushed by the Roman legions, Emperor Hadrian issued a decree that made it illegal for all circumcised persons to live in Jerusalem or even to come within sight of the city. Along with their Jewish brethren, the Jewishbelievers were also affected by this decree. It meant the cessation of the community of Jewish believers in Jerusalem, at least for some years. They lost their spiritual headquarters, so to speak. The most influential and oldest community of Jewish believers was dissolved. In their stead, Gentile Christians invaded Jerusalem and established a purely non-Jewish community there.” 49

“After the failure of the First Jewish Revolt against Rome, the twenty-four “courses” or divisions of priests from the Temple in Jerusalem fled northward. One priestly family by the name of Hapizez (or Hapis) settled in Nazareth (Mishmaroth 18). That Nazareth was the home of a priestly course is repeated in a fragment of a Byzantine period Hebrew inscription, a list of the priestly courses, found at Caesarea in 1962. In the 3d century, Nazareth still had a strong priestly character according to Midr. Qoh. 2.8.” 50

“…we also find another picture of Sepphoris emerging from the rabbinic sources, namely that of wealthy Jewish landowners dwelling there in the 2nd century C.E. These 'great ones' or 'heads' were the recognized leaders of the Jewish community and acted as judges in their law courts, as well as representing them in the city council which was part-Jewish, part-Gentile, at least after the Bar Cochba revolt and the re-naming of the city as Diocæsarea. The picture which rabbinic sources paint of these great ones and their oppression of their poorer Jewish brothers is not very complimentary, giving rise to the bitter disputes with the Jewish teachers who transferred there after 135 C.E. Presumably this Jewish landed aristocracy can be dated back to the period immediately after the first revolt when, as we have seen, many, especially of the upper classes, fled Jerusalem for safer places like Agrippa's kingdom, and presumably also Sepphoris, which was spared the ravages of the war due to the presence of the Roman garrison which Vespasian had granted them”. 51

49 In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity. Oskar Skarsaune. IVP: 2001; Note—there is a tradition that the Christians were forced by the combo of BarKokhba and Hadrian to leave the city and that they fled to Pella, but some (or all) of them could have gone back to Galilee.
50 Anchor Bible Dictionary, David Noel Freedman (main ed.), DoubleDay:1992
51 Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323BCE to 135CE: A Study of Second Temple Judaism, Sean Freyne, T&T Clark:1980, 126-127
“After the further Roman devastation of Judea in suppressing the Bar Kokhba Revolt, many of the sages moved to Galilee, establishing academies first in Usha and Beth Shearim and then in Sepphoris”.  

“As if history were repeating itself, recovery and the reinstitution of Jewish self-government ensued once again. With the accession of the emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161 C.E.), virtually all of Hadrian's decrees were rescinded. The patriarchate and the high court were reconstituted at Usha, in the Galilee. Indeed, the two revolts contributed greatly to encouraging the Jewish population of Palestine to move from Judea to the north, settling primarily in the Galilee. Under Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel II, (first half of the second century C.E.) and later under Rabbi Judah the Prince (latter half of the second and beginning of the third century C.E.), the editor of the Mishnah, the patriarchate and the other institutions of the Jewish community reached their height. Taxes poured into the patriarchal coffers even from the Diaspora, where the emissaries of the rabbis of Palestine attempted to foster the spread of tannaitic Judaism. …”

“Around the beginning of the third century, for reasons long the object of speculation and still unknown, the position of the patriarchs and rabbis began to change—a change most scholars follow rabbinic literature in attributing partly to the activities of the patriarch Judah I. He somehow became a wealthy landowner, well-connected in the increasingly prosperous Galilean cities and even, the Talmudim claim (or rather fantasize), in the Roman imperial court. He or his son may have been the famous Jewish "ethnarch" referred to by Origen as behaving regally, to the point of executing criminals—though without imperial authorization. It was probably in this period, too, that the patriarchs began to claim Davidic ancestry. Cohen argues that around 200 rabbinic judicial activity broadened to include issues of interest outside rabbinic circles, like civil law and Sabbath observance. Apparently, rabbinic judicial prestige was growing again, perhaps in part because the rabbinic movement left its rural Galilean exile for the cities, mainly Sepphoris and Tiberias, but also Caesarea, Scythopolis-Beth Shean, and Lydda”.

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54 Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 bce to 640 ce. Seth Schwartz. Princeton:2001, 113
“The Galilee, the second major area of Jewish population at the time, remained virtually untouched by the devastation of the revolt and thus was able to assume a position of leadership as it absorbed refugees from the southern part of the country after the hostilities ended”. 55

“The center of Jewish life moved from Judea to towns and villages in Galilee that had survived the war unscathed. … With the emergence of Galilee as a major center of Jewish life, the rabbinic leaders also moved there. From places like Yavneh and Lydda in Judea, they migrated north. Indeed, the first rabbinic literary works were redacted (that is, compiled and edited) in Galilee, not Judea”. 56

For our purposes, there are three implications of this:

1. Any of the leadership who had encountered Jesus and His followers in Jerusalem or Judean would now be living ‘next door’ to those Galileans who had a personal (or family, or community) remembrance of Jesus and His life.

2. Any ‘official’ interaction between emerging Judaism and Jewish Christians in the area will originate among this Galilean group.

3. To the extent this ‘new’ scholarly group develops an ‘official response’ to any remembrances of Jesus ‘on the ground’ or ‘in a text’, these responses will help identify the remembrances encountered (somewhat).

The data for continuity

Here we are looking for indications of family stability, cultural continuity, and any social means for enforcing/supporting community/family longevity or identity. There are a couple of data points here:


“Nazareth lay beside Yafa or Yafia, a city that Josephus fortified in the first revolt against Rome and in which he lived (JW 2.20.6–573; Life 52–270). This village was known to be Jewish as late as the 4th century a.d”.  

“One priestly family by the name of Hapizez (or Hapises) settled in Nazareth (Mishmaroth 18). That Nazareth was the home of a priestly course is repeated in a fragment of a Byzantine period Hebrew inscription, a list of the priestly courses, found at Caesarea in 1962. In the 3d century, Nazareth still had a strong priestly character according to Midr. Qoh. 2.8”.  

“Fortunately we are in a position to fill out this picture of Sepphoris from rabbinic sources, both prior to and after 70 C.E. From these it is apparent that in the period before 70 C.E. Sepphoris was one of the few priestly towns in Galilee. The evidence of Rabbi Jose ben Halaphta who lived in Sepphoris in the second half of the second century C.E. is of particular significance, given his own genuine historical interest in the past of his people, and the fact that his father was head of the community in Sepphoris shortly after 70 C.E. Jose mentions that a priest from Sepphoris, Jose ben Illem took the place of the high priest on the day of atonement. We are able to date this event more precisely from Josephus, who tells that it was the place of his cousin Matthias who had rendered himself unclean the previous night. This occurred towards the end of the reign of Herod the Great (Ant 17:166), long after his purge of the Hasmonaean nobility. We are safe in assuming that this family at least survived both Herod's purges and the attack on the Galilean nobles who remained faithful to him (Ant 14:450) and that Sepphoris was their home, even though Matthias is described by Josephus as being from Jerusalem (Ant 17:78). We hear also of Arsela from Sepphoris, 'an Israelite' (i.e. a lay noble) who was given an active role in regard to the scapegoat rite on the day of atonement usually reserved for a priest (M. Yoma 6:3)…”  

“Galilee should probably not be lumped with Judea in discussions of the Roman disposition of the land following the reconquest. In either case, the territory was evidently not taken as imperial land after the revolt. Recent critical analysis suggests that only rebels' lands were confiscated. Early rabbinic literature indicates that Galilean households still farmed their own family inheritance, and were not largely tenants on imperial land. …”

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57 Anchor Bible Dictionary, David Noel Freedman (main ed.), DoubleDay:1992  
58 Ibid, Anchor  
59 Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323BCE to 135CE: A Study of Second Temple Judaism, Sean Freyne, T&T Clark:1980, 126-7  
“In the second and third centuries the free population of Tiberias apparently consisted mostly, or almost entirely, of people who were in some sense Jewish. … The rabbis unquestionably regarded Tiberias, along with Sepphoris and Lydda, as "Jewish," in contrast to the mainly pagan Scythopolis and Ptolemais. Probably in all these places there was a small Christian or Jewish-Christian presence, notwithstanding Epiphanius's claim (Panarion 30.11.9-10) that around 320 the cities and large villages of Galilee were entirely Jewish.”

“Eventually all of Lower Galilee was divided between the territories of these two cities but Upper Galilee apparently continued as the separate district of Tetracomia. This is best explained by the strong persistence of Jewish village life in the area which had not been disturbed by the revolt”.

Of special importance here is the existence (and use) of genealogical records—to prove family continuity. There are two data points (one Jewish, and one Jewish-Christian) to illustrate that these were still in use. (BTW, they are almost invariably ‘in use’ in any inheritance-based land-ownership society (!), so these cases are only the tip of the iceberg.)

“… and Rabbi Jose also informs us that old registers were kept in this city indicating who were Israelites of pure blood, equal to those whose ancestors were priests, levites, or members of the Sanhedrin (M. Kidd 4:5)”.

“Apart from this, we also meet Jesus’ relatives as church leaders and travelling missionaries in some other scraps of information in Hegesippus and others. Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 9:5 about the rights of a traveling apostle, rights that were used by “the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas”. Some 170–80 years later Julius Africanus said that Herod, being a non-Jew, had all Jewish family records burned so that no one should have an advantage on him, yet a few careful people had private records of their own, … priding themselves on preserving the memory of their noble birth. Of such were the persons mentioned above, called Desposyni [Relatives of the Lord] from their connexion with the Saviour’s family. Coming from the Jewish villages of Nazareth and Cochaba, they travelled over the rest of the land, explaining the aforesaid genealogy, as far as they could trace it, and from the Book of the Days [= Chronicles]. (Ecclesiastical History 1.1.14). … Africanus’s concern in context is to explain the differences between the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke; this explains why he makes it sound as if the main contents of the preaching of the relatives of Jesus was their genealogy. The tradition on which he depends, however, could contain correct historical information: in proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah, his relatives emphasized his (and their) Davidic descent. That this was an important element in the earliest version of the Christian message is witnessed to by Paul in Romans 1:3–4, where he quotes an old Jewish-Christian kerygmatic formula ”.

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63 Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323BCE to 135CE: A Study of Second Temple Judaism, Sean Freyne, T&T Clark:1980,126-127
64 In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity. Oskar Skarsaune. IVP:2002,192
But you really didn’t need written records (in an oral culture) to document family membership—the community around you simply ‘remembered’. It was stable enough for generations and generations. A great example of this is the post-War/post-Revolt actions by Rome to make sure Davidic-based messianic fever did not arise again (after Bar Kochba). Three times they went into Galilee, queried people and records, and called the relatives of Jesus up on the carpet!

“Religious toleration went hand in hand with increased political vigilance in the decades after 70, and Rome took precautions which may have been excessive to guard against any resurgence of Jewish nationalism. Christian tradition tells of three occasions between 70 and the end of Trajan’s reign on which members of the "family of David" were hunted down in Palestine. The first was "after the capture of Jerusalem", when Vespasian ordered a search to be made for all the members of the family of David, so that none of the "royal house" might be left in the province, and this led to a serious "persecution of the Jews". It is possible that "Vespasian" is an error and that the search was actually ordered by Titus before his return to Rome in 71. But be that as it may, the tradition is entirely credible and the purpose of the search clear: the messiah was expected from the house of David, messianic hopes had contributed to the outbreak of the revolt in 66, and Rome was anxious to forestall any recurrence of movements such as had disturbed the province periodically before it. It was a political precautionary measure, confused by Church historians with later Roman hostility towards the Church and magnified into a "persecution of the Jews" of which Jewish sources are completely ignorant. The menace, such as it was, was not regarded as entirely eliminated, for under Domitian members of the family were again rounded up. The story of this investigation, much fuller than the notice of the previous one and furnished with picturesque detail, cannot be taken literally, for in it members of the immediate family of Christ are haled before the emperor, personally present in Palestine (which Domitian never visited), who then terminates "the persecution of the Church" on discovering that they are poor working-class folk, not likely to constitute a political danger. But the significant point is that the men arrested are interrogated about "Christ and His kingdom." The enquiry thus had the same purpose as the earlier one, to nip potential messianic movements in the bud, and though only Christian Jews are named as its subjects, the third episode seems to involve non-Christian Jews also. Early in Trajan’s reign the house of David was in trouble again, when Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, described as a cousin of Christ, was denounced by "certain heretics" to Atticus the legate of Judaea and executed; but his fate recoiled on the heads of his accusers, who were themselves arrested as members of the "royal family of the Jews", which was then being hunted down. This suggests that Simeon’s enemies were members of his own family who had not adopted Christianity and were trying, unsuccessfully, to divert attention from themselves. If such Jews were in danger under Trajan, they will hardly have escaped under Domitian. The details of these stories, related from the Christian angle, matter little for the present study. Their overall significance for the history of the province after 70 is simply that for at least thirty years the Romans were on the alert to guard against incipient messianic movements and to pounce on anyone who looked like a potential trouble-maker. And lack of evidence does not mean that their vigilance was relaxed after the beginning of the second century. But the operations can more accurately be described as police measures than as "persecutions". 65

In other words, the family blood ties were public enough that Rome could carry out these actions. This argues, though, that we can also use the family of Jesus as a data point on continuity. They are said to be based out of two cities during this entire time—one of which was Nazareth (where a priestly station also existed—as noted above).

“These wandering missionaries of our Lord’s family are said to have preached in the land of Israel and lived in the villages of Nazareth and Cochaba. The latter is very likely modern Kaukab, sixteen kilometers north of Nazareth”. 66

“In the 3d century the Christian martyr Conon from Nazareth of the family of Jesus was killed in Asia Minor (Bagatti 1969: 16).” 67

“More promising is the evidence of Julius Africanus (c. 170 C.E.) in his letter to Aristides, namely that the ἐσπασυνοί, that is the cousins of the Lord 'from the Jewish villages of Nazara and Cochaba traversed the rest of the land expounding their genealogy from the book of Chronicles as far as they went' (Eccles. Hist. 1,7.15). The context is a discussion of the differing genealogies of Mt and Lk and it is possible that in the second century different people laid claim to being cousins of the Lord within the Jewish Christian community, relying on the differing genealogies”. 68

What this means is that we have a concrete example from history of a family which spanned the two events and lived in the same town all that time: Jesus’ family, at least down to the late 3rd century. And the priestly families in Sepphoris, and probably the Tiberian house-manager servants did too—at a minimum. We have one more stake in the ground to place: that there was probably a Jewish-Christian witness (in addition to the family of Jesus) within the area of Galilee during our period. We have already seen that, -

66 In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity. Oskar Skarsaune. IVP:2002,192
67 Anchor Bible Dictionary, David Noel Freedman (main ed.), DoubleDay:1992
68 Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323BCE to 135CE: A Study of Second Temple Judaism, Sean Freyne, T&T Clark:1980,352
“The rabbis unquestionably regarded Tiberias, along with Sepphoris and Lydda, as "Jewish," in contrast to the mainly pagan Scythopolis and Ptolemais. Probably in all these places there was a small Christian or Jewish-Christian presence, notwithstanding Epiphanius's claim (Panarion 30.11.9-10) that around 320 the cities and large villages of Galilee were entirely Jewish".  

And the non-heretical nature of the Nazarenes – who were very probably in Transjordan, and possibly operating in Galilee too—was a Jewish-Christian presence:

“The Nazarenes. Despite the considerable symbolic significance of the event just mentioned, it should not mislead us to think that Jewish Christianity completely disappeared. In the middle of the second century, some twenty-five years after the Bar Kokhba revolt, Justin knew of Jewish believers who had two characteristics: (1) They believed in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, and (2) they continued to observe the law of Moses without requiring that their Gentile brethren do the same. … In the third and fourth centuries there is still solid evidence for the existence of such Jewish believers. In the fourth century they are called “the Nazarenes”, and from Jerome and Epiphanius we get the following information: they are few, mainly to be found in the region of Israel and Syria. They recognize Jesus as the Son of God, they accept the virgin birth, they recognize the apostleship of Paul and the Gentile mission, and they have a gospel in Hebrew. These two church fathers—who were zealous hunters of all heresies—found nothing wrong with the doctrines of the Nazarenes. But they took offense at another aspect of this Jewish Christian group: they continued to keep the law, that is, circumcision and the Sabbath. By this time there was no longer any willingness in the Gentile church to accept such Christians; the spirit of brotherly recognition, as seen in Justin, was gone”.  

So, the players are on stage: we have the ‘embedded’ Galilean witnesses (friendly and maybe hostile) and memory-carriers of Jesus, we have new possible ‘Jerusalem witnesses’ who observed Jesus decades before, we have some level of Jewish-Christian witness, and we have a new, “fiercely re-configuring” Judaism leadership. Let’s see what their interactions tell us about our question of ‘nobody there to refute a gospel?’

70 In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity. Oskar Skarsaune. IVP:2001
Evidences of Jewish/Christian interaction during this period (in the Land)

What we are looking for here is the (post-biblical) Jewish response to Jewish-Christian proclamation in our area/period. As Judaism-without-a-Temple gets to work trying to reinvent itself, national identity becomes 'at risk'. The fierce boundary setting requirement of this period ("this is a Jew—and that is not") is standard for threatened organizations (Christianity went through it early and over and over and over again...). A practical starting point for delineating what you are is to first list all the things you are not. And Galilean Judaism defines that during our period and in interaction with Jewish-Christian literature. Consider this simple summary of Jewish response:

“As we glance back over this chapter, a number of things come to light. There is evidence that Jews persecuted and harassed Christians intermittently in a number of locations. This could take the form of synagogue discipline or of persuading Gentile authorities to act on their behalf. Christians nevertheless had a tendency to exaggerate the intensity and extent of Jewish hostility, and this has unduly influenced certain strains of scholarly analysis since. Christians were included among those targeted by the Jewish authorities at Yavneh. The banning of books, occasional expulsion, and liturgical malediction all appeared in new or revised form during the Yavnean period, and their implementation throughout world Jewry was probably encouraged by roving envoys. From the rabbinic viewpoint, Christians were one of several troublesome groups of nonconformists, but Christians increasingly saw themselves as singled out for rabbinic antipathy. The Bar Cochba uprising may have been an important turning point, precipitating the expansion of the synagogue malediction to include Gentile Christians too. And, as an element of liturgical routine, the more this malediction focused on Christians the greater its influence would have been on popular Jewish attitudes.

Traditions about Jesus as a miracle worker and teacher are prominent in Jewish sources. Josephus, noncommittally, describes him in just these terms, but the rabbis preserve the negative version of the same two traits: that Jesus was a magician and deceiver of the people. The rabbinic view is ascribed more generally to Jews by Justin and Origen. In the stories about Eliezer ben Dama and R. Eliezer there is a hint that some rabbis consorted with Christians until they were challenged by stricter colleagues or came under suspicion by political authorities. .. Christology was one of the main obstacles to Jewish-Christian rapprochement. There is nothing surprising about this, nor about the two foci of disagreement that appear in many different sources: messianism and monotheism. The issue of messiahship does not arise explicitly in the rabbinic sources, though the polemical reading of Jesus' role as miracle worker and teacher effectively denies to him activities that some sources expected of the messiah. The assertion of Jesus' divinity met with several objections. One centered around his arrival in the world, about which the rabbis transmitted a polemical (perhaps, unknown to them, historical) line: that Jesus was a bastard and his mother an adulteress. If the idea of God's becoming human was absurd, the idea of a second god was for many Jews blasphemous. To the rabbis, Christians were part of a wider heretical tendency in which the existence of "two powers" in heaven was espoused. This may have made the Christians more difficult to combat, since other Jews were promoting speculations along the same lines. …
Overall, Jewish reaction to Christians took many forms: political action, communal discipline, liturgical innovation, exegetical reasoning, and polemical subversion. Variety of action, however, is not matched in the sources by much variety of mood. Most of the evidence we have considered in this chapter suggests that resistance and opposition were the instinctive modes of Jewish response. But even if this reflects the preponderant reality, it is still misleading. Recalling Josephus's statement, and the possible rabbinic references to amicable contact between Jews and Jewish Christians, might seem to be clutching at straws, and it does not do much to balance the account. However, the actions and attitude of Trypho, as well as the encouragement that some Christian Judaizers were presumably given from the Jewish side, are only two other factors that need to be considered for a fully rounded picture. [RS:193f 71; note R. Eleazar b. Dama died ‘sometime in the first third of the second century’ 72, and R. Eliezer around 90 AD.]

“Jewish Polemic and Rejection of Christianity. Jewish polemic directed against Christianity could be just as harsh and ugly as was Christian polemic, though with the ascendancy of Christianity, Jewish polemic came to be muted and sometimes was even edited out of texts. Some of the Jewish polemic is preserved in “dialogues” composed by Christians. The best known is Justin Martyr’s Dialogue with Trypho the Jew. Although these dialogues are artificial and routinely portray the Christian apologists as refuting, even silencing, their Jewish opponents, the nature of the objections raised by the Jews in all probability accurately reflects the arguments and polemic that Jews directed against Christians.

Justin's Trypho found it difficult to accept that Jesus could really have been the fulfilment of the Jewish Scriptures. How could Jesus have been the Messiah, since he had been defeated and put to death by the Romans in such a shameful manner? Trypho declares: “Be assured that all our nation awaits the Messiah; and we admit that all the Scriptures which you have quoted refer to him. . . . But we are in doubt about whether the Messiah should be so shamefully crucified. For whoever is crucified is said in the Law to be accursed, so that I am very skeptical on this point. It is quite clear, to be sure, the Scriptures announce that the Messiah had to suffer; but we wish to learn if you can prove it to us whether by suffering he was cursed . . . Prove to us whether he must also be crucified and die such a disgraceful and dishonourable death, cursed by the Law. For we cannot bring ourselves even to consider this” (Dial. Tryph. 89–90).

With the passage of time the polemic became much sharper, even hateful. Civil arguments, such as we find in Justin’s Dialogue, gave way to vituperation and slurs. The polemic found in the Talmud and Midrashim document some of this nastier polemic. In reference to Jesus’ birth we find: “She who was the descendant of princes and governors [= Mary] played the harlot with carpenters [= Joseph]” (b. Sanh. 106a). … In various places Jesus is accused of having practiced magic and having led Israel astray (b. Sanh. 43a; t. Šab. 11.15; b. Šab. 104b). Indeed, Jesus can be raised through incantation (b. Git. 57a, MS M).

As early as the end of the first century the liturgy of the synagogue was modified to discourage Christian Jews. It was apparently at this time that the twelfth benediction of the ancient Jewish prayer, called the Amidah (or Shemoneh Esreh), was expanded: “Can anyone among you frame a benediction relating to the heretics? Samuel the Lesser arose and composed it” (b. Ber. 28b). Samuel the Lesser’s composition may have something to do with the revision of the twelfth benediction: “For apostates let there be no hope, and the kingdom of arrogance quickly uproot. [In a moment let the Nazarenes and the heretics be destroyed; let them be blotted from the Book of Life, and with the righteous not be inscribed.] Blessed are you, O Lord, who loves judgment!” (Amidah §12). The bracketed words are thought to be the later inserted material. It was probably to this malediction (often referred as the Birkat ha-Minim, lit. “blessing of the heretics”) that Justin alluded when he told Trypho, “You curse in your synagogues all those who are called from him Christians” (Justin Dial. Tryph. 96).

We don’t have room here to unpack these, but if you look over the responses, you can see that they match up pretty well with what a Jewish-Christian might define as his or her belief at the (pre-Church Councils) time. There are no ‘straw men’ in there: they would be addressing items that they could hear from Galileans in Nazareth or Greeks in Antioch. But some are closer-to-home, around Nazareth. The issues of Mary’s infidelity, Jesus’ sorcery [i.e., His mostly-Galilean and probably-remembered miracles!], and His messianic deception are all found (or at least hinted at) in the Gospel of John. But this is an exercise in literary ‘reverse engineering’—figuring out what the audience ‘said first’ in a piece of literature or tradition. And in this case, the response suggests that much of the core proclamation of the Gospels was circulating in Galilee during the 70-135-200 ‘reinvention period’. [Note: this ‘reverse engineering’ methodology is generally very risky, as can be noted by those who study the Heresiologists. We cannot be sure the Heresiologist is representing their opponent fairly/accurately—since we do not have any of the alleged heretic’s actual writing. But in our case, we do have the ‘heretic writing’—in our NT documents.]

Summary: Our first three points argued that there were plenty of people who lived through the war, that their ability to articulate objections (e.g. the polemical responses to Christians) was always there and increasing in sophistication, and that the Christian witness (of at least, the very flesh-and-blood family of Jesus in Nazareth) was available for them to ‘shoot’ at. And they shot at it—at various times and in various ways—but this confirms that their intellectual world confronted the traditions of the historical Jesus (e.g. birth, parentage, Galilean ministry) and confronted the theological explanations of the Jewish-Christian church of the time (e.g. Jesus as Messiah and as Son of God).
Jude and the body of Moses

**Jude 1:9** Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

**Zechariah 3:1-5** And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. 2 And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? 3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. 4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. 5 And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.

Some scholars believe that Jude was not using Zechariah but was referring to a Jewish apocryphal pseudopigraphical work where a fight over the corpse of Moses is described. It is worth remembering that Moses died on Mt Nebo and apparently no one buried him (Deut 32.49-52, though reference to “gathered unto thy people” suggests otherwise). Philo adds to Deuteronomy 34:6 that Moses was buried by celestial beings (Vita Mosis 2:3). Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on the same passage records that the angels buried Moses four miles away from where he died. In a Falasha legend the three gravediggers are Michael, Gabriel and Zagzagel.¹

Zechariah 3 is thought (by some) to depict the recently deceased body (soul?) of Joshua appearing before the Judgment seat. This cannot be correct because Joshua is given a list of priestly requirements that he is expected to uphold and he can hardly do this if he is dead. Others argue that the vision is directed at Joshua’s grandson the serving High Priest Eliashib who was corrupt by the time of Nehemiah (Neh.13.28). Joshua was probably already dead by that time and the vision-oracle would function as an allegory-parable exposing priestly intermarriage and financial corruption in the time of Nehemiah. However, the story does not condemn Joshua in fact exactly the opposite is true. The allegation is thrown out and Satan is rebuked. In fact the remainder of the vision addressed to Joshua becomes highly messianic with Joshua foreshadowing Jesus. The story does not function as a warning to the priests of Nehemiah’s era (Joshua’s grandsons) nor does it make sense if addressed to a “dead” Joshua. The only possible explanation is that the allegation lodged against Joshua was that the captivity had made him ritually unfit or unclean for the role of High Priest.

¹ Ginzberg, Vol. 6, p.952 cites Faitlovich, Mota Musa 9-20
This possibly relates to sectarian infighting between different priestly factions (Zadokite, Levite, Aaronite) and may even have focused on irregularities concerning identity (was Joshua legitimately a Zadokite or Levite etc...). Priests were supposedly scrupulous in recording and protecting their lineage but this obviously went awry when the priests married foreign women in Nehemiah’s time. That something like this lies behind the vision is established by Yahweh’s promise in v.9 — “I will engrave the graving thereof [on the stone]”. This is a euphemism for conception. The Hebrew word for stone is ‘eben, a play on the Hebrew word ben, used for sons. A house can be built with stones (‘eben) and a dynasty is built with sons (ben). The altar and the temple (house) of God are built without using any tool of man (Exod 20.25, Deut.27.5, 1 Kgs 6.7). This is a prophecy concerning the virgin birth. God would raise-up a high priest Joshua-Jesus – he would “engrave the graving” thereof and the slander and accusations concerning his legitimacy would be thrown out of court. It was necessary to have a priest (intercessor) who bore the nature of Adam and yet was also the son of God. Zechariah 3:9-10

“I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree” – compare Nathaniel under the fig tree (John 1.46-51), his messianic declaration and his reference to Nazareth (cf. my servant the Branch in Zech 3.8.2

2 Hebrew(tsemach), sprout, growth, branch. In the LXX a proper noun ‘Ανατολήν from, anatolē meaning a rising of light, that is, dawn (figuratively); by implication the east (also in plural): - dayspring, east, rising. The LXX and Hebrew use completely different terms possibly indicating the use of different Hebrew Vorlage. In Isaiah 11:1 it says, “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit”. The Hebrew there is רכין (NZR) “and is probably related to the same root that gives us the place name Nazareth” (NIDOTTE, ed., VanGemeren, Paternoster, 1997, vol. 3, 5916, p., 148), here the LXX has ἄνθος (anthos), a primary word meaning, a blossom (flower). There does not seem to be consistency of translation either between the Hebrew and Greek versions or even in the English translations. The word branch (NZR) probably forms the basis of Matthew 2.23 (possibly based on oral tradition - “that which was spoken by the prophets”). See also Gen 49.26 the blessing on Joseph: “of him that was separate נצייר (naziyr) from his brethren”. Remarkably, the other name for Galilee – Genneseret – means land of Nazareth. The Hebrew lema of “Nazareth” also means “preserved” or “guarded”(how marvellously appropriate here to one kept safe from the wrath of Herod!) The reference by Nathaniel to Nazareth immediately before his messianic declaration (although derogatory) supports the play on branch (NZR) for Nazareth. In effect Nathaniel is saying there is no branch/sprout (messianic descendant of Jesse) coming from that (worthless) place. Solomon gifted cities in this area to King Hiram but Hiram considered them worthless and was not pleased (1 Kgs 9.13). It is strange (and inconsistent) that Zech 3.8 uses tsemach instead of nezer and the LXX is of no help here. One wonders if deliberate scribal choices were made to obscure the prophecy. The Nazarenes originated as a sect of first-century Judaism. The first use of the term “sect of the Nazarenes” is used in Acts 24.5. Then, the term simply designated followers of “Yeshua Natzri” but in the first to fourth centuries, the term was used for a sect of followers of Jesus who were closer to Judaism than most Christians.
Jude and extra biblical sources

According to Origen, a Greek Christian writer of the early 3rd C, and an advocate of belief in fallen angels, Jude is quoting a Jewish myth:

“And in the first place, in the book of Genesis the serpent is described as having seduced Eve; regarding whom, in the work entitled The Assumption of Moses, a little treatise, of which the Apostle Jude makes mention in his Epistle, the archangel Michael, when disputing with the devil regarding the body of Moses, says that the serpent, being inspired by the devil, was the cause of Adam and Eve’s transgression”. (Origen, De principiis, III, 2,1)

Origen names this work the Assumption of Moses (Analepsis Mouseos, Ανάληψις Μωυσέως) which may or may not be the same as the Ascension of Moses (Anabasis Mouseos, Ανάβασις Μωυσέως) mentioned by Athanasius (c. 293 – 373). To complicate matters further, Nicephorus (c. 758 – 828) lists among apocryphal texts found in the libraries of Constantinople both a Testament of Moses and an Assumption of Moses.

The actual text to which Origen refers is lost. But Origen being able to cite something as specific as the serpent being inspired by the devil bears the hallmark of a genuine Jewish myth – since in Jewish mythology the serpent and devil were seen as two separate enemies. This is particularly clear in the Apocalypse of Moses, a Greek text which unlike the Assumption of Moses does contain the material Origen describes: Michael, when disputing with the devil regarding a body, says that the serpent, being inspired by the devil, was the cause of Adam and Eve’s transgression (Apocalypse of Moses is the Greek version of the Latin and Slavonic Life of Adam and Eve).

The only problem with Origen’s testimony is that the burial incident in the Apocalypse of Moses isn’t about Michael, the devil and the body of Moses, but concerns the body of Adam. Is it possible that Origen got confused between two apocryphal Jewish texts: the Assumption of Moses (Analepsis Mouseos) and the Apocalypse of Moses (Apokalypsis Mouseous)?
Discussion

Was Jude referring to a Jewish apocryphal pseudepigraphical work or to Zechariah? The context of Jude is a dispute with Enochites, who held a belief in fallen, rebellious and sinful angels. According to I Enoch 9:1-10, it was Michael who accused Shemihazah and Azazel, but according to Jude, Michael “would not dare to bring a slanderous accusation,” even against the devil himself. In other words, the story of Michael making an accusation against the angels in Enoch is false, and if the story of the accusation is false then so is the story of the angels’ sin.³

Therefore, by identifying the angel of Zech. 3 with Michael, Jude provides a counter argument against the Enochites who were *slandering heavenly beings*, (Jude 8) in believing that angels were capable of sin, since the Angel of the Lord does not do in Zech. 3 (slander) what Michael is reported to do in 1Enoch.⁴ This accounts for the addition of Michael by Jude, by why did he change Joshua into the *body of Moses*? A paraphrase of Zech 3 might look like this:

Yet the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about Joshua, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

Instead Jude says this:

**Jude 1:9** Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

It seems that Jude wants to point the subject of the dispute away from being about the suitability of Joshua (Jesus) towards the suitability of Judaists (followers of Moses) that had brought Enochic fables into the church. Jude intends the body of Moses to contrast with the body of Christ, for the Jews were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10:2 NKJ). The Old Covenant community was baptized (as a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation)⁵ into Moses. Even under Moses they were meant to be a holy nation and Enochic doctrine was not only falsely slandering angels (the administrators of the Law) as rebellious but was somehow used to justify turning the grace of God into lasciviousness (v.4). The example of Sodom and “strange flesh” (v.7) reflects the Sodomites wanting to force themselves on their angel visitors –

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⁵ Exodus 19.6
it is about crossing boundaries between the holy and the profane. In slandering the integrity of those very dignitaries Enochic teaching was crossing the same boundary (between the holy and profane) that the Sodomites crossed. The argument has subtly been changed from the fitness of Jesus-Joshua as a priest to the fitness of the Jewish nation becoming a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The body of Moses would also subliminally remind them that Moses had himself not entered the kingdom and had been buried outside the land because *ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel* (Deut 32.51). Moses did not sanctify God neither did Enochic Judaists sanctify God or his angels. Even their own prophet Enoch condemns them (v.14-15)\(^6\) with words that the pseudepigraphical writer obviously based on Deut 33.2 the same chapter that relates the death of Moses!

A more likely explanation for this passage is that Jude was familiar with the Apocalypse. In the “war in heaven” Rev 12 paraphrases Zech 3 and conflates it with Michael in Dan 12.1 (and the 3½ year time of trouble). In turn, Jude has both the Apocalypse and Zechariah at his disposal and conflates them to produce a counter argument (another paraphrase) against the Enochites, who were also (supposedly) a Judaist law-keeping-party.

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\(^6\) Enoch 1:9, translated from the Ethiopic (found also in Qumran scroll 4Q204=4QEnoch\(^*\) ar, col I 16–18) And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His Saints To execute judgment upon all, And to destroy all the ungodly: And to convict all flesh Of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, And of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. See, Clontz, TE; Clontz, J (2008), The Comprehensive New Testament with complete textual variant mapping and references for the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, Josephus, Nag Hammadi Library, Pseudepigrapha, Apocrypha, Plato, Egyptian Book of the Dead, Talmud, Old Testament, Patristic Writings, Dhammapada, Tacitus, Epic of Gilgamesh, Cornerstone, p. 711
Rulers (Governors) of Judea 26 CE-70CE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Reign</th>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Pontius Pilate</td>
<td>26–36</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Roman Prefect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Marcellus</td>
<td>36–37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Roman Prefect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Marullus</td>
<td>37–41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Roman Prefect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Agrippa I</td>
<td>41–44</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>King of Judaea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Cuspius Fadus</td>
<td>44–46</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Roman Procurator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Tiberius Julius Alexander</td>
<td>46–48</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Roman Procurator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Ventidius Cumanus</td>
<td>48–52</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Roman Procurator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Marcus Antonius Felix</td>
<td>52–60</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Roman Procurator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Porcius Festus</td>
<td>60–62</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Roman Procurator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Luceceius Albinus</td>
<td>62–64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Roman Procurator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Gessius Florus</td>
<td>64–66</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Roman Procurator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Marcus Antonius Julianus</td>
<td>66–70 (dates uncertain)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Roman Procurator</td>
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</table>

Caesars 49 BCE-69CE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Josephus</th>
<th>Caesar</th>
<th>Reign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Julius Caesar</td>
<td>49 – 44 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Emperor</td>
<td>45 – 26 BCE¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Augustus</td>
<td>27 BCE – 14 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tiberius</td>
<td>14 – 37 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Caligula</td>
<td>37 – 41 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Claudius</td>
<td>41 – 54 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nero</td>
<td>54 – 68 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Galba</td>
<td>68 – 69 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Otho</td>
<td>69 – 69 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vitellius</td>
<td>69 – 69 CE</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vespasian</td>
<td>69 – 79 CE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Octavian=Augustus elected Consul power struggle with Mark Antony
### High Priests 6 BCE - 15 CE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Priests</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ananus (or Annas) the son of Seth</td>
<td>6 BCE–15CE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Eleazar the son of Ananus</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Trial of Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ishmael ben Fabus</td>
<td>15-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Caiaphas</td>
<td>18-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Jonathan ben Ananus</td>
<td>36-37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Theophilus ben Ananus</td>
<td>37-41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simon Cantatheras ben Boethus</td>
<td>41-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Matthias ben Ananus</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Eleoneus ben Simon Cantatheras</td>
<td>43-44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Jonathan ben Ananus</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>(restored)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Josephus ben Camyuds</td>
<td>44-46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Ananias ben Nebedeus</td>
<td>46-58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Jonathan</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>(Ben Ananus restored?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Ishmael ben Fabus</td>
<td>58-62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Joseph Cabi ben Simon</td>
<td>62-63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Ananus ben Ananus</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Had James the Just stoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Joshua ben Damneus</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Joshua ben Gamla</td>
<td>63-64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Mattathias ben Theophilus</td>
<td>65-66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Phannias ben Samuel</td>
<td>67-70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Herodian Dynasty 37 BCE-92CE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herod</th>
<th>ruled</th>
<th>Territory or incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Herod the Great</td>
<td>37 BCE–4 CE</td>
<td>Built temple, slaughters innocents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Herod Archelaus</td>
<td>4 BCE– 6 CE</td>
<td>ethnarch of Samaria, Judea, and Idumea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Herod Antipas</td>
<td>4 BCE– 39 CE</td>
<td>tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea: kills Baptist, mocks Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Herod Philip II</td>
<td>4 BCE– 34 CE</td>
<td>tetrarch of Iturea, Trachonitis, and Batanaea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Herod Philip I</td>
<td>27 BCE–33 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Herod of Chalcis</td>
<td>41–44 CE</td>
<td>Roman client King of Judea, Kills James (Acts 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Herod Agrippa II</td>
<td>41–48 CE</td>
<td>king of Chalcis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Herod Agrippa</td>
<td>48–c. 92 CE</td>
<td>ruled Chalcis (See Paul's defence in Acts 25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2 Son-in-law of the high priest Ananus ben Seth
3 Jos. Antiq. 20,5.2
4 Jos. Antiq. 20,8.5
5 Restored?
6 His wife Martha belonged to family of Boethus
7 Herodian kingship continued in Northern Levant until 92, when the last Herodian monarch, Agrippa II, died and Rome assumed full power over his domain.