

ADDITIONAL CONFIRMATION FOR THE EARLY DATE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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Evidentiary Foundation # 1:

“I Am Coming Quickly”

In order to avoid rushed decisions that are not supported by the facts or wild exaggeration that make void the plain meaning of the text or texts in the Book of Revelation. Revelation should be based on evidence we can accumulate, not fabricated or constructed to support a pre-existing position regarding eschatology. Like a detective, letting the evidence lead us to a conclusion, not looking for evidence to support a conclusion. This study will survey five evidentiary foundations to support a time-frame within which to date John’s Apocalypse. One of the first examinations that proves the early date is found in the first three verses of Chapter 1.

What is stated upfront in the prologue (1:1-3) is also repeated in the epilogue (22:6, 10, 20). John begins his opening remarks about the “soon” (ἐν τάχει, *en tachei*) coming of Jesus. John makes plain the unfolding of God’s revelation concerning the “time of the end” for the overthrow of apostate Israel. John begins his writing with the announcement that the “time of the end” is near for God’s judgment upon the rebellious Jews. The following comments by John should grab our attention concerning the imminent return of the Lord:

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must [*dei*] **soon take place** [*en tachei*]. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,² who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.³ Blessed is the one who **reads** the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who **hear** it and **take to heart** what is written in it, because the **time is near** [καὶρὸς ἐγγύς, *ho kairos engys*]. (Revelation 1:1-3)

The KJV translates the Greek phrase *en tachei* as “**shortly come to pass**” rather than “soon take place” as rendered in the NIV (1:1). In verse 3, John informed his readers that the “**time is near**,” which in the Greek text is *ho kairos engys*. On the other hand, the KJV renders this phrase as “**the time is at hand**.” As we peruse these three verses, we should keep in mind

that this introduction was written to seven churches in Asia¹ in order to strengthen them in the oncoming assault by the Jews as well as ultimately by the Roman government. In the *epilogue* [conclusion] (22:6), the angel reinforced what John was told in the very beginning of the *prologue* (introduction):

The angel said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that **must soon take place** [*en tachei*, ‘quickly’]. (22:6)

In Chapter 22:10, 20, we also discover that the Holy Spirit uses the same terminology that He related to John in 1:3. Once more, John records what he was told: “Then he told me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because **the time is near**” [ὁ καιρὸς γὰρ ἐγγύς ἐστιν, *ho kairos engys estin*], (22:10). Jesus again alerts John as to the immediacy of His impending judgment against Israel with an adverb *tachy*, which means, ‘**quickly, without delay, or soon.**’ We need, once more, to tune our ears to the following words: “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, **I am coming soon**’ [ἐρχομαι ταχύ, *erchomai tachy*]. Amen. Come, [ἐρχου, *erchou*] Lord Jesus” (22:20).

The two expressions (‘**the time is near**’ and ‘**the time is at hand**’) given above address urgency, not two-thousand years in the future. The “*ho kairos engys*” (‘the time is at hand’) is an expression of imminence that includes a notion of present time. It is in this same vein that John the Baptist began his ministry by calling the Jews to repentance and announcing the nearness of God’s kingdom. He **proclaims**: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven **is near**” [ἤγγικεν, *ēngiken*, ‘has come near’] (Matthew 3:2).

Following the Temptation of Jesus, Matthew informs us that Jesus went to Galilee and began preaching: “From that time on Jesus began to **preach**, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven **is near**’” [ἤγγικεν, *ēngiken*,² ‘has come near’], (4:17). Both John the Baptist and Jesus used the perfect tense to inform their listeners that the kingdom of heaven is “near.” Ray Summers³ defines the “perfect tense”:

As the name indicates, the perfect tense stands for perfected action (action which has been completed and stands completed in the present). English translations are accommodations to the Greek perfect and do not express the full force of this tense. **The perfect tense conveys three ideas: action which has occurred in the past, which has come to a culmination, and which stands as a completed result.**⁴ (Emphasis mine—underlining and bold)

¹Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (Revelation 2:1—3:22).

²*Ēngiken* (ἤγγικεν) is a verb, perfect, active, 3rd person, singular from *engizō*.

³Ray Summers served as a professor of New Testament and Greek at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Baylor University, where he was Chairman of the religious department.

⁴Ray Summers and Thomas Sawyer, *Essentials of New Testament Greek*, Rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 114.

Grant R. Osborne's⁵ comments on the perfect tense is on target when he writes concerning the kingdom of heaven being near:

In 3:2 [Matthew], the Baptist proclaimed, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven **has come near.**" Now his ministry has come to its end (4:12), and he has passed the baton to Jesus, who takes up the same message but with a new depth, for the "great light" has "dawned (see v. 16) and the kingdom age is here. The meaning of "has come near"/is near" (*ēngiken*) as both **already and not yet, as here and yet coming**, continues in this context as well (see 3:2). Jesus has inaugurated the kingdom events (for the kingdom as already present, see 12:28) but they will not be consummated until the eschaton.⁶

Even though Osborne writes about the "eschaton," he is speaking of the end of Planet Earth. On the other hand, the context of the whole of the New Testament writings assign the "eschaton" to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. D. A. Carson⁷ is correct in his comments concerning the use of the perfect tense. He writes: "with Jesus the kingdom has drawn so near that it has actually dawned"⁸ (emphasis mine). He is correct in his comments, but, at the same time, he is still looking for a future kingdom that has not yet appeared. Also, Jeffrey A. Gibbs⁹ commentary on Matthew 1:1—11:1 helps to explain the use of the perfect tense:

Second, when Jesus of Nazareth (like John) grounded his call to repentance in Israel with the declaration that "the reign of heaven stands near," he was proclaiming that the kingly ruling deeds of God, expected on the Last Day, were beginning already now on the earth. The "reign of heaven" is not primarily a place. It certainly is not a group of people or an organization. The reign of heaven is the *reigning* of God, what God the King is doing—in Jesus, in history.⁷¹⁰ (Emphasis mine)

Again, Gibbs mentions the "Last Day" as a reference to Planet Earth, we need to keep in mind that the "Last Day" in the New Testament Scriptures had to do with the end of Apostate Israel in AD 70, not something yet to be fulfilled.¹¹ Even though the "kingdom of God" is "already but not yet," the end-time salvation is already now in the present (see Luke 17:21).

⁵Grant R. Osborne (1942-2018) was a professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. His areas of expertise include the gospels, hermeneutics, and the book of Revelation.

⁶Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, General Editor, Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 144.

⁷D. A. Carson is research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He is the author or editor of more than forty books and is one of the leaders of the gospel Coalition.

⁸D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 117.

⁹Jeffrey A. Gibbs is professor of exegetical theology (New Testament) at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis Missouri.

⁷ See further "The Reign of Heaven/God in Jesus" in "Matthew's Intention" in the introduction.

¹⁰ Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 215.

¹¹My comments concerning, Osborne, Carson, or Gibbs are not to question the integrity of these God fearing men. These men, so it seems to me, have allowed their theological training to influence their thinking of the "last days" scenario found in the Scriptures.

Once more, the words of Summers on the perfect tense is well-worth reading: “Sometimes the perfect can be translated correctly by the English present tense.”¹²

These statements by both John and Jesus concerning the “kingdom of heaven” should grab our attention. Daniel foretold the coming of the Messianic kingdom about six-hundred years earlier (see Daniel 2 and 7).¹³ Now, the kingdom is on the horizon. Mark’s Gospel draws attention to this kingdom and is, at the same time, a parallel to Matthew 3:2 and 4:17. Mark, in his Gospel, informs us that after John the Baptist was put in prison that Jesus began preaching in Galilee:

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵“**The time has come**” [ὁ καιρὸς ἤγγικεν, *ho kairos ēngiken*, ‘the time has drawn near’], he said. “**The kingdom of God is near**. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:14-15)

“The kingdom of God that is near” is the kingdom that God revealed to Daniel in 2:44 and 7:14. Also this kingdom is equivalent to the “new heaven and a new earth” in Revelation 21:1. The Greek text of Mark’s Gospel actually reads: “the time has been fulfilled [*peplērōtai*]¹⁴ and the kingdom of God [*basileia tou theou*] **has drawn near**” (*ēngiken*).¹⁵ There is a great deal of controversy over the English word “soon” and the phrase “**the time is near**” as found in the *prologue* and *epilogue* of the Book of Revelation. How should we interpret this particular word and this unique phrase? In the NIV, the word *soon* **appears eight times** in the Book of Revelation.¹⁶

The English word “soon” is from the Greek *en tachei*, which means “with speed.” Within the context, this warning has particular consequences for the listener. Both John the Baptist and Jesus began their ministries with a warning concerning the near approach of God’s kingdom. Those present under their ministries were to hear their message. Even though we today may disagree about the duration of time, we can all agree that both John and Jesus wanted the phrase to compel those present to hear the words: “the kingdom of heaven is near/has drawn near” (*ēngiken*).

In Revelation 2:16, the English word “soon” is from the Greek adverb *ταχύς* (*tachys*), which word means “quickly.” An understanding of the first three chapters of Revelation sets the stage for the proper interpretation and application of this most misunderstood book by the Christian community as a whole. Unfortunately, in our seeking to grasp the intended meaning of this prophecy, we have failed to reflect upon the recipients of this prophecy—written to seven churches in the first century. Our interpretation of the word *soon* should be consistent,

¹² Ray Summers and Thomas Sawyer, *Essentials of New Testament Greek*, Ibid., 114.

¹³For an in-depth study of Daniel 2, see Dallas Burdette, “God: Revealer of the End from the Beginning,” in Dallas Burdette, *Commentary on Daniel: An Unraveling of God’s Messianic Kingdom* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2016), 74-90.

¹⁴*Peplērōtai* is a perfect passive indicative from *plēroō*, “to fulfill.”

¹⁵*Ēngiken* is a perfect active indicative from *engizō*, “to draw near.”

¹⁶**The English word “soon” (*tachos* [τάχος] and *tachy* [ταχύ]) appears eight times: Revelation 1:1; 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:6, 7, 12, 20. The noun form is used with the preposition *en* in 1:1 and 22:6. The other uses of the word “soon” is an adverb in its six other occurrences (I am coming quickly).**

unless the context or language implies that we should adjust our interpretation. It should not be interpreted one way in one verse and differently elsewhere unless the passage forces us to do so. It is in this approach that Milton S. Terry (1840-1914, American Methodist minister and educator) addressed the proper method of defining words:

The character of the whole book or epistle, and the context, scope, and plan are often necessary to be taken into consideration before the real bearings of a given text can be clearly apprehended. That doctrine only is theologically sound which rests upon a strict grammatico-historical interpretation of Scripture, and while all divinely inspired Scripture is profitable for doctrine and discipline in righteousness, its inspiration does not require or allow us to interpret it on any other principles than those which are applicable to uninspired writings. **The interpreter is always bound to consider how the subject lay in the mind of the author, and to point out the exact ideas and sentiments intended.** It is not for him to show how many meanings the words may possibly bear, nor even how the first readers understood them. The real meaning intended by the author, and that only, is to be set forth.¹⁷ (Emphasis mine—underlining and bold)

In Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, we are told about the seven churches in Asia—**Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea**. This book of prophecy was written to encourage and to strengthen the believers in the first century who were suffering tribulations. Christianity as a whole was suffering persecution from the Jews and later from the Roman Emperor under the leadership of Nero (AD 54-68).

For example, in **Pergamum**, John wrote a letter to these believers as it was delivered to him by an angel. In this letter, he pens the following words concerning those who held to the doctrine of Balaam: “Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will **soon** [ταχύ, *tachy*] come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth” (Revelation 2:16). False teaching as well as persecution enveloped the church. What is significant about this letter is that the Lord said, “I will *soon* [*tachy*] come to you.” The Greek text reads: “I am coming to you quickly.” **The context reveals that He was warning the believers in that generation, not ours in the twenty-first century.**

THE WORD *BEAST* IN REVELATION

Our second evidentiary foundation focuses in on the “**beast**” in Revelation 17, which **beast** has **seven heads** and **ten horns**. This seventeenth chapter of Revelation is the climax of the preceding chapters dealing with the identity of the “**beast**” (Chapters 11-13). Chapter 17 adds additional information that was not disclosed in Chapters 11-13. I wish to begin with Chapter 17 and work myself backwards in order to prove that the “**beast**” of Revelation 17 is Rome and that the sixth emperor of this empire was none other than **Nero** himself.

¹⁷Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments*, Second Edition, (New York; Cincinnati: Eaton & Mains; Curts & Jennings, 1890; republished by Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, nd), 595–596.

Evidentiary Foundation # 2:

The Beast in Revelation 17

As we approach our “Evidentiary Foundation # 2” for an early date of the Book of Revelation, we turn our attention to Chapter 17 of this supernatural prophetic book, which book may be described as a “prophetic miracle.” In the Book of Revelation God makes known the end from the beginning (see also Isaiah 46:10). In this instructive chapter, John adds additional information to his previous development of the “**beast**” (**Θηρίον, thērion**)¹⁸ from Chapters 11, 12, and 13. In this study, we begin with Chapter 17 and work backwards in our analysis of our “Evidentiary Foundation” to establish the early date of the Book of Revelation, which date precedes AD 70.

TERRIFYING BEAST: SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS

Chapter 17 is the climax of previous chapters in which John zeros in on this **terrifying beast**, which **beast** has **seven heads** and **ten horns** (17:3, 7, 16; 13:1; 12:3; Daniel 7:7, 20, 24).¹⁹ In Chapter 17, he nails the coffin shut, as it were, concerning the true identity of this “**beast**” beyond the shadow-of-a-doubt as having reference to the Roman Empire, which identification is corroborated by Daniel in his comments about the fourth world empire. John pens the following characteristics of this particular “**beast**” that represents Rome:

Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting [Jerusalem] on a **scarlet beast** [Rome] that was covered with blasphemous names and had **seven heads** and **ten horns**. (Revelation 17:3)

John repeats certain information (“**seven heads** and **ten horns**”) that he had previously mentioned in Chapter 13:1-2 and Chapter 12:3-6. John, once more, repeats this specific identification mark, which is proof that he still has the Roman Empire in mind. This wild “**beast**” has “**seven heads**” and “**ten horns**.” The distinctive characteristic of this odious **beast** will assist us in identifying this “**scarlet beast**.” As we continue to read Chapter 17, we discover additional information about this “**scarlet beast**.” We should pay more attention to the words of Holy Scripture, not the church fathers:

I saw that the woman [Jews/Jerusalem] was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. ⁷ Then the angel said to me:

¹⁸The word *beast* occurs **forty times** in the Book of Revelation: 11:7; 13:1, 2 (2 times), 3 (2 times), 4 (3 times), 5, 8, 11, 12 (2 times), 14 (2 times), 17, 18; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2, 10, 13; 17:7, 8 (2 times), 11, 12, 13, 16, 17; 19:19, 20 (2 times); 20:4, 10.

¹⁹The expression “**ten horns**” occurs **six times** in the Book of Revelation: 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, and 16. The expression “**seven heads**” appear **five times** in the Book of Revelation: 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9. The expression “**seven heads and ten horns**” **occur five times together** in 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9.

“Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman [Jews/Jerusalem] and of the **beast** [Rome] she rides, which has the **seven heads** and **ten horns**. (17:6-7)

SEVEN HEADS: SEVEN HILLS

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls (17:1) disclosed the identity of this “**beast**.” This “**beast**” that the woman (prostitute) rode is described as a “**beast**” with “**seven heads**” and “**ten horns**,” which description is none other than Rome itself. The angel continues to add supplemental data or facts about the “seven heads,” which knowledge helps to establish beyond a shadow-of-a-doubt as to the distinguishing and identifiable features of this “**beast**.” John writes: “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The **seven heads** are **seven hills** on which the woman sits” (17:9). This organized information adds to the specific identity of the **beast**. We know from historical sources that Rome was a city of seven hills—**Palatine, Aventine, Caelian, Esquiline, Viminal, Quirinal, and Capitoline**.

SEVEN HEADS: SEVEN KINGS

The angel continues to give data that help to identify this beast (Roman Empire) with additional data. The “seven heads” also represent kings of the Roman Empire. Again, the angel reveals the following information: “They are also **seven kings**. Five have fallen, one is [Nero, AD 54—June, 68], the other has not yet come [Galba, June, AD 68—January, 69]; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while” (17:10). The angel informs John that “Five have fallen, that is to say, that they had died. These five were: **Julius Caesar** (BC 49—BC 44), **Augustus** (31 BC—AD 14); **Tiberius** (AD 14—37); **Caligula** AD 37—41); **Claudius** (AD 41—54). The sixth Emperor of Rome was **Nero** (AD 54—68). This catalogue of Emperors proves that the Book of Revelation was written prior to June of AD 68 since **Nero** was still alive (“one is”) at the time John completed this prophecy. Following Nero’s death, **Galba’s** reign only lasted for six months.

THE HORNS: TEN PROVINCES

God does not leave any stone, as it were, unturned. He continues to elaborate on how to identify this particular beast. Again, John records: “The **ten horns** (**δέκα κέρατα**, *deka kerata*) you saw are **ten kings** who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the **beast**” (17:12). The “**ten horns**” represent **ten provinces** within the Roman Empire—Italy, Achaia, Asia, Syria, Egypt, Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Germany. As a cold-case detective, we must examine all the clues in our search for the correct interpretation of who the beast is and who the harlot is. The identification of the “ten horns” adds stability to our findings.

Once more, the angel calls attention to this “**beast**” with its “**ten horns**” (17:16) and its desolation of the “**great city**”²⁰ (17:18, Jerusalem.). We need to listen carefully as the angel reveals this additional information about the **beast**:

Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits (Jerusalem), are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages [Gentiles].¹⁶ The **beast** [Rome] and the **ten horns** [provinces] you saw will hate the prostitute [Jerusalem]. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the **beast** [Rome] their power to rule, until God’s words are fulfilled.¹⁸ The woman you saw is the **great city** [Jerusalem] that rules over the kings of the earth.” (17:15-18)

THE GREAT CITY AND BABYLON THE GREAT ARE ONE AND THE SAME

The “**great city**” is none other than Jerusalem. Remember, this phrase appears **eight times** in the Book of Revelation and always has reference to Jerusalem. The “**great city**” is also identified as “**Babylon the Great**” four times in Revelation.²¹ **Another phrase** that John employs to identify Jerusalem is the “**holy city.**” This phrase also occurs **four times** in Revelation.²² All of these phrases are associated with the terrifying beast of “seven heads” and “ten horns.”

Just a casual reading of Revelation reveals that the **beast** is incarnated in Nero as a Roman authority and that Jerusalem is the harlot. Both Nero and Jerusalem are critical pieces in our search for the identification of the “**beast.**” Every piece of evidence must be considered in Revelation 17, otherwise, one’s interpretation cannot be accurate. Honesty requires each interpreter to consider, the “**heads,**” the “**rider on the beast,**” and the “**horns.**” If one addresses the full picture of the “**beast,**” this will prevent one from advancing a post-70 AD interpretation. Every interpretation must account for all of the pieces with consistency and then work itself backwards to the preceding chapter (13) making sure that the “**evidentiary trail**” remain consistent as well.

THE SIXTH EMPEROR: NERO

Just a casual reading of Chapter 17 draws attention to the “**seven heads**” and “**ten horns**” in its persecution of “**the great city.**” The beast of Chapter 17 is the beast that destroys the “**great city.**” These two designations (**seven heads** and **ten horns**) are the culmination of the introduction of the “**ten horns**” and the “**seven heads**” as previously

²⁰“**Great city**” refers to Jerusalem. This phrase is **used eight times** in the Book of Revelation: 11:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21. John tells us that the “**great city**” is where our Lord was crucified (11:8).

²¹“**Babylon the Great**” is mentioned **four times** in Revelation 14:8; 16:9; 17:5, and 18:2.

²²“**The holy city**” is mentioned four times in Revelation, 11:2; 21:2, 10; 22:19. The first occurrence (11:2) refers to the physical holy city. On the other hand, the other three occurrences refer to God’s New Jerusalem.

mentioned in Chapter 13. Chapter 17 reveals that the sixth emperor is **Nero** (“one is”), Chapter 13 identifies this one that “**is**” as the one whose number is “666.”

CHAPTER 13 SETS THE STAGE FOR CHAPTER 17

Thus, our **third evidentiary foundation** is made solid by John calling attention to **Nero** who represents Rome by informing the first-century readers that **Nero’s** name along with his family name (Caesar) is equivalent to the number “666.” As we work ourselves backwards in our exegetical study of the date of Revelation, we discover that Chapter 13 sets the stage for Chapter 17 that identifies the sixth emperor of Rome. Chapter 13 gives us the number of the man as “**666**,” but Chapter 17 identifies this particular man as Nero (sixth emperor of Rome). Both chapters complement one another.

Evidentiary Foundation # 3:

Nero Caesar in Revelation 13

Before we turn our attention to Daniel’s announcement concerning the coming of God’s kingdom during the time of the Roman Empire (Daniel 2:44; 7:1-7; 9:24-27), I wish to turn our attention to Revelation 13 concerning the number “666.” Prior to reflecting upon Revelation 13, we need to reflect, once more, upon the expressions concerning the “**ten horns**” and the “**seven heads**” revealed in Revelation 17.²³ This repetition of these two designations should assist us in identifying this unique beast. For example, in Chapter 13 of Revelation, we are confronted with these same two descriptions found in Chapter 17 in conjunction with the “the number of the **beast**, for it is a **man’s number**. His number is “666” (13:18).

REVELATION CHAPTERS 13 AND 17: SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS

John reveals a tremendous amount of data in this chapter to help every reader arrive at a correct analysis of the “**ten horns**” and the “**seven heads**.” If we start with **Revelation 13 and then jump to Revelation 17**, we witness a progression of more information to assist us in correctly interpreting the Scriptures concerning the date of Revelation. We should pay careful attention to John as he writes about the **beast** and the **number of the man** who represents this terrifying and alarming **beast**:

And I saw a **beast** [Rome] coming out of the sea [Mediterranean]. He had **ten horns** and **seven heads**, with **ten crowns** on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.² The beast [Rome] I

²³Again, we should reflect upon the expression “**ten horns**,” which occurs six times in the Book of Revelation: 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, 16. Earlier in this study, we called attention to the expression “**seven heads**,” which appear five times in the Book of Revelation: 12:3; 13:1; 17:3; 17:7, 9. Over again, we should take notice that the expression “**seven heads and ten horns**” occur five times together in 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9.

saw resembled a **leopard**, but had feet like those of a **bear** and a mouth like that of a **lion**. The dragon gave the **beast** his power and his throne and great authority. (13:1-2)

FORTY-TWO MONTHS

This **beast** (Rome) was given authority to attack the Holy City for **forty-two months**, which time-frame should alert every reader to the Book of Daniel for its calculation.²⁴ This time-table plays a tremendous role in understanding the clandestine operation of the **beast** (Rome) against the Holy City (Jerusalem), which city would be trodden down for “**forty-two months**.” In John’s vision, he saw:

The **beast** [Rome] was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for **forty-two months**.⁶ He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place [Jerusalem/Temple] and those who live in heaven.⁷ He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe [*phulē*, 12 tribes of Israel], people, language and nation [Gentiles]. (13:5-7)

The Olivet Discourse [Matthew 24—25; Mark 13; Luke 21] is the background for the Book of Revelation. In this Discourse, Jesus foretold the destruction of the old “heaven and earth” (Matthew 5:18), which destruction occurred over a **forty-two month period** (Revelation 13:5; 11:2). Luke gives some additional information about this Tribulation period not recorded by Matthew’s reporting of the Olivet Discourse. For instance, Luke pens the following words uttered by Jesus:

When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies [Rome], you will know that its desolation is near [See Matthew 24:15 and Daniel 12:11].²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.²² **For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment** [*plēsthēnai*]²⁵ **of all that has been written** [in the Hebrew Scriptures].²³ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people.²⁴ They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. **Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled** [forty-two months]. (Luke 21:20-24).

Jesus said, “Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out.” This phrase proves that the end of the world is not under consideration. In other words, this warning would be useless for the end of the world since this caveat of Jesus would have had no real value for His present audience to save themselves during the forty-two months siege.

NERO CAESAR: NUMBER 666

²⁴“**Forty-two months**” appears twice in the Book of Revelation: 11:2 and 13:5. The expression “**1,260 days**” appears twice in Revelation: 11:3 and 12:6).

²⁵*Plēsthēnai* is an aorist passive infinitive from *pimplēmi*, which means “to fill, to fulfill—an infinitive of purpose.

The “**times of the Gentiles**” is identified by John as “**forty-two months**” (Revelation 13:5). Chapter 13:18 is the background for the identification of the sixth emperor of the Roman Empire in Revelation 17:10. The numerical number of “666” (13:18) along with the “one is” eliminates all guess work as to the one who represents Rome. Nero’s name in the Hebrew language is equivalent to “666.” In Hebrew, Nero’s name is spelled Neron Kesar. Since the Hebrew language in the time of John did not employ a written vowel system, the counting of the consonants would tally out to “666.”

For instance נ (“n”) equals 50, ר (“r”) equals 200, ו (“v/w”) equals 6, and נ (“n”) equals 50, which total gives us the numeric value of 306. On the other hand, ק (“k”) equals 100, ש (“s”) equals 60, and ר (“r”) equals 200, which numeric value equals 360.²⁶ These two totals add up to “666.” Even though I began my “second evidence” for the date of Revelation with Revelation 17, we immediately observe from Revelation 11 and 13 the progressive nature of the unfolding of the characteristics of the **beast**. Chapter 17 is the climax of Chapters 11 and 13. God does not leave us wondering as to the identity of this **beast** and his tyranny against the Jews as well as God’s saints.

If one holds onto a different assignment of “666” to another individual, that individual must have the same relationship with the evidence of the same beast in Revelations 17. If the “beast” is someone else, who is the “harlot,” the “seven heads,” and the “horns”? We need to keep in mind that the evidence is not isolated, but rather is a part of the whole story. In other words, when one combines Revelation 13 and 17, we see that nothing is left out of the story about the “beast” and the number of the man that bears the number “666.” An investigator cannot select independent pieces of evidence and then construct a story that ignores the remaining pieces. The remaining pieces may identify beyond a shadow-of-a-doubt as to the beast and the harlot.

WORKING BACKWARDS TO CHAPTER 11

As we continue to work ourselves backward in our scenario of evidences, we witness in Chapter 11 an earlier reference to the “**forty-two months**” (11:2). As set forth above in our third evidentiary foundation (13:5-7), John reiterates in this chapter what was revealed to him in Chapter 11. One should not divorce Chapter 13 from Chapter 11. Our **fourth evidentiary foundation** now focuses on the Temple in Chapter 11 as proof that the Book of Revelation was written prior to AD 70. Since the Temple was still standing at this time, we know from Chapter 17 that Nero was still alive (“**one is**”). Since the **Temple** was destroyed at the end of the “**forty-two months**” in AD 70, we are given internal evidence in Chapter 11 to establish the early date as the correct date of composition.

²⁶For a detailed study of the number 666, see Dallas Burdette, “The Date of Revelation: Written before June AD 68,” in Dallas Burdette, *Commentary on the Book of Revelation: An Unraveling of the Olivet Discourse As a Preface to Understanding Revelation*, volume 1 (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2013), 9-14.

Evidentiary Foundation # 4:

The Jerusalem Temple in Revelation 11

As we turn our attention to Chapter 11 of the Book of Revelation, we have already noticed from Chapter 13 (vv. 5-7) that the “**beast**” was given authority over the Jews for **forty-two months**.²⁷ Remember that Chapter 13 is an expansion of Chapter 11. The expression of “**forty-two months**” should shine like a neon light in our eyes. Since the Temple is still standing, this historical fact substantiates that the Book of Revelation was written prior to AD 70. God gave the Gentiles a period of **forty-two months** for the destruction of the Holy People. John’s statement of the time table is an echo of Daniel’s “**a time, times and half a time**” (Daniel 12:7). John informs his readers about the angel’s announcement concerning the Temple:

I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, “Go and measure the **temple of God and the altar**, and count the worshipers there. ² But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city²⁸ for **42 months**. ³ And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for **1,260 days**, clothed in sackcloth.” (Revelation 11:1-3)²⁹

John is told that “the holy city” had been given to the Gentiles for “**42 months**” (11:2; 13:5) This time-frame is also equivalent to “**1,260 days**” (11:3; 12:6) Following this devastation, the seventh angel sounded its trumpet by announcing the “new heaven and earth” (see also Hebrews 12:22-28).³⁰ The angel says, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (11:15). Following this announcement, the angel also announced the time for God’s wrath upon Israel who was spiritually dead:

The nations were angry; and your wrath has come [“**42 months**”]. The time has come for judging the dead [Israel], and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth” [*gē*, the land] (11:18)

²⁷As mentioned above, the phrase “**forty-two months**” appears twice in the Book of Revelation: 11:2 and 13:5, and the expression “**1,260 days**” appears twice in Revelation: 11:3 and 12:6).

²⁸This term “**holy city**” appears four times in Revelation. The first occurrence refers to the physical holy city (Jerusalem, 11:2). On the other hand, the expression “holy city” refers three times to God’s New Jerusalem (21:2, 10 and 22:19).

²⁹For the background of John’s statement, see Luke 21:20-24.

³⁰For an examination of the new heaven and new earth, see Dallas Burdette (b. 1934), “A New Heaven and a New Earth,” in Dallas Burdette, *Commentary on the Book of Revelation: An Unraveling of the Olivet Discourse As a Preface to Understanding Revelation*, volume 1 (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2013), 42-89.

CHAPTERS 11 AND 12

In the original text, we did not have chapter and verse divisions. Even though in our translation of the sacred Scriptures, Chapter 12 is divided from Chapter 11. Nevertheless, the “**42 months**” in Chapter 11 continues as a theme into Chapter 12. The church flees for safety from the “red dragon” (Rome). How do we know this “**red dragon**” represents Rome? Listen, once more, to the angel as he describes this dragon:

Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous **red dragon** [Rome] with **seven heads** and **ten horns** and **seven crowns** on his heads. ⁴ His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. ⁵ She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. ⁶ The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for **1,260 days**. (12:3-6)

TIME, TIMES, AND HALF A TIME

As a result of this rescue by God, the “**red dragon**” was filled with fury at this failure to wreak havoc on God’s saints. The angel tells John:

The **woman** was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for **a time, times and half a time**, out of the serpent’s reach. (12:14)

This “woman” is different from the woman (harlot) in Revelation 17:3-7. This body of believers were not devoured. Prior to this particular time, God had not given Rome the authority to attack the holy city for 42 months. Jerusalem was under the physical jurisdiction of Rome, but God still retained the position of spiritual authority until the time He had allotted to Rome to execute His judgment. After this time, God took back His spiritual authority over His people and still has it today. God’s authority is revealed in coming of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1). Since the Temple was destroyed in AD 70, how could the recipients of this vision measure the Temple after its destruction? We should not cherry-pick what we desire from these chapter. We should endeavor to identify every individual piece of evidence just a detective would in investigating a crime scene.

Whether we speak of “**a time, times and half a time**,” we are still speaking of “**42 months**” or “**1,260 days**” as the time foreordained for God’s wrath to be poured out upon apostate Israel. We cannot read Chapters 11, 12, 13, and 17 without a consciousness as to who the **beast** was that pursued apostate Israel as well as Christians—a beast with “**seven heads**” and “**ten horns**.” Our interpretation of the data should guide us through the evidence set forth in Chapter 11 through 17. Did the disciples come to understand that the Hebrew Scriptures had foretold these events hundreds of years before they were fulfilled? The answer is yes! Just before Jesus’ ascension, Luke informs his readers about this final encounter with the risen Christ:

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures [the Hebrew Scriptures].⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:45-49)

Chapter 11 begins by calling attention to the time that God allotted to the Gentiles to accomplish God’s wrath against corrupt Israel. The time designated for its destruction is “**forty-two months**,” which is also given as “**1,260 days**” (11:1-3). In Chapter 12, this time period is also described as “**a time, times and half a time**” (12:14). This expression is a direct echo of Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 concerning the demise of the holy city. Finally, the fifth evidentiary foundation to establish the early date of Revelation is to demonstrate the relationship between Daniel’s writings and John’s Apocalypse.

Evidentiary Foundation # 5:

The Writings of Both Daniel and John

The Book of Daniel, in one sense, is the precursor to the Book of Revelation.³¹ **In the sixth century (BC), God revealed to Daniel the very things that God later disclosed to John when he was on the isle of Patmos.** My objective in this particular study is to observe that the same terminology employed by Daniel is also utilized by John in his Apocalypse. In the Book of Revelation, John writes about the **fourth world power** (Roman Empire) that God revealed to Daniel in the sixth century (BC). For example, in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (603 BC), Daniel had a dream that he could not interpret. Even though he called for his wise men to interpret the dream, none were found that could explain the dream. Ultimately, Daniel, God’s prophet, was able to reveal the dream as well as to interpret the dream.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S DREAM: FOUR WORLD EMPIRES

In this dream, Nebuchadnezzar witnessed a large statue that stood before him (Daniel 2:31). God revealed to Daniel that this image represented four world empires—**Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome**. The head of the statue represented the **Babylonian Empire** (2:32). The second pictured the **Medo-Persian Empire** (2:39a). The third kingdom represented the **Grecian Empire** (2:39b), and finally, the fourth kingdom (**Roman Empire**) appeared on the scene (2:40). This fourth world empire would be ferocious in the activities under its control. Yet, during this period of time, God would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed

³¹See Dallas Burdette, *Commentary on Daniel: An Unraveling of God’s Messianic Kingdom* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2016).

(2:44). Daniel writes about what God revealed to him concerning the coming of his new kingdom through His Anointed One:

Finally, there will be a **fourth kingdom** [Rome], strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.⁴¹ Just as you saw that **the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron**, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay.⁴² As **the toes were partly iron and partly clay**, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle.⁴³ And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.⁴⁴ “In the time of those kings [the Caesars], **the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people**. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. **“The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future.**” The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy.” (Daniel 2:40-45)

DANIEL’S VISION: FOUR WORLD EMPIRES

This dream is miraculous in nature. God intervenes and announces the future of three additional world empires following the Babylonian Empire. Daniel was told what would **“take place in the future.”** From 603 BC, we now jump to 553 BC for our next major prophecy concerning the four world empires. This time, Daniel received his vision during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign in Babylon (7:1). **In this vision, we are not confronted with a large statue, but rather, we are introduced to wild beasts as emblematic of the same four world empires as recorded in Daniel 2.**

The first empire is described as a **lion** (Babylon, 7:4), the second empire is described as a **“beast”** that is like a **bear** (Medo-Persia, 7:5), the third **“beast”** (Greece) is pictured as a **leopard** (7:6), and finally, the **fourth beast was extremely terrifying** (7:7). Daniel’s remarks should cause each of us to stand up and take notice of the similarity of language that is found in Revelation 13 and 17. Daniel writes what he saw:

After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a **fourth beast—terrifying and frightening** and very powerful [Rome]. It had large iron teeth; **it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.**⁸ “While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another **horn** [Nero Caesar], a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like **the eyes of a man** and a mouth that spoke boastfully. (7:7-8)

Following this vision, we are told that God’s new kingdom would be established during this period of time: “But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and **will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever**” (7:18). This is parallel to Daniel’s statement in his interpretation of the fourth world empire in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream: “In the time of those kings [the Caesars], **the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed,**

nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever” (2:44). In Daniel’s vision during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign, Daniel wrote more about this fourth world empire:

Then I wanted to know the true meaning of **the fourth beast**, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the **beast** that crushed and devoured its victims and **trampled** underfoot whatever was left. ²⁰ I also wanted to know about the **ten horns on its head** and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the **horn [Nero] that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully.** ²¹ As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. (7:19-22)

The “**ten horns**” of this **fourth beast**³² (Rome) should alert us to the same terminology that is recorded by John in his description of this fourth beast.³³ Again, in Daniel 7, we have additional information about this fourth beast (Rome):

He gave me this explanation: ‘The **fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth.** It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. ²⁴ The **ten horns are ten kings** [ten provinces] who will come from this kingdom. After them another king [Nero] will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. ²⁵ He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. **The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.** ²⁶ But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. ²⁷ Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.’ (7:23-27)

ROME: TEN HORNS ON ITS HEAD

In Daniel 7:20, he mentions “**ten horns on its head.**” Again, in 7:24, he calls attention to the “**ten horns**” that represents “**ten kings.**” Also, in 7:7, he writes about the **fourth beast** as having “**ten horns.**” Do we remember John’s remarks about this **fourth world empire**? Listen, once more, to his description: “The **ten horns** you saw are ten kings” (Revelation 17:12). Again, John writes, “The **beast** and the **ten horns** you saw will hate the prostitute” [Jerusalem]. Earlier, John penned the following words: “An enormous **red dragon** [Rome] with **seven heads** and **ten horns**” (12:3). Then, in the following chapter, John calls attention to this **beast**: “And I

³²Once more, I call attention to the word *beast*, which occurs **forty times** in the Book of Revelation: 11:7; 13:1, 2 (2 times), 3 (2 times), 4 (3 times), 5, 8, 11, 12 (2 times), 14 (2 times), 17, 18; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2, 10, 13; 17:7, 8 (2 times), 11, 12, 13, 16, 17; 19:19, 20 (2 times); 20:4, 10.

³³The expression “**ten horns**” occurs **six times** in the Book of Revelation: 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, and 16. Also, the expression “**seven heads**” appear **five times** in the Book of Revelation: 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9. The expression “**seven heads and ten horns**” **occur five times together** in 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9.

In the Book of Daniel, the phrase “**ten horns**” also occurs three times: Daniel 7:7, 20, 24.

saw a **beast** [Rome] coming out of the sea [Mediterranean]. He had **ten horns** and **seven heads**" (13:1).

FORTY-TWO MONTHS

We have already observed the amount of time that God set for the overthrow of apostate Israel ("**42 months**," Revelation 11:2). John also described this time-frame as "**1,260 days**" (11:3). Finally, this time period is also designated as: "**a time, times and half a time**" (12:14). How does this fit in with Daniel's prophecy about the demise of apostate Israel? As Daniel concluded his prophecy, he reports that one angel asked another angel as to how long this devastation of the holy city would demand. Daniel records the angel's words: "It will be for **a time, times and half a time**. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken [AD 70], all these things will be completed" (Daniel 12: 7).

CONCLUSION

Hopefully, every reader will reflect upon the five evidentiary points employed in this brief analysis of the internal data to establish beyond the shadow-of-a-doubt about the date of Revelation as having taken place prior to June of AD 68. Do we remember Daniel's comments in 7:25: "The saints will be handed over to him (Rome) for **a time, times and half a time**," which period is equivalent to **three and one-half years, 42 months, or 1,260 days**? Also, Daniel 9:27 allows **42 months** for the destruction of the holy city. Finally, Daniel, as he concludes his prophecy, is told that God has decreed the time factor as **42 months** for the demise of apostate Israel (12:7), which time-frame is verbalized by Daniel as: "**a time, times and half a time**" (see also 7:25).

INTERNAL EVIDENCE FOR THE DATE OF REVELATION

Instead of relying upon the "church fathers," as many Christians do, for our understanding of the date of Revelation, we need to turn to the "internal evidence" to establish the time-frame of the writing of this prophecy that John received from Jesus. The "internal evidence" points to a date prior to the completion of God's timetable for the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the "**beast**" with the "**seven heads and ten horns**."

God's written Revelation is the final benchmark by which we regulate our understanding of the date of Revelation (before June, AD 68), not the church fathers (not AD 95). Since the Book of Daniel was written in the sixth century BC, he was told "because the words are **closed up and sealed** until the **time of the end**" (12:9). The "time of the end" had to do with the end of the Old Covenant world of Judaism. On the other hand, John wrote his Revelation before the "**time of the end**" of apostate Israel. John was told: "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of the book, because **the time is near**" [ἐγγύς, *engus*] (Revelation 22:10). In other words, Jesus is saying that the time appointed for Israel's end is "near."