

Revelation: The End of the Age

Throughout the last 2,000 years, most Christians have held the belief that the majority of the book of Revelation, alongside the prophecies recorded in Matthew 24 and Daniel 9 and 12, were actually fulfilled around AD 70 with the fall of Jerusalem. A careful analysis of Scripture, comparing the Old and New Testaments, seems to support that conclusion.

Most other viewpoints on Revelation, including the popular idea of a pre-tribulation rapture, have only surfaced in modern times. While that doesn't necessarily mean those views are wrong, it should at least cause us to cast doubt on the newer ideas and to study what has been believed by most Christians throughout many centuries. This brief introduction to the topic is intended to be a starting point for doing just that.

Matthew 27:25	This verse is a key to understanding all of these prophecies, as Pilate declared Jesus to be innocent, but the Jews still demanded that He be crucified and said, "His blood be on us and on our children." God would fulfill their foolish demand within that generation by destroying the temple and all of Jerusalem about 40 years later, and many prophecies in the Bible deal with this horrific event in history.
Daniel 12:4 Revelation 22:10	Another key to understanding these passages is found in these verses. Daniel was told to seal up his vision, because its fulfillment was far into the future. In contrast, John was told not to seal up the visions in Revelation, because their fulfillment was near.
When was Revelation written?	The common belief that John wrote Revelation in 95 A.D. is based on one uncertain historical source. Given the reality that John does not mention the significant event of the destruction of the temple, and Revelation 11:1-2 seems to indicate that the temple is still standing, it is likely that John actually wrote Revelation a few years prior to 70 A.D. There are multiple warnings throughout the book of Revelation that its fulfillment would take place very soon.
Revelation 1-19, Matthew 23-24, and Daniel 9 were fulfilled around AD 70 with the fall of Jerusalem.	
Matthew 20-22	In Matthew 20-22, Jesus gives multiple parables and prophecies indicating that salvation is coming to the Gentiles, leading up to His prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem. The coming of Christ's worldwide, spiritual kingdom, replacing the old earthly kingdom of Israel, was completed with the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ followed by the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This marked the end of the age of the earthly Jewish kingdom.
Daniel 9, 12 Matthew 23-24 Revelation 6-11	The Roman Empire, led at first by the emperor Nero, brutally attacked Jerusalem during the period from AD 66 to 73. The suffering and hunger that they endured during that time is almost unimaginable. Once we understand that part of history, it is easy to see how many of the dire prophecies given in these chapters were fulfilled during this time. The words recorded in Matthew 23:36 – 24:2, in particular, specifically indicate that destruction would come upon Jerusalem and the temple during that generation.
Daniel 9, 12 Matthew 23-24 Revelation 7	The abomination of desolation pictures the destruction of the Jewish temple in AD 70, which took place during Rome's seven-year war against the Jews. In addition, though it may be either a literal or a symbolic number, the 144,000 who were sealed were true believers who God saved out of Judaism during this same period of time.
Daniel 7 Revelation 13	The Roman Empire was the last great beast—the last of the four great kingdoms on earth—which was replaced by the kingdom of Christ, beginning during this period of time. The greatest persecutor of Christians and Jerusalem was the emperor Nero.

Revelation 13 and 17	If Julius Caesar is included among this group (he essentially began the Roman Empire as we know it, though he was not given the actual title of emperor), Nero was the sixth of seven emperors, and the seventh only ruled for a short time. Much like Roman numerals, letters in the Hebrew alphabet represent certain numbers. Using these numbers, when translated in Hebrew, Caesar Nero's name adds up to 666.
Revelation 18-19	The city of Babylon, the great prostitute, must represent Jerusalem. Only Jerusalem had a covenant relationship with God that the people broke. In essence, they prostituted themselves to other gods, idols, and lusts rather than remaining faithful to God. Neither the city of Rome, nor the Roman Catholic Church, ever had such a relationship with God that they could properly be called a prostitute.
From this perspective, only Revelation 20-22 and Matthew 25 refer to present-day and future events.	
Revelation 20	Prior to this time, Satan was given much more freedom by God to deceive the world, particularly the Gentile nations. Since this time, Satan's influence is greatly diminished because the gospel has been spread around the world. Of course, Satan is still actively at work, but the church has a worldwide influence that simply did not exist before AD 70 (when the Kingdom of God ruled by Christ replaced the old Jewish sacrificial system).
Revelation 20	With this in view, it seems most reasonable that the millennium represents the current church age—a long period of time (with the 1,000 years being symbolic) beginning with the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. It is also possible that the millennium represents some future period of greater church influence on the world that has not yet begun.
Matthew 25 Revelation 20-22	Either way, Satan will make one last attempt to deceive the world at the end of time. That may be happening now, or this may still be in the future. Either way, Christians must remain vigilant, following Christ and awaiting His return and the final judgment. We can eagerly look forward to the complete fulfillment of these prophecies with the final, ultimate victory of Jesus Christ over sin and death!

Commonly Confused Ideas Regarding the End Times			
<p>Is Jesus talking about the end of the world in Matthew 24?</p> <p>In verses 1-2, Jesus tells His disciples that the temple will be destroyed. They ask him when this will happen, and the remainder of Matthew 24 is an answer to this question. Some versions say “the end of the world” but “the end of the age” is a better translation.</p>	<p>Does the gospel have to be preached to all nations before Jesus returns?</p> <p>This comes from Matthew 24:14 as Jesus tells the disciples signs that will indicate the destruction of the temple is near. According to Colossians 1:6 and 1:23, this was already being accomplished at that time with the going forth of the gospel beyond Israel and across the vast Roman Empire, which encompassed the greater part of the known world.</p>	<p>Does the Bible indicate a future in which we have one world government?</p> <p>This idea comes from the fourth beast of Daniel 7 and the beast mentioned several times in Revelation. Both of those represent the Roman Empire, not some future one world government.</p>	<p>Should we watch for the arrival of the antichrist?</p> <p>The antichrist that John writes about in two of his letters is best understood as those who stand against Christ. It may specifically refer to Nero as well, who is “the beast” of the Roman Empire personified.</p>

These resources were used in creating this brief introduction and are recommended for further study:

“The Last Days According to Jesus” by Dr. R.C. Sproul (video series freely available at ligonier.org and also available as a book)
 “A Study of Biblical Eschatology” by G.I. Williamson (freely available at reformed.org) • “Vengeance Has Come” by David Forsythe

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