

Dispensationalism – Neronic Dating (Refuted)

Arguments against the Neronic Dating (64AD):

■ EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

1. EARLIEST EXTERNAL WITNESS TO THE NERONIC DATING:

The earliest witness to the Neronic Dating of (65-66AD) is found in a Syriac translation of the New Testament in 550AD. The only other pieces of external evidence we have for the Neronic Dating is: Arethas (c. 900) and Theophylact (d. 1107). This is incredibly weak evidence for the Preteristic position of the earlier dating.

"The first clear, accepted, unambiguous witness to the Neronic date is a one-line subscription in the Syriac translation of the New Testament in a.d. 550," notes Mark Hitchcock. "Only two other external witnesses to the early date exist: Arethas (c. 900) and Theophylact (d. 1107)." This is scant "evidence," needless to say, upon which to draw such dogmatic conclusion, as is often done by many Preterists. On the other hand, Hitchcock notes that the late date "has an unbroken line of support from some of the greatest, most reliable names in church history, beginning in a.d. 150. . . . The external evidence from church history points emphatically to the a.d. 95 date for the composition of Revelation."

—— Mark Hitchcock, *Date of Revelation*, in Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson, editors, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2004), 337.

■ INTERNAL EVIDENCE

1. THREE TOWERS (HANK HANEGRAAFF)

"In summary, from all the reasons we are well justified in believing that the book of Revelation was not written twenty-five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, three tower above the rest."

—— Hank Hanegraaff, and Sigmund Brouwer, *The Last Sacrifice*, e-book, (Carol Stream, Ill., Tyndale House Publishers, 2012), 303.

1ST TOWER - NO MENTION OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

Response:

A AUDIENCE OF REVELATION WAS GENTILE BELIEVERS IN ASIA MINOR, NOT JEWS...

It wouldn't make sense to reference the destruction of the temple 25 years earlier, that has no real bearing on Gentile believers.

B REVELATION IS NOT A HISTORICAL BOOK. IT IS A PROPHETIC BOOK...

It isn't required that John explain historical details if it were written in 95AD. These are prophetic future events that John was given. The "past" was not part of the vision ("write the things which you have seen, things which are, things which will take place after these things").

Revelation 1:19 NASB

Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.

"Preterists argue that it is bizarre that John would fail to mention the destruction of Jerusalem, if he was writing in AD 95. Jesus' prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem was an excellent apologetic for supporting the veracity of Christ's claims. Preterists argue why John would fail to point this out in his letter. However, a number of counterarguments can be made: First, the original audience was ethnically and geographically different than Jerusalem. When we look at the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, these are all Gentile churches—not Jewish believers. They were 800 miles from Jerusalem. Second, the original audience was chronologically different than Jerusalem. If the late date is true, then the destruction of Jerusalem would've been 25 years in the past. Third, John was commanded to write about prophecy (Rev. 1:3)—not apologetics. In Revelation 1:19, Jesus commands John: "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things." John was a prophet who was writing about the future—not a historian or an apologist who was writing about the past. If Revelation was an apologetics text, we might expect him to mention this fulfilled prophecy. However, Revelation is a book of prophecy—not apologetics or history."

— James M. Rochford, Why is the dating of Revelation Important? Website: <http://www.evidenceunseen.com/bible-difficulties-2/nt-difficulties/jude/date-of-revelation/>

2ND TOWER - NO MENTION OF THE FULFILLMENT OF JESUS' PROPHECY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM IN MATTHEW 24...

Response:

A REVELATION NEVER DOES THIS WITH ANY PROPHECY...

No mention is made of any terminology such as "For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture" (Jn 19:36). "that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture" (Jn. 19:28). There are allusions to fulfillment from the Old Testament, but no formulas that prove this to be necessary.

3RD TOWER - JOHN MENTIONS THAT THE TEMPLE IS INTACT IN REVELATION 11:1-2.

Response:

A IT DOESN'T NECESSARILY NEED TO BE STANDING AT THE TIME HE WROTE ABOUT IT...

Daniel 9, Ezekiel 40-43 both spoke of temples that were not yet constructed, but that were future to both writers. John followed this pattern to describe an end-time temple.

B IT CANNOT BE ASSUMED THAT THE TEMPLE JOHN SAW WAS THE 2ND TEMPLE.

Preterist's simply assume (begging the question) that the temple here is a Reference to the 2nd temple. It must be demonstrated that John saw the 2nd temple, and that it cannot be a future temple.

2. SOON/NEAR LANGUAGE

"Preterists are faced with a critical dilemma. They insist that the time indicators "near," "soon," and "at hand" in the Book of Revelation must refer to first-century events and not to events that will immediately precede the Lord's return. Nevertheless, as Mathison explains, the apostle John borrowed these time statements from the day of the Lord passages found in the Old Testament Prophets, passages that prophesied events that did not take place for at least several centuries after the prophecies were written. These same preterists condemn futurist interpretations of John's time indicators on the grounds that they require several centuries for fulfillment! In addition, a general consensus exists among biblical scholars that the "little while" of Hebrews 12:26-28 is an allusion to the "little while" prophecy of Haggai 2:6. Consequently, preterists must either admit that the writer of Hebrews referred to a different "little while" than Haggai intended or that such day of the Lord passages can have both a near and a far fulfillment. This would mean either a dual fulfillment or an "already and not yet" aspect of fulfillment of Haggai's original prophecy, both of which are devastating to common preterist thinking about how prophecy is fulfilled."

— Brock Hollett, Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the Not Yet of Bible Prophecy, Kindle, (Morris Publishing, 2018), Location 418,439.

"The actual problem is a faulty perception of slowness, based on an erroneous reckoning of time by those who fail to appreciate the depth of God's patience towards his elect who have not yet repented (v. 9). Some (not all!) of Peter's contemporaries accused Jesus of failing to return quickly, but this is based entirely on their faulty human reasoning. The apostle alluded to Psalm 90:4 ("a thousand years in your [God's] sight are but as yesterday when it is past") to demonstrate that a divine reckoning of time is different than mere human reckoning; the idea is that the readers should recognize God's timetable and divine perspective instead of relying on their own understanding."

— Brock Hollett, Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the Not Yet of Bible Prophecy, Kindle, (Morris Publishing, 2018), Location 329.

"Isaiah 13:22 and Habakkuk 2:3-4, for example, speak of the imminence of the judgment to come upon Babylon. It is interesting to note that Isaiah was writing between 740 and 701 B.C., while Habakkuk wrote sometime between 609 and 598. Yet both spoke of Babylon's judgment using short-term time texts. Isaiah says it is "near." Habakkuk tells the people that "it will not tarry." Babylon fell to the Persians in 539. . . . Isaiah 56:1 says that God's salvation is "about to come." Writing in the early sixth century B.C., Ezekiel says that "the fulfillment of every vision" is "at hand" (12:23). Writing after the Exile, in approximately 520, Haggai proclaims the following word from God: "Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land . . . (2:6-7). If this prophecy was fulfilled at the coming of Christ, as Hebrews 12:26-28 seems to indicate, then "a little while" was more than 520 years."

—— Keith A. Mathison, *When Shall These Things Be?: A Reformed Response to Hyper-Preterism*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2004), 165.

■ Revelation 1:1 NASB

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

"The things which soon take place" [ἃ δεῖ τάχει γενέσθαι] will be a common phrase as we get deeper into the book. I believe this phrase is specific to futuristic language. That means that in a short time, the train of events will be put into motion. Both Rev 1:1, and Rev 22:6 use the word (tachos), which means we must understand an imminent nature setting these things in motion. These terms are like book ends that serve as an inclusio for all of Revelation.

"The most satisfying solution is to take the expression 'must soon take place' in a straightforward sense, remembering that in the prophetic outlook the end is always imminent. Time as chronological sequence is of secondary concern in prophecy. This perspective is common to the entire NT."

—— Mounce, Robert H, *The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 41.

"Things which must shortly come to pass - Not all the things that will occur, but such as it was deemed of importance for his people to be made acquainted with. Nor is it certainly implied that all the things that are communicated would shortly come to pass, or would soon occur. Some of them might perhaps be in the distant future, and still it might be true that there were those which were revealed in connection with them, which soon would occur. The word rendered "things" (ἃ ha) is a pronoun, and might be rendered "what"; "he showed to his servants what things were about to occur," not implying that he showed all the things that would happen, but such as he judged to be needful that his people should know. The word would naturally embrace those things which, in the circumstances, were most desirable to be known. The phrase rendered "must come to pass" (δεῖ γενέσθαι dei genesthai), would imply more than mere futurity; The word used (δεῖ dei) means "it needs, there is need of," and implies that there is some kind of necessity that the event should occur."

—— Albert Barnes' *Notes on the Whole Bible, Commentary on Revelation 1:1*.

"The things which must shortly come to pass ...Scholars generally assume that this means: (1) either that all of Revelation was fulfilled within a very short time after John wrote, or (2) that such events as "the thousand years" and the final judgment were mistakenly believed by the apostle to lie in the near future. We simply cannot believe that either proposition is true. Caird declared that all of the events John prophesied were "expected to be accomplished quickly in their entirety." [1] Even the respected Foy E. Wallace, Jr., wrote that, "The word "shortly" denotes immediacy; the events applied to them, not to centuries after their time, and even yet to come. [2] The objection to the view in (1) is twofold: first, many of the events foretold in Revelation, notably the final judgment, did not take place "shortly"; and secondly, it is incorrect to suppose that the holy apostles of Christ erroneously "taught" that the end of all things would occur soon. It may be freely admitted that they may indeed have been mistaken in thinking such a thing; but, in fairness, it must be admitted that none of them either implied or declared the Second Advent to be an event in the immediate future. The statement before us teaches no such thing. The meaning of it is the same as when Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is at hand," meaning that the "beginning of it" was near at hand. Furthermore, the declaration of John in 4:1 that some of the things he prophesied were to "come to pass hereafter" categorically refutes such views. Regarding the view in (2), we heartily agree with McGuiggan who said: The claim is made that the early church believed that the second coming was near in time; but this is just not true. They may have lived aware of the possibility of his coming soon, but that they believed he was coming soon is not at all established by the New Testament."

—— Coffman's *Commentary, Commentary on Revelation 1:1*.

"to show unto his servant things which must shortly come to pass: the Arabic version adds, "in future ages"; things that were to be hereafter, the accomplishment of which was necessary, because of the certain and unalterable decree of God, the good of his people, and his own glory; and these were to come to pass quickly, in a very little time; not that they would all be fulfilled in a short space of time, for there are some things not fulfilled yet, though it is nineteen hundred years ago and more, since this revelation was made; and we are sure there are some things that will not be accomplished till a thousand years hence, and more, for the millennium is not yet begun; and after that is ended, there is to be a second resurrection, and a destruction of the Gog and Magog army; but the sense is, that these things should very quickly begin to be fulfilled, and from thence forward go on fulfilling till all were accomplished."

—— John Gill's *Commentary, Commentary on Revelation 1:1*.

“shortly — Greek, “speedily”; literally, “in,” or “with speed.” Compare “the time is at hand,” Revelation 1:3; Revelation 22:6, “shortly”; Revelation 22:7, “Behold, I come quickly.” Not that the things prophesied were according to man’s computation near; but this word “shortly” implies a corrective of our estimate of worldly events and periods. Though a “thousand years” (Revelation 20:1-15) at least are included, the time is declared to be at hand. Luke 18:8, “speedily.” The Israelite Church hastened eagerly to the predicted end, which premature eagerness prophecy restrains (compare Daniel 9:1-27). The Gentile Church needs to be reminded of the transitoriness of the world (which it is apt to make its home) and the nearness of Christ’s advent. On the one hand Revelation says, “the time is at hand”; on the other, the succession of seals, etc., show that many intermediate events must first elapse.”

—— Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible, Commentary on Revelation 1:1.

“Must shortly come to pass (δὲι γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει— dei genesthai en tachei). Second aorist middle infinitive of γινομαι — ginomai with δει — dei See this same adjunct (ἐν τάχει — en tachei) in Luke 18:8; Romans 16:20; Revelation 22:6. It is a relative term to be judged in the light of 2 Peter 3:8 according to God’s clock, not ours. And yet undoubtedly the hopes of the early Christians looked for a speedy return of the Lord Jesus. This vivid panorama must be read in the light of that glorious hope and of the blazing fires of persecution from Rome.”

—— Robertson’s Word Picture, Commentary on Revelation 1:1.

“Shortly come to pass (γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει) — For the phrase ἐν τάχει shortly see Luke 18:8, where yet long delay is implied. Expressions like this must be understood, not according to human measurement of time, but rather as in 2 Peter 3:8. The idea is, before long, as time is computed by God. The aorist infinitive γενέσθαι is not begin to come to pass, but denotes a complete fulfilment: must shortly come to pass in their entirety.”

—— Vincent’s Word Studies, Commentary on Revelation 1:1.

“Must shortly come to pass; these words may be understood as meaning that the series of events here foretold must soon begin to be accomplished. But this limitation is not necessary, since the constant representation of Scripture is, that with the Lord a thousand years are but as one day, and that the coming of Christ and the end of all things is always at hand, chapter Revelation 22:20; 1 Peter 4:7; 2 Peter 3:8; 2 Peter 3:12; and especially Luke 18.”

—— Justin Edwards Commentary, Commentary on Revelation 1:1.

“These words do not connote the speedy manner in which the Daniel prophecy is to be fulfilled, nor the mere possibility that it could be fulfilled at any time, but the definite, imminent time of fulfillment, which likely has already begun in the present. What Daniel expected to occur in the last days, John is announcing as imminent, or beginning to occur now. The change of phraseology implies that the final tribulation, defeat of evil, and establishment of the kingdom, which Daniel expected to occur distantly in “the latter days,” John expects to begin in his own generation — and, indeed, it has already started to happen (for the idea of tribulation preceding the divine kingdom see Daniel 7, which is a parallel prophecy to Daniel 2). The focus of “quickness” and “nearness” in vv. 1-3 is primarily on the inauguration of prophetic fulfillment and its ongoing aspect rather than nearness of consummate fulfillment (the return of the Lord), though the latter thought is secondarily present.”

—— G. K. Beale, The Book of Revelation (The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 47-48.

3. NERO/BEAST

“Not only does the evidence suggest that John was given his revelation after AD 70, but preterist interpretations of the beast, his image, and his number are also not exhaustively fulfilled by Nero and the events of AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.”

—— Kim Riddlebarger, A Case for Amillennialism, (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2013), 152.

“666 does not have anything to do with Nero Caesar.”

—— Jordan, James B. The Vindication of Jesus Christ: A Brief Reader's Guide to Revelation (Monroe, LA: Athanasius Press, 2008. Kindle Edition), 427.

“A popular interpretation of many scholars is that the number 666 has the numerical value of the name Nero Caesar. We should keep in mind, however, that it was not until the 1830s that four German scholars proposed the name Nero for the number 666. But the choice of Nero’s name creates many difficulties. First, to arrive at the number 666 as the numerical value of Nero’s name, one has to add the name Caesar. But even then, the expanded name Nero Caesar has the numerical value of only 616. Only when one adds an extra letter n to the name Nero, resulting in Neron Caesar, is the full number 666 achieved. But then one has to resort to the Hebrew spelling of Neron Caesar, which is nun = 50, resh = 200, waw = 6, nun = 50, qoph = 100, samech = 60, resh = 200, for a total of 666. But the normal spelling of the transliterated Hebrew word for “Caesar” is qysr, which includes the letter yodh. This letter, with the numerical value of 10, makes the total 676;

therefore, proponents of this numerical scheme have searched for a manuscript that lacks the extra letter yodh. Among the literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls, archaeologists have discovered a fragment that has the Hebraic (Aramaic) spelling of the name Neron. The next word qysr has two damaged consonants after the letter q, but there is no room for a vowel. Nevertheless, the questions must be asked, "Why would the author not use a Greek form instead of a Hebrew form?"

—— Kistemaker in Mathison, Keith A. *When Shall These Things Be?: A Reformed Response to Hyper-Preterism*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2004), 228-29.

"The discerning Christian should understand that the calculation of the Beast's number 666, using either gematria or isopsephy, does not result in the name Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus or any of its derivatives. As many preterist teachers admit, they must reject the usual spelling for Nero and choose an extremely rare form of his name, which has been reconstituted from a damaged manuscript that may have originally included an extra Hebrew letter. This is nothing short of exercising selection bias and conforming data to fit a predetermined conclusion."

—— Brock Hollett, *Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the Not Yet of Bible Prophecy*, Kindle, (Morris Publishing, 2018), Location 2232.

"However, the proposed chronology of Nero cannot account for the prophecy that the Son of Man will appear and subsequently kill the Beast and his armies (Rev. 19:19-21; cf. 2 Thess. 2:8). Preterists teach that "the coming of the Son of Man" occurred in conjunction with Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70; however, the fall of Jerusalem took place more than two years after Nero's death! This may explain why Hanegraaff erroneously places the Year of the Four Emperors (AD 69) and the destruction of Jerusalem during the Neronian persecution."

—— Brock Hollett, *Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the Not Yet of Bible Prophecy*, Kindle, (Morris Publishing, 2018), Location 2232.