

Sermon  SNAPSHOTS

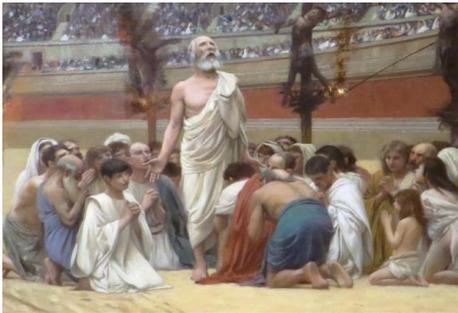
REVELATION

PART 2

THE PRIMARY SUBJECT OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The book of Revelation is one of the most fascinating books of the Bible. Its imagery challenges our intellects, as we seek to understand the message revealed therein. In my judgment, if we can determine the primary message of the book, we will have gone a long way toward unraveling what is “signified” by its various images. Determining that primary message is a tall order, but I shall attempt it in this article.

Within the book, great judgments are unleashed upon the earth from the throne of God (6:12-17; 11:13-18; 14:17-15:1; 16:19; 17:1; 18:21-24; 19:1-2). Upon closer examination, we learn that these judgments were God’s response to the prayer of *saints who had been martyred* for their faith. They cried, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You *avenge our blood* on those who dwell on the earth?” (6:9-11). When this vengeance is finally given, we read their prayer of thanks: “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, *and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth*” (11:17-18). Now, we know “who” was asking to be avenged! They were God’s “servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name.” Later in the book, we learn that those who are being avenged are “*saints and prophets*” (16:4-7), “*holy apostles and prophets*” (18:20), and “*prophets and saints, and... all who were slain on the earth*” (18:24). This information is quite helpful, as we shall soon see.



Next, notice that the bringing of this vengeance involved the destruction of a “city” (11:13). If we can identify this city, we will have another piece of the puzzle. Starting in chapter 11, the city is identified in several ways. First of all, it is the city where the “*temple of God*” was located (11:1). It is called “*the holy city*” (11:2), and it was the city which was to be *trodden by Gentiles* (11:2). It is also “*the great city...where also our Lord was crucified*” (11:8). It is a city which is identified as a “*harlot*” (17:1-5), who “*reigns over the kings of the earth*” (17:18). It is a city from which *God’s people must “come out of”* (18:1-4), which was *repaired “double”* (18:6), and which (as already noted) had *shed the blood of the “holy apostles and prophets”* (18:20, 24). Many cities might fit SOME of these characteristics. But there is only ONE city which will fit ALL of these characteristics: JERUSALEM!

Notice how Jerusalem fits all the above characteristics. First, the “temple” was in there (Jn.2:13-14). It was called “the holy city” (Mt.4:5). It was to be trodden by Gentiles (Lk.21:24). It is “where also our Lord was crucified” (Lk.22:18-20). It was long known to be a spiritual “harlot” (Ez.23:1-4). It “reign[ed] over the kings of the earth,” because it was “the city of the great King” (Ps.48). It was the city from which God’s people had “come out of” (Lk.21:20-21).

It was repaid “double” for its sins (Dn.9:25-26; 12:1; Mt.24:21). And it was the city which God held responsible for shedding the blood of the “apostles and prophets” (Mt.23:34-39; Lk.11:47-51; 13:33-35). In my humble opinion, this is an airtight case! *If Jerusalem is not the city which is destroyed in the book of Revelation, then it is the greatest coincidence that I have ever seen in the word of God!* This information is also helpful in dating the book of Revelation. If this book does indeed reveal the impending destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, then it MUST pre-date 70 AD! But is there any evidence to support this? I believe there is! Further, that evidence is found within the book of Revelation itself, which means that the evidence for “the early date” is inspired! Let’s examine that evidence...

Back in chapter 11, there were “two witnesses” (11:3) who were slain (11:7-8). Whoever these “two witnesses” are, it is clear that they were slain “in the street of the great city...where also our Lord was crucified.” Further, they were slain by “the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit” (11:7-8). Since we have already identified “the great city” as Jerusalem, we MUST identify “the beast” as the Roman Empire, which destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. Further, this is the same beast who “will ascend out of the bottomless pit” in chapter 17 (cf. 17:8). *Most brethren (even those who believe in the “late date”) readily accept “the beast” as the Roman Empire. Since “the beast” is the Roman Empire, then the “seven heads” must represent the government of Rome. This should be evident, since a “body” is ruled or governed by its “head” (cf. Ep.1:22-23). Further, John identifies the “seven heads” as “seven mountains,” and “also seven kings” (17:9-10). In the Scriptures, “mountains” often signify governments (Isa.2:2-3; Jer.51:25). Thus, the “seven heads” signify the Roman Emperors, who ruled the empire.*



According to Josephus (who should know, because he lived in this time period), Julius Caesar was the first King of Rome. Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius were the second, third, fourth, and fifth emperors. This makes Nero the sixth. Now, hear John: “There are also seven kings. **Five have fallen, one is**, and the other has not yet come” (17:10). Can anyone seriously doubt that he identifies Nero, the sixth king? He is the one who “**is**” when John wrote the book of Revelation. Couple that with these facts: **1.)** Many commentators identify the head that was “wounded” (13:3) with Nero; **2.)** He was the first emperor to “make war with the saints” (13:7); **3.)** He did so for 42 months (13:5); **4.)** He was “killed with the sword” (13:10); and **5.)** Many commentators identify “the number of the beast” (666) with Nero (13:18). These facts add up to a pretty solid case! *If this is not a reference to Nero, we have yet another one of the greatest coincidences that I have ever seen in the word of God!* Since Nero died by his own hand in 68 AD, the book of Revelation MUST have been written prior to this date. (Yes, I know that “the number of the beast” has been assigned to a whole host of people, but it stands to reason that we would look for a person who is RELEVANT to the subject matter of the book.)

We have now established the primary subject matter of the book of Revelation. It deals with the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in 70 AD. This fits in very nicely with John’s statement that Revelation would show things to “**shortly take place**” (1:1-3). If the primary message was the fall of the Roman Empire, then John missed it by a mile! The Roman Empire did not fall for FOUR CENTURIES after the book of Revelation was written. It is certainly true that the fall of Rome is mentioned (19:11-21); but it is clearly a secondary message. I hope this study has been profitable for you. These are my own fallible conclusions; I humbly offer them for your consideration. **-Lanny Smith**

Fishers Church of Christ

JOIN US FOR *Worship!*

Times of Service

Sunday Worship: 10 am
Sunday Bible Study: 5 pm
Wednesday Bible Study: 7 pm

Our Eldership

Jan Boser (H) 773-3178 (C) 509-1828
Al Easter (H) 585-9846 (C) 698-1846
Randy Shouse 570-4908
Lanny Smith 770-8077

Contact Information

10082 East 126th Street
Fishers, IN 46038
(317) 577-3788

Thank you for picking up a copy of our Sermon Snapshot! We hope you will use this tool for personal study or an easy to use template when studying with friends and neighbors about important spiritual matters!

If you would like more information either through CD or download, please visit our website for these sermons and many more. If you would like a personal bible study with our evangelist or Elders please contact us as well!



Facebook: Fishers Church of Christ
Twitter: @FishersChurch
Visit us online & YouTube!
www.fishers-churchofchrist.com