A FUTURIST RESPONSE TO THE PRETERIST INTERPRETATION OF BABYLON IN REVELATION 17–18

Introduction

Preterists contend that the futuristic section of the Book of Revelation (4–22) was mostly fulfilled in the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. They believe that the Book of Revelation was penned in the mid 60's and predicts God's divorce and A.D. 70 judgment upon harlotrous, national Israel due to her rejection of Christ. At that time, God was also at work creating the new universal, international church to permanently replace disgraced and judged Israel (John 4:21; Gal 3:9, 28-29; 6:16; Eph 2:14). However, partial preterists are quick to distinguish themselves from full preterists by still holding to a future bodily return of Christ and final judgment (20:7-15).[1]

Revelation 17–18 are significant to the preterist interpretation. Preterists believe that the harlot in these chapters represents first-century Jerusalem and that the beast represents first-century Rome. Thus, the beast's destruction of the harlot (Rev 17:16-17) represents Rome's sacking of Jerusalem in the events surrounding A.D. 70. Preterists are confident in their interpretation. Gentry explains, "I am convinced *beyond any doubt* that this Harlot is first-century Jerusalem" (italics added).[2] Hanegraaff similarly explains, "What has puzzled me over the years is not the identity of 'the great prostitute,' but how so many could mistake her historical identity. . . . In biblical history only one nation is inextricably linked to the moniker 'harlot.' *And that nation is Israel!*"[3]

---

[1] Kenneth L. Gentry, "A Preterist View of Revelation," in *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, ed. C. Marvin Pate (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 86, 46, n. 25.

[2] Kenneth L. Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology*, 2nd and rev. ed. (Tyler: TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1997), 392.

[3] Hank Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2007), 118-19.

As one begins to study this subject, it is striking to discover the number of commentators that embrace this interpretation. Examples of older commentators holding this view include Philip Carrington, J.S. Russell, and Milton Terry. Examples of more recent commentators holding the view include R.C. Sproul, N.T. Wright, Scott Hahn, Massyngberde Ford, David Chilton, Hank Hanegraaff, and Kenneth Gentry. Today, full length books are even written in defense of the notion that the Babylonian harlot represents first-century Jerusalem.[4] Thus, the purpose of this paper is to analyze whether details of Rev 17–18 fit the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. An older strain of preterism identifies the Babylonian harlot as Rome, which fell in A.D. 410.[5] However, this paper is not focused upon this issue but rather upon the form of preterism, which is more popular today, that identifies the Babylonian harlot as first-century Jerusalem.

The first part of the paper represents a response to the arguments that preterists employ in order to identify Babylon as first-century Jerusalem. This first major division contains two parts. First, arguments from within Rev 17–18 will be analyzed. Second, arguments from outside Rev 17–18 will be scrutinized. The second part of the paper sets forth some general weaknesses with the preterist identification of the harlot as first-century Jerusalem.[6]

---

[4] Joseph Balyeat, *Babylon, the Great City of Revelation* (Servierville, TN: Onward, 1991); Don Preston, *Who Is This Babylon?*, rev. ed. (Ardmore, OK: JaDon, 2006).

[5] Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse*, vol. 2 (London: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), 295, 325.

[6] For more detailed argumentation on this subject, the reader is encouraged to consult Andy Woods, "A Futurist Response to the Preterist Interpretation of Babylon in Revelation 17–18" (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2009).

Response to Preterist Arguments

Analysis of Preterist Arguments From Rev 17–18

This section features eleven arguments employed by preterists from within Rev 17–18. Here, each argument is stated and then responded to from a futuristic perspective.

Babylon's Harlotry (Rev 17:1-2)

The preterist notes that Babylon is called a harlot (Rev 17:1-2). The preterist explains that harlotry is an impossibility for anyone who does not have a pre-existing covenant with God. The preterist then observes that Israel is the only nation in world history that has a covenant with God. Thus, the harlot of Rev 17 must be Israel. The preterist buttresses this argument by noting that the Old Testament uniquely describes Israel/Jerusalem as the harlot (Jer 2–3; Ezek 16; 23; Hos 9:1).[7]

The response to this argument is that harlot imagery does not uniquely identify Israel/Jerusalem since the Old Testament also designates Gentile cities as harlots. For example, the Old Testament also designates two Gentile cities, Nineveh (Nah 3:4) and Tyre (Isa 23:16), as harlots. However, Chilton attempts to mitigate the force of this response as follows:

> It is noteworthy that Tyre and Nineveh—the only two cities outside of Israel that are accused of harlotry—had both been in covenant with God. The kingdom of Tyre in David and Solomon's time was converted to the worship of the true God, and her king contracted a covenant with Solomon and assisted in building the temple (1 Kings 5:1-12; 9:13; Amos 1:9); Nineveh was converted under the ministry of Jonah (Jon 3:5-10). The later apostasy of these two cities could rightly be considered harlotry.[8]

---

[7] Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code*, 118-19.

[8] David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Tyler, TX: Dominion, 1987), 424, n. 2.

However, to contend, as Chilton argues, that Nineveh and Tyre "had both been in covenant with God" overstates the case. Nineveh merely repented at Jonah's preaching. Thus, at best, Nineveh had contact with Israel rather than a pre-existing covenant with God. Similarly, Tyre contracted with Solomon to build the temple. Thus, Tyre's covenant was with Solomon rather than God.

It should also be noted that had John, in Rev 17:1-2, wanted to communicate Israel's violation of her covenant with God he likely would have used the word "adultery" rather than "harlotry." Thomas explains:

> Since the angel never uses the term “adultery” (μοιχεῖαι [*moicheia*])—a more restricted term implying a previous marital relationship–in connection with the woman, she need not be representative of apostate Israel or the apostate church. *Pornēs* can include *moicheia*, because it is broader. So this woman represents all false religion of all time, including those who apostatize from the revealed religion of Christianity.[9]

Babylon's Alliance (17:3b)

The preterist observes that the woman (Israel) is riding the beast (Rome) in Rev 17:3b. The preterist contends that such imagery communicates the alliance that existed between Jerusalem and Rome in their collaboration to crucify Christ (John 11:48-50). However, the preterist also observes that Israel's relationship with Rome was later broken in the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and this is what is meant by the beast ultimately destroying the harlot (Rev 17:16-17).[10]

However, it remains disputed that Israel ever had the type of alliance with Rome that is communicated by the woman riding the beast. Beale notes:

> Jerusalem was never a full fledged ally with Rome. Of course, the two were on the same spiritual side in their opposition to the church, but what is portrayed in

---

[9] Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 283.

[10] Gentry, “A Preterist View of Revelation,” 78.

> Revelation 17 is a much stronger spiritual, political, and economic alliance than Jerusalem ever had with Rome.[11]

This point is especially true if Revelation was written in the mid 60's and predicts the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. By the time the Apocalypse was composed, whatever alliance that existed between Rome and Jerusalem had deteriorated. Thomas explains, "Rome's prolonged siege and destruction of Jerusalem from the late 60's to 70 hardly gives the impression of any alliance between the Jews and the Romans."[12] Furthermore, Jerusalem never dominated Rome the way the woman seems to dominate the beast in Rev 17:3b. It should also be observed that many of the passages relied upon by preterists to communicate an alleged relationship between Rome and Jerusalem (John 11:48-50) transpired decades before preterists date the composition of the Apocalypse thereby causing preterists to turn most of Rev 17, with the exception of verses 16-17, into an *vaticinia ex eventu* prophecy.

Babylon's Adornment (Rev 17:4; 18:16)

The preterist observes that Babylon is bedecked in scarlet, purple, and gold (Rev 17:4; 18:16). He further notes that these are the same colors used to describe the various institutions of Judaism, such as the high priest's attire (Exod 28:5) as well as the Tabernacle furnishings (Exod 25:4). The preterist also observes that the harlot is portrayed as holding a golden cup (Rev 17:4) and that the Scripture typically uses cup imagery in order to depict Israel's sins (Matt 23:28) and tribulations (Zech 12:2; 1 Thess 2:16). Based upon such associations, the preterist is confident that the harlot of Rev 17 represents Jerusalem.[13]

---

[11] G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 887.

[12] Robert L. Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 458.

[13] Gentry, "A Preterist View of Revelation," 76-77; Ralph E. Bass, *Back to the Future: A Study in the Book of Revelation* (Greenville, SC: Living Hope, 2004), 382-83.

However, it is unlikely that such colors are meant to identify specific nations. Rather, they are merely designed to reveal broad spiritual themes. For example, scarlet may be meant to merely communicate sin or the opposite of purity (Isa 1:18). Moreover, purple simply conveys royalty (Luke 16:19). Thus, it seems that preterists have read far more into the point of the colors in Rev 17–18 than what the author intended.

In addition, it is unlikely that such color associations were designed to identify specific nations since virtually all interpreters seeking to identify the harlot can also appeal to similar color parallels in order to validate their view. For example, those contending that the harlot represents the papacy have long seen a connection between her adorning colors and the identical colors found in the robes of the church's ecclesiastical representatives.[14] Furthermore, while preterists are able to find multiple biblical examples associating Jerusalem/Israel with cup imagery, none of their examples point to a golden cup. Such imagery is significant since John portrays the woman as not just holding a generic cup but rather specifically a "gold cup" (Rev 17:4; Jer 51:7a).

Babylon's Title (Rev 17:5)

Preterists believe the harlot's title identifies her as first-century Jerusalem. Preterists contend that the woman's forehead portraying her as a harlot is reminiscent of God's depiction of Judah as having "a harlot's forehead" (Jer 3:3). They also maintain that John's description of the woman's harlotrous forehead is deliberate parody with the Jewish high priest who had the words "Holy to the Lord" inscribed upon his turban (Exod 28:36-38).[15] Despite these intriguing connections, there are three problems with the preterist interpretation. First, in the very chapter that preterists use to equate the harlot's

---

[14] E. B. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae; or a Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical; Including Also an Examination of the Chief Prophecies of Daniel*, 4th ed., vol. 4 (London: Seelys, 1851), 30.

[15] Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 431.

forehead with Judah (Jer 3:3), restoration language is employed, which contradicts the very replacement- theology idea perpetuated by preterism. Jeremiah 3:17 says, “At that time they shall call Jerusalem ‘The throne of the Lord’ and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem . . .”

Second, although preterists want the interpreter to see "Babylon" in the harlot's title as representative of "Jerusalem," such a substitution is unlikely. To begin with, the proper rendering of the harlot’s title is “Babylon the Great” (NASB) rather than “Mystery, Babylon the Great” (NIV, KJV). Most preterists seem to rely upon Bible versions communicating that the harlot’s title is “Mystery, Babylon the Great.”[16] Their preference for this rendering may relate to the fact that it more easily conveys a non-literal understanding of "Babylon." Non-preterists also contend that the rendering “Mystery, Babylon the Great” also attaches a symbolic significance to Babylon. For example, Bruce notes, “This title was written on her forehead: Mystery: ‘mystery’ indicates that the name she bears . . . is not to be understood literally, but allegorically: Babylon the Great is read, but ‘Rome’ is meant (cf. verses 9, 19).”[17] However, mystery is not part of the harlot's title since in the five other uses of the title in the Apocalypse (14:8, 16:19; 18:2, 10, 21), the title is simply "Babylon the Great" and never "Mystery Babylon the Great."[18] Also, "mystery" does not just apply to the Babylonian harlot only but also the beast (Rev 17:7).[19]

---

[16] Balyeat, *Babylon, the Great City of Revelation*, 120; J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming* (London: Unwin, 1887; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 483; Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 423; Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code*, 118, 34; Gentry, “A Preterist View of Revelation,” 77.

[17] F. F. Bruce, “Revelation,” in *International Bible Commentary with the New International Version*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 1621.

[18] Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary*, 289.

[19] Arthur Pink, *The Antichrist* (Swengel, PA: Depot, 1923; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1988), 262.

Furthermore, given Revelation's heavy reliance upon the Old Testament,[20] it would be improbable for John to merge the terms "Babylon" and "Jerusalem"[21] since these two entities are always kept separate and distinct throughout the pages of the Old Testament.[22] In fact, numerous Old Testament passages, which likely form the background for Rev 17–18, distinguish these two cities from one another in the very same context.[23] For example, Jer 51:49 says, "Indeed *Babylon* is to fall for the slain of *Israel*" (italics added).[24] Equally unlikely is the notion that John used "Babylon" as a code word for Jerusalem. Babylon is never used as a code word for Jerusalem either inside[25] or outside the Bible. Beale notes, " . . . there is not one example of 'Babylon' ever being a symbolic name for Israel, either before or after 70 A.D. This does not mean such an application is impossible, but the burden of proof rests upon those maintaining the Babylon = Jerusalem identification."[26]

Much of the preterist case for Babylon as a code for Jerusalem comes from Peter's reference to Babylon in 1 Pet 5:13. Because preterists believe that Peter wrote his letter from Jerusalem, they contend that Peter was using the word "Babylon" as a code for Jerusalem in 1 Pet 5:13. Russell contends that because Peter's life and acts were more closely associated with Jerusalem than any other city. (Acts 8:1; 11:19; 12:3; 12:12, 25;

---

[20] Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary*, ed. Kenneth Barker (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 40.

[21] Mark Hitchcock and Thomas Ice, *Breaking the Apocalypse Code* (Costa Mesa, CA: Word for Today, 2007), 172-73.

[22] Charles H. Dyer, *The Rise of Babylon*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 41-109.

[23] Tony Garland, *A Testimony of Jesus Christ–Volume 2: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Camano Island, WA: Spirit and Truth, 2004), 202.

[24] See also Isa 14:1-4; 48:12-14; Jer 50:17-20; 51:1-6, 24, 35, 49.

[25] Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary*, 206, 307; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 25.

[26] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 25.

15:22-32; Gal 1:18; 2:1-9, 11-12), Peter penned his epistle from Jerusalem.[27] However, Russell's examples linking Peter to Jerusalem are all taken from early Acts. His last reference (Acts 15:22-32) occurs at the Jerusalem council in A.D. 49. Using these early dates to establish the location of the writing of Peter's letter is unconvincing since the apostle could have traveled quite a bit in between A.D. 49 and the composition of the epistle (A.D. 64). Peter's propensity for travel is seen early on in his journey "to another place" (Acts 12:17) and in Paul's declaration of his apostolic right "to take along a believing wife" like Cephas (1 Cor 9:5). In fact, it is possible that Peter traveled to Corinth since Paul mentions a Petrine faction there (1 Cor 1:12). Constable seems open to this perspective when he observes, "There is no scriptural record that Peter ever visited Corinth, though he may have."[28] Dionysius, a second-century Corinthian bishop, indicates that Peter was influential in the Corinthian church. Eusebius notes that Dionysius wrote to Pope Soter and indicated that Peter along with Paul " . . . taught together in our Corinth and were our founders . . ."[29]

Third, the title "The Mother of Harlots" is inapplicable to Jerusalem. "Mother" refers to source or origin of all harlotry. The fact that the phrase "mother of harlots" is articular adds intensification to the noun thereby buttressing the notion that she represents the source of all false religion. She is not *a* "mother of harlots" but *the* "mother of harlots." The Tower of Babel fits this description. Larkin explains:

> The river Euphrates, on which the city of Babylon was built…To this centre the "forces of Evil" gravitated after the Flood, and "*Babel*" was the result. This was the origin of the nations, but the nations were not scattered abroad over the earth

---

[27] Russell, *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*, 349; Balyeat, *Babylon, the Great City of Revelation*, 87-88; Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 362-63.

[28] Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on 1 Corinthians," online: www.soniclight.com, accessed 27 July 2008, 12.

[29] Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 2.25.8

> until Satan had implanted in them the "Virus" of a doctrine that has been the *source* of every false religion the world has ever known.[30]

There were no nations prior to the Tower of Babel incident. Distinct nations and cultures only came into existence as a result of this event. Thus, the mother-child cult that began at Babel[31] spread into every nation and culture that followed.[32] In this sense, Babel is the origin or source of all harlotry.

Although it is easy to identify Babel as "The Mother of Harlots," it is difficult to make this designation fit Jerusalem. The reason for this difficulty lies in the fact that Jerusalem, unlike Babel, did not originate the mother child-cult but rather absorbed it (Jer 7:18; 44:17-19, 25; Ezek 8:14). According to Johnson:

> . . . this prostitute is the *mother* of all of the earth's idolatrous prostitutes . . . She is the fountainhead, the reservoir, the womb that bears all the individual cases of the historical resistance to God's will on the earth . . . Therefore she cannot be merely ancient Babylon, Rome, or Jerusalem, because these are only her children—*she* is the mother of them all.[33]

In fact, rather than identifying her as the mother harlot, Ezekiel specifically identifies Judah as a daughter harlot who was guilty of emulating the whorish characteristics of her Amorite, Hittite, and Egyptian parents (Ezek 16:3, 44-45; 23:2-4).[34] Because Jerusalem did not become a Jewish city until the time of David around 1000 B.C. (2 Sam 5), Jerusalem appears too late on the stage of world apostasy to be considered the source of all harlotry.

---

[30] Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation* (Glenside, PA: Larkin, 1919), 151.

[31] John F. Walvoord, "Revelation," in *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 1983), 970-71.

[32] Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons; or, the Papal Worship Proved to Be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife*, 2nd American ed. (Edinburgh: Wood, 1862; reprint, New York: Loizeaux, 1959), 12-90; Mark Hitchcock, *The Second Coming of Babylon* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003), 42.

[33] Alan F. Johnson, "Revelation," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein et al., vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 556.

[34] Garland, *A Testimony of Jesus Christ–Volume 2: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 42-43, 203-4.

Moreover, the preterist notion that first-century Israel was "The Mother of Harlots" seems inconsistent with the high calling of national Israel. Because it was God's intent to bless the world through the Jews (Gen 12:3; Isa 42:6; 49:6), virtually all spiritual blessings, including the Savior (John 4:22; Rom 9:5) and the Scriptures (Rom 3:2), have come to the world through the Jewish nation. These blessings hardly constitute the source of all harlotry spoken of in Rev 17:5. While first-century Israel did lapse into unbelief and apostasy (Matt 23:15), Paul explains that God still used her, even in her apostate condition, to bring riches and reconciliation to the world (Rom 11:12a, 15a).

Babylon's Persecution (Rev 18:20, 24)

There are two issues related to Babylon's persecution that preterists use to identify Babylon of Rev 17–18 as first-century Jerusalem. The first issue involves Babylon killing both the apostles and prophets. The second issue involves Babylon killing all of the prophets.

Only Jerusalem Killed both the Apostles and Prophets

Preterists note that Babylon is depicted as killing both the apostles and prophets (Rev 18:20). Preterists further note that only Jerusalem killed the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles. Thus, preterists conclude that Babylon of Rev 17–18 is Jerusalem. Gentry articulates this view while explaining why Rome could not be Babylon:

> Rome was stained with the blood of the saints. Yet Rome had only recently entered the persecuting ranks of God's enemies; throughout Acts Jerusalem and the Jews were the main persecutors. Furthermore, Rome was not guilty of killing any of 'the prophets' of the Old Testament, as was Jerusalem.[35]

However, notice that the preterist assumes that the words "prophets" and "apostles" in Rev 18:20 must refer to Old Testament prophets and first-century New

[35] Gentry, "A Preterist View of Revelation," 75.

Testament prophets respectively. However, these words are not technical words that always must refer to the same thing every time they are used. There is far more flexibility in these terms than the preterist interpretation allows. Although "prophets" sometimes refer to Old Testament prophets (Matt 23:34-35), this same word can also refer to New Testament prophets (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 15:32; 21:10; 1 Cor 12:28-29; 14:1-5, 29, 32; Eph 2:20). Similarly, although "apostles" sometimes refers to first-century New Testament apostles (Acts 1:21-22; Eph 2:20), the word can also refer to non-technical apostles in the sense of common sent ones or missionaries (Acts 14:4, 14; 2 Cor 8:23; Rom 16:7; Phil 2:25).

Only Jerusalem Killed All of the Prophets

Preterists observe that Babylon kills the prophets (Rev 18:20, 24). Preterists further observe that Christ stated that only Jerusalem killed the prophets when he said that no prophet died outside of Jerusalem (Luke 13:33). Thus, preterists conclude that Babylon of Rev 18 is Jerusalem. Balyeat articulates this view as follows:

> If the righteous blood of *all* the prophets is to come upon Jerusalem, then how can the righteous blood of *all* the prophets also come upon Babylon? The only solution to this question is our original premise that Babylon is indeed merely a figurative name used by John to describe apostate Jerusalem. . . . Jesus stated in Luke 13:33, ' . . . *surely no prophet can die outside of Jerusalem!*'[36]

However, a logical syllogism, like the one preterists set up here, is only as good as the premise it is based upon. If the premise is faulty then the whole syllogism collapses. In Luke 13:33, Christ was not saying that all prophets had to die in Jerusalem. There were many prophets that did not. Abel, the first prophet Christ mentioned (Matt 23:35) was killed before Jerusalem and the Jewish people ever existed (Gen 4). Jeremiah

[36] Balyeat, *Babylon, the Great City of Revelation*, 72.

was martyred in Egypt.[37] We could call Paul, Peter, and John prophets. Yet Paul and Peter were likely martyred in Rome. John was killed in Asia Minor. Thus, in Luke 13:33, Christ was likely stating a general principle that most prophets die in Jerusalem rather than an ironclad rule that all prophets must die in Jerusalem as the preterist presupposes.

Babylon's Influence (Rev 17:18)

There are two issues related to Babylon influence that are significant to the preterist interpretation. The first issue is Babylon's description as the great city (Rev 17:18a). The second issue is Babylon reigning over the kings of the earth (Rev 17:18b).

Great City (17:18a)

Preterists observe that the first reference to the great city in the Apocalypse is undoubtedly Jerusalem since John describes the great city as the place where the Lord was crucified (Rev 11:8). The preterist further notes that Babylon is also referred to as "the great city" (Rev 17:18a). Thus, the preterists conclude that the great city Babylon of Rev 17:18a must also be Jerusalem. Russell articulates this view as follows: “If then, ‘the great city’ of chap. xi. 8 means ancient Jerusalem…By parity of reasoning, ‘the great city’ . . . in chap. xvii. 18, and elsewhere, must refer also to Jerusalem.”[38]

However, the preterist interpretation assumes that there can only be one great city in Revelation. It is entirely possible that Revelation could be highlighting two great cities, both Jerusalem and Babylon. Although the designation "great city" is used to

---

[37] Preterists seek to weaken the force of this argument by noting that it was actually the Jews who instigated the authorities to cause these deaths. Preston, *Who Is This Babylon?* , 90, 114. However, this argument is difficult to prove with certitude. For example, in the case of Jeremiah, while one tradition indicates “that Jeremiah was stoned to death by the Jews at Tahpanhes,” “on the other hand, there is the Jewish statement that, on the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, he, with Baruch, made his escape to Babylon, and died there in peace.” Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 3rd and rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1966; reprint, Chicago: Moody, 1971), 570.

[38] Russell, *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*, 487.

describe both of these cities, the context of the chapters describing these two cities is entirely different. Note the following differences between the cities.

Name	**Jerusalem**	**Babylon**
Geography	Sodom and Egypt	Babylon
Martyrs	Two prophets	Apostles, prophets
Division of city	1/10	1/3
Earthquake intensity	Not the greatest in history	The greatest in history
Judgment association	Seventh trumpet	Seventh bowl
Imagery	Temple	Water
Time indicators	42 months, 31/2 days	One day/hour
Gifts	Gift exchange	No gift exchange
Descriptor	Adverb "spiritually"	Noun "mystery"

This interpretation involving two great cities is likely given the fact that Revelation draws so heavily from the Old Testament.[39] If the two cities Babylon and Jerusalem are separate entities throughout the entire Old Testament,[40] why would this be any different in the Apocalypse, which is so heavily influenced by the Old Testament? Interestingly, nowhere does John indicate that Revelation highlights only one great city. Had this been John's intention, he could have easily communicated this by attaching the adjective "only" (μόνον), which the apostle routinely employs throughout his writings (John 5:18; 11:52; 12:9; 13:9; 17:20; 1 John 2:2; 5:6). Rather than repeating the term "the great city" in order to equate Jerusalem and Babylon, it may be that John duplicates the term as an intentional literary device in order to contrast the differing divine programs for both Jerusalem and Babylon. By way of comparison, the father's name (Rev 7:3) versus the beast's name (Rev 13:16) inscribed upon people's foreheads is not designed to equate the marks but rather to highlight two different programs.

[39] Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary*, 40.

[40] Dyer, *The Rise of Babylon*, 41-109.

Reigning Over the Kings of the Earth (17:18b)

Preterists also observe that Babylon is reigning over the kings of the earth (Rev 17:18b). Here, preterists typically assemble various pieces of biblical and extra-biblical evidence demonstrating that first-century Jerusalem was indeed a city of importance as well as international fame and reputation. Descriptors of Jerusalem that preterists typically point to include "great city" (Jer 22:8), "city of the great king" (Matt 5:35), "center of the earth" (Ezek 5:5; 38:12), "princess of the nations" (Lam 1:1), and "joy of the earth" (Ps 48:2; Lam 2:15). They also note the city's divine role of disseminating God's blessings to the world (Isa 2:2-3; Mic 4:1-2; Zech 14:16-18).[41]

However, Rev 17:18b seems to be describing much more than mere importance, fame, and international reputation. Revelation 1:5, which describes Christ's future universal, political reign is practically identical in the original Greek with the description of Babylon's reign as given in Rev 17:18b. Since Rev 1:5 pertains to Christ's universal reign, consistency mandates that Babylon's reign must also be universal and political. Although first-century Jerusalem was a famous city, she came far short of reigning over the entire earth. Far from ruling over the world, first-century Jerusalem was trampled down by various Gentile powers (Luke 21:24) and under Roman occupation. Beale explains, "It is also fatal to the preterist view that the influence of Jerusalem was at its lowest in the two centuries preceding A.D. 70, whereas Babylon's demise in Revelation 17–18 is an immediate fall from great power and prosperity."[42]

---

[41] Russell, *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*, 495.

[42] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 889.

Babylon's Sins (Rev 18:4-5)

There are two issues related to Babylon's sins as described in Rev 18:4-5 that preterists utilize in order to identify Babylon as first-century Jerusalem. They include the command for God's people to flee from Babylon (Rev 18:4) and the description of Babylon's sins arising to heaven (Rev 18:5).

Command to Flee From Babylon (Rev 18:4)

Preterists observe that God commands His people to flee just prior to Babylon's destruction (Rev 18:4). Preterists contend that such a flight was fulfilled in the early church's flight to Pella just prior to first-century Jerusalem's destruction[43] as recorded by Eusebius.[44] However, this interpretation proves to be chronologically problematic for the preterist since they believe that the Book of Revelation was written in A.D. 65[45] and represents prophetic events that were mostly fulfilled in the Jewish War of A.D. 66–70. The reason for this chronological difficulty is that Eusebius indicates that the church's flight to Pella transpired in A.D. 62 or four years before the Jewish War ever began. Note how church historian Philip Schaff explains Eusebius' comment about the Pella journey: "Eusebius puts the flight to Pella before the war (πρ□ το□ πολέμου), or four years before the destruction of Jerusalem."[46] The flight to Pella could not have taken place after the Jewish War had started. By the time Titus had surrounded the entire city of Jerusalem there was no hope of any kind for escape. Josephus explains, "For the Jews,

---

[43] Balyeat, *Babylon, the Great City of Revelation*, 90-91, n. 3; Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Apocalyptics: A Study of the Most Notable Revelations of God and of Christ* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1898; reprint, Grand Rapids, Baker, 1988), 385.

[44] Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.3.

[45] Kenneth L. Gentry, *The Beast of Revelation*, rev. ed. (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2002), 245.

[46] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 1 (New York: Scribner, 1910; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 402, n. 1.

along with all egress, every hope of escape was now cut off."[47] Thus, despite the fact that preterists believe that Revelation represents "real prophecy,"[48] they have turned Rev 18:4 into a *vaticinia ex eventu* prophecy since the flight to Pella transpired four years before preterists date the composition of the book.

Babylon's Arising Sins (Rev 18:5)

Preterists also believe that the description of Babylon's sins arising to heaven uniquely describes Jerusalem. Preterists note that Jerusalem, with her sins arising to heaven, is described in the exact same manner (Ezra 9:6).[49] However, the mere notion of sins arising to heaven need not uniquely describe Jerusalem since Gentile cities are also described in this same manner (Gen 11:4; 18:21; Jer 51:9).

Babylon's Commercial Trade (Rev 18:11-19)

Revelation 18:11-18 describes Babylon as the center of worldwide commercial activity. This description is problematic for the preterist interpretation since Jerusalem was not a harbor city and therefore not located near a prosperous port. At this juncture, preterists are helped by a Josephus reference indicating that Herod had built a port in nearby Caesarea.[50] However, the presence of the Caesarean port is mitigated by the fact that Jerusalem was removed six hundred stadia[51] or forty-seven miles from Caesarea.[52] Furthermore, Jerusalem could not have been the center or worldwide

---

[47] Josephus *Wars* 5.12.3.

[48] Kenneth L. Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), 145.

[49] Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 449.

[50] Josephus *Antiquities* 16.2.1; Preston, *Who Is This Babylon?* , 255-58.

[51] Josephus *Antiquities* 13.11.2; Josephus *War* 1.3.5.

[52] Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 160.

commerce since it was geographically removed from the main commercial highways of the first-century world. As explained by most Bible dictionaries, "unlike many other ancient cities, Jerusalem is neither a harbor city *nor a city situated on trade routes*" (italics added).[53]

Babylon's Geography (Rev 17:1, 3a; 18:17)

There are two geographical clues given in Rev 17–18 in order to describe Babylon that cause difficulty for the preterist interpretation. They include the references to the harlot in the wilderness (Rev 17:3a) and the references to Babylon on the water (Rev 17:1; 18:17).

Babylon in the Wilderness (Rev 17:3a)

Revelation 17:3a associates Babylon with the wilderness. Such a geographical description proves problematic for the preterist interpretation since the Scripture seems to distinguish the land of Israel from the wilderness. For example, Ezek 20 distinguishes the desert from Canaan as the chapter describes Israel's journey from the desert to the land flowing with milk and honey. Ezekiel 20:15 clearly distinguishes the two when it says, "Also I swore to them in the *wilderness* that I would bring them into the *land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey*, which is the glory of all lands" (italics added). Other verses that seem to draw the same distinction include Ezek 20:35, 38. The fact that Ezekiel distinguishes the wilderness and the land of Israel is especially problematic for the preterist interpretation since preterists see the Book of Ezek, especially chapters 16 and 23, as the backdrop not only for Rev 17–18 but also for the entire Book of

[53] Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, eds., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. and updated ed. (Nashville: Nelson, 1985; reprint, Nashville: Nelson, 1995), 655.

Revelation. Carrington goes so far as to say that "The *Revelation* is a Christian re-writing of Ezekiel."[54]

Babylon on the Water (Rev 17:1; 18:17)

Rev 17–18 associates Babylon with the waters. Not only does John depict the city as sitting upon many waters (Rev 17:1), but he also uses four Greek terms synonymous with people of the sea in order to describe those that were in a commercial relationship with Babylon (Rev 18:17). These terms include helmsmen (κυβερνήτης), passengers (πᾶς ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων), sailors (ναῦται), and those who work the sea (τὴν θάλασσαν ἐργάζονται). However such maritime details could hardly describe Jerusalem due to Jerusalem's landlocked status. The city is inland and therefore not beside any major body of water as demanded by John's vision. Jerusalem is situated fourteen miles west of the Dead Sea, thirty-three miles east of the Mediterranean, and sixty miles south of the Sea of Galilee.[55] Therefore, "unlike many other ancient cities, *Jerusalem is neither a harbor city* nor a city situated on trade routes" (italics added).[56] In fact, far from describing the city as dwelling upon the sea as it does with Tyre (Ezek 27:3, 27), the Scripture describes Jerusalem as dwelling "between the seas" (Dan 11:45).

Babylon's Incurred Justice (Rev 18:6b)

Preterists observe that Babylon is given the cup of God's wrath to drink (Rev 18:6). Preterists maintain that the "cup" of judgment that Babylon will soon experience (Rev 18:6b) identifies Jerusalem. They contend that this language goes back to God giving His cup of wrath to the various nations to drink from as described by the prophet

---

[54] Philip Carrington, *The Meaning of Revelation* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1931), 65.

[55] Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 387, 576.

[56] Youngblood, Bruce, and Harrison, eds., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 655.

Jeremiah (Jer 25:17-26). Preterists note that Jerusalem is the first nation mentioned on Jeremiah's list (Jer 25:18). Beagley explains:

> Again, the idea of punishment as being given a cup to drink occurs in the Old Testament in connection with Jerusalem; Jeremiah is being given a cup of wine of wrath and sent to make various nations drink of it; but Jerusalem is the first place named; later it is said that all nations are to drink from this cup and Yahweh begins to work evil 'at the city called by [his] name' (25:28).[57]

While preterists are correct in noting that Jerusalem is the first of the nations to drink after Jeremiah had been given the cup of divine wrath, it should be noted that Babylon represents the last of the nations to drink. Commenting on Rev 18:6b, Bullinger remarks, "Compare Jer. li. 7, and especially chap. xxv., where the cup of God's wrath is sent to the nations (vv. 15, 16), and Babylon drinks last (v.26)."[58] Both the first and last names mentioned in ancient Near Eastern lists are important. Preterists have chosen the first name on Jeremiah's list when interpreting Rev 18:6b. However, it seems more consistent to follow Bullinger's approach and select the last name mentioned since John also uses the name Babylon rather than Jerusalem in Rev 17–18. Associating the cup of punishment motif with Babylon is not out of the ordinary since Habakkuk seems to follow the same practice (Hab 2:16). Thus, contrary to preterist assertions, the cup of judgment motif does not uniquely identify Jerusalem but is equally applicable to a Gentile city.

Babylon's Destruction (Rev 18:8, 10, 21-23; 19:1-6)

There are at least four points of disharmony in between John's description of Babylon's fall and what is known of first-century Jerusalem's fall in A.D. 70. They include

---

[57] Alan James Beagley, *The 'Sitz Im Leben' of the Apocalypse with Particular Reference to the Role of the Church's Enemies*, vol. 50, Beiheft Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche, ed. Erich Gräβer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987), 98.

[58] E. W. Bullinger, *The Apocalypse Or "The Day of the Lord"* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1909; reprint, London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1972), 564. Sheshach (Jer 25:26) is a cryptogram for Babylon (Jer 51:41).

Babylon's sudden fall, Babylon's final fall, the heavenly rejoicing associated with Babylon's fall, and Babylon burning forever subsequent to her fall.

Babylon's Sudden Fall

When Babylon falls, her decline will be sudden and instantaneous. Such suddenness of destruction is evidenced in how John analogizes her fall to a giant stone sinking into the Euphrates (Rev 18:21). However, Jerusalem's fall was part of an elongated process spanning several years (A.D. 66–70). That the fall of Jerusalem was part of a long process is apparent from the way scholars typically refer to "Rome's *prolonged* siege and destruction of Jerusalem from the late 60's to the 70's" (italics added).[59]

Babylon's Final Fall

John describes Babylon's fall as final. In other words, once she falls she will never be rebuilt nor inhabited again. This reality explains why the phrase "not found any longer" or an equivalent expression is repeated six times in Rev 18:21-23. Such finality obviously could not be describing Jerusalem's past fall since there are people living in Jerusalem today. In fact, Jerusalem's fall in A.D. 70 was not final because she was rebuilt and destroyed again many times afterward. According to Appian, " . . . Pompey . . . destroyed . . . Jerusalem . . . . it was afterward rebuilt and Vespasian destroyed it again, and Hadrian did the same in our time."[60] Bullinger summarizes the preterist dilemma concerning the predictions of Babylon's sudden and final fall. He notes, "This suddenness and completeness of Babylon's judgment and *disappearance from the face of the earth* is

---

[59] Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old*, 458.

[60] Appian *Syrian Wars* 50.

one of the prominent features of this prophecy: and it effectually proves that it has not yet taken place."[61]

Heavenly Rejoicing

Revelation 19:1-6 records the rejoicing of various heavenly entities when Babylon falls. Praise is heard from the many (19:1-3), the elders and four living creatures (19:4), a voice from the throne (19:5) , and a great multitude (19:6). However, why would the heavenly chorus rejoice at Jerusalem's demise, when Jeremiah wept when Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. (Lam 2:11) and Christ wept at the prospect of Jerusalem's fall in A.D. 70 (Luke 19:41)? This point becomes even more salient if the 24 elders (Rev 19:4) represent the church. Such rejoicing would be out of place for the early church. Paul had earlier warned her not to be conceited on behalf of the natural branches (Israel) that had been cut off (Rom 11:18) because God was able to re-graft them. In fact, it is God's plan to re-graft these branches. If Israel's rejection of Christ meant reconciliation for the world, how much more would her return to God bless the world (Rom 11:12)? Such Pauline instruction makes the whole idea of the church rejoicing over Jerusalem's fall seem inappropriate.

Babylon Burning Forever

Revelation 19:3 predicts Babylon burning forever after she falls. However, in what sense did first-century Jerusalem burn forever (Rev 19:3)? The perpetual burning of Babylon is communicated through the present tense "rises" (ἀναβαίνει) as well as the repetition of the noun "forever" (αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων). Chilton answers:

> It is used here to communicate the permanent nature of Babylon's fall. . . . The phrase thus cannot be pressed into service as a literal description of the eternal

[61] Bullinger, *The Apocalypse Or "The Day of the Lord"*, 565.

> state of the wicked in general. The actual flames that consumed “Babylon” burned out long ago; but her punishment was eternal. She will never be resurrected.[62]

However, preterists show no hint of interpreting the nearly identical expression ὁ καπνὸς τοῦ βασανισμοῦ αὐτῶν εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων ἀναβαίνει in Rev 14:11 as communicating anything other than a perpetual burning.[63] Why should the nearly same phrase found in Rev 19:3 not be given the same treatment?

Analysis of Preterist Arguments From Outside Rev 17–18

Now that the arguments that preterists employ from within Rev 17–18 have been analyzed, a response to three arguments that preterists employ from outside these chapters will be similarly considered. These arguments include Revelation's so called "time texts," appeals to extra-biblical evidence, and first-century audience relevance.

"Time Texts"

Because Revelation makes use of the words “shortly” or “quickly” or tacevos (Rev 1:1; 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:6, 7, 12, 20), “near” or “at hand” or eggus (Rev 1:3; 22:10), and “about to” or mevllw (1:19; 3:10), preterists believe that they have the literary license to locate the fulfillment of most of John’s prophecies in the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.[64] According to Jerusalem advocates, such a limitation at least narrows the interpretive possibilities of the identity of Babylon in Rev 17–18 so that the interpreter at least must consider Jerusalem, which was an immediate oppressor of God’s people at the time John wrote the Apocalypse.[65] Russell explains:

---

[62] Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 472, n. 2; Bass, *Back to the Future: A Study in the Book of Revelation*, 413.

[63] Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 365-66; Bass, *Back to the Future: A Study in the Book of Revelation*, 329-30.

[64] Gentry, “A Preterist View of Revelation,” 41-45.

[65] Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 421.

> Rome, Heathen or Christian, lies altogether outside the apocalyptic field of view, which is restricted to "things which shortly must come to pass." To wander into all ages and countries in the interpretation of these visions is absolutely forbidden by the express and fundamental limitations laid down in the book itself.[66]

However, the preterist errs in assuming that these words are technical expressions that always have the same definition every time they are used. In fact, each of these terms has a broad semantic range and therefore its meaning must be determined by its context rather than through the imposition of an artificial "one size fits all" grid.

For example, besides always understanding these words chronologically indicating *when* Christ will return, it is also possible to understand them adverbially or qualitatively indicating the *manner* of Christ's return. In other words, when the action comes it will come suddenly or with great rapidity.[67] The New Testament allows for such a usage. For example, while it is true that Scripture often uses "shortly" or "quickly" (tacwos) in a chronological sense to indicate "when" (1 Timothy 3:14), Scripture also uses the same word in a qualitative sense to indicate "how." For instance, Acts 22:18 uses tacwos to indicate manner when it says, "Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me." The LXX also displays an adverbial use of these expressions by using them in prophetic contexts that would not be fulfilled for hundreds and sometimes thousands of years or more into the future (Isa 13:22; 51:5; Zeph 1:7, 14; Obad 15; cf. Isa 5:26; 13:6; 58:8; Joel 1:15; 2:1; 3:14).[68] Given the broad semantic range of these terms, "context is king" in determining whether the chronological or adverbial meaning is applicable. Because the context of Revelation involves global events that have not yet come to pass, an adverbial rather than a

---

[66] Russell, *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*, 484-85.

[67] John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 35.

[68] Thomas Ice, "Has Bible Prophecy Already Been Fulfilled? (Part 2)," *Conservative Theological Journal* 4 (December 2000): 306.

chronological meaning should be assigned to these words. It is also possible to understand ἐγγύς (Phil 4:5) and μέλλω (1 Pet 5:1) in terms of imminency. In other words, rather than chronology, these terms could be communicating that the prophesied events could happen at any moment.[69]

While Revelation's "timing texts" pose no obstacle to the futurist interpretation, these texts pose considerable problems for the preterist interpreter. Partial preterist interpretive problems are created by the fact that Revelation's "timing texts" are found at the end of the Book of Revelation as well as the beginning (Rev 22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20). The partial preterist system still wants to hold to a future bodily appearing and final judgment (Rev 20:7-15). However, the use of καιρός and ἐγγύς in Revelation 22 is injurious to the partial preterist system, because the existence of these words at the end of the book logically leads to the conclusion that the entire Book of Revelation was fulfilled in A.D. 70 rather than just most of it. If the use of καιρός and ἐγγύς in the early chapters of Revelation lead partial preterists to conclude that most of the book's prophecies were fulfilled in A.D. 70, then surely these identical words found at the end of the book should also lead to the conclusion that the entire book was fulfilled in A.D. 70.

In essence, it is impossible to be a consistent partial preterist because the logical corollary of partial preterism is full preterism. In actuality, the designations "partial preterist" and "full preterist" are misnomers. Rather, partial preterists should be labeled "inconsistent preterists" while full preterists should be referred to as "consistent preterists." This inconsistency is evident even to some partial preterists, such as David Chilton, who eventually abandoned his partial preterist system in favor of full preterism.

Because of the use of καιρός and ἐγγύς in Revelation 22, in order for partial preterists to be consistent, they also must believe that the Second Advent and final

---

[69] Mark Hitchcock, "A Defense of the Domitianic Date of the Book of Revelation" (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2005), 86-96.

judgment have already taken place. Such a belief is at odds with the great ecumenical church creeds, which teach a future bodily appearing of Christ. Denying the Second Advent takes one outside the pale of orthodoxy and into the camp of heterodoxy or heresy. Thus, the partial preterist understanding of Revelation's timing texts flirts dangerously with unorthodoxy.[70]

Extra-Biblical Material

Preterists appeal to two extra-biblical sources in an attempt to find a hermeneutical basis for identifying Babylon of Rev 17–18 as first-century. These sources include apocalyptic literature and Qumran material.

Apocalyptic Literature

Preterism has difficulty explaining how Revelation's seemingly global language was fulfilled in the local events of A.D. 70. For example, Revelation predicts that the greatest earthquake in human history will occur (Rev 16:18), that Babylon's reach would extend to all peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues (Rev 17:15), and that Babylon would reign over all of the kings of the earth (Rev 17:18). How could these prophesied global events have been fulfilled in the local Jewish War of the first century? The preterist escapes the tension between Revelation's global language and understanding this language as finding a fulfillment in the local events of A.D. 70 by assuming that Revelation shares the same features with a special group of non-canonical writings called apocalyptic literature that flourished from the intertestamental period into the first century[71] "where symbolism is the rule and literalism is the exception."[72] Because

[70] Thomas Ice, "The Great Tribulation Is Past: Rebuttal," in *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future? Two Evangelicals Debate the Question*, ed. Thomas Ice and Kenneth L. Gentry (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 162-63.

[71] Non-canonical apocalyptic literature is an extra-biblical literary genre that flourished around the time of Revelation's composition. The Book of Enoch, Apocalypse of Baruch, Book of Jubilees, Assumption of Moses, Psalms of Solomon, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, and the Sibylline Oracles

such writings were characterized by apocalyptic hyperbole, this classification gives the preterist the hermeneutical basis that he needs to argue that Revelation's seeming global language is in actuality local language whenever the book's textual details seem to go beyond a mere A.D. 70 fulfillment.

According to Hanegraaff, ". . . *apocalyptic hyperbole* to underscore the distress and devastation that would be experienced when Jerusalem and its temple were judged" (italics added).[73] Gentry similarly notes, ". . . the preterist view does understand Revelation's prophecies as strongly reflecting actual historical events in John's near future, though they are set in *apocalyptic drama* and clothed in *poetic hyperbole*" (italics added).[74] A case in point is how Preston appeals to the hyperbolic description of an earthquake in extra-biblical apocalyptic writings in order to explain how John's description of the greatest earthquake in human history (Rev 16:18) is actually a past local event. According to Preston, "The Sibylline Oracles . . . says, 'all creation was shaken' when Jerusalem fell. This was not a reference to a literal earthquake . . ."[75]

However, the problem with the hyperbolic argument is that it is inconsistently employed by preterists. Preterists typically take the following features of Revelation

---

are all considered to be part of this literary era. This genre is comprised of works sharing the following common cluster of characteristics: extensive use of symbolism, vision as the major means of revelation (Rev 1:10-11), angelic guides (Rev 1:1), activity of angels and demons (Rev 12:7-8), focus on the end of the current age and the inauguration of the age to come (Rev 1:3), urgent expectation of the end of earthly conditions in the immediate future (Rev 21:1), the end as a cosmic catastrophe, new salvation that is paradisal in character (Rev 21–22), manifestation of the kingdom of God (Rev 11:15), a mediator with royal functions (Rev 3:7), dualism with God and Satan as the leaders, spiritual order determining the flow of history, pessimism about man's ability to change the course of events, periodization and determinism of human history (Rev 6:11), other worldly journeys (Rev 4:1-2), the catchword glory (Rev 4:11), and a final showdown between good and evil (Rev 19:11-21). The above citations from Revelation show that it has at least some affinities with these extra-biblical works. This list was adapted from Frederick J. Murphy, *Early Judaism: The Exile to the Time of Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 130-33.

[72] Steve Gregg, ed., *Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville: Nelson, 1997), 11.

[73] Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code*, 30.

[74] Gentry, "A Preterist View of Revelation," 38.

[75] Preston, *Who Is This Babylon?* , 98.

literally as they attempt to identify Babylon as first-century Jerusalem: Jerusalem (11:8),[76] divisions of the city into thirds (Rev 16:19),[77] the word "city" (Rev 11:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21), the seven hills (Rev 17:9),[78] and the one hundred pound hailstones or ταλαντιαία (Rev 16:21).[79] Preterists also take other aspects of the Apocalypse literally since they are useful in arguing for a Neronian date for the composition of the book: the temple (Rev 11:1-2), the number 666 (Rev 13:18), the forty-two month reign of the beast (Rev 13:5),[80] and the seven kings (Rev 17:10).[81] Since the preterist system takes some aspects of the Apocalypse literally, how does one determine which aspects of Revelation are literal and which ones are not? Moreover, the assumption that Revelation is part of the apocalyptic category can be countered by noting that any similarities it has with these non-canonical works are outweighed by notable differences between the two.[82]

Apocalyptic Genre	**Revelation**
Pseudonymous	Not pseudonymous
Pessimistic about the present	Not pessimistic about the present
No epistolary framework	Epistolary framework
Limited admonitions for moral compliance	Repeated admonitions for moral compliance
Messiah's coming exclusively future	Messiah's coming is past (Rev 5:9) and future

[76] Gentry, "A Preterist View of Revelation," 74.

[77] Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology*, 425.

[78] Ibid., 426.

[79] Ibid., 425.

[80] Gentry, "A Preterist View of Revelation," 65, 68, 70.

[81] Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology*, 426.

[82] Adapted from Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old*, 338. See also Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary*, 23-28.

Does not call itself a prophecy	Calls itself a prophecy
History under the guise of prophecy	*Futuristic prediction*
Concerns a future generation (1 Enoch 1:2)	Concerns present (2–3) and future (4–22)

Qumran Hermeneutics

Another problem for the preterist interpretation concerns how prophecies aimed at Babylon in Rev 17–18 can be understood as speaking of first-century Jerusalem's fall. At this juncture, Jerusalem advocates appeal to Qumran material that takes Old Testament prophecies originally aimed at Nineveh and Babylon and redirects these prophecies so as to condemn first-century Jerusalem. For example, the Qumran scroll 1QpHab, through the use of pesher hermeneutics, redirects portions of the text for the purpose of predicting imminent judgment upon Jerusalem rather than the Chaldeans.[83] Jerusalem proponents argue that if the Qumran community redirected Old Testament texts so as to predict imminent judgment upon Jerusalem, then John could also be using the same procedure by taking the Old Testament concept of Babylon and redirecting it so that it is used to predict the coming A.D 70 judgment upon Jerusalem. Ford explains, "If Ephraim was seen in such a light and such metaphors were used of her at the time the Qumran commentaries were written, the same accommodation might well have been made years later with reference to Jerusalem under the Romans."[84]

However, three reasons make this interpretation problematic. First, because Qumran was a break-away community, it therefore may not be reflective of the Jewish tradition in which the Scripture was given. Second, the Qumran community was not doing Old Testament exegesis but rather was interpreting passages under the authority of

[83] 1QpHab 9:2-7; 12:5-10.

[84] J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 284.

the Teacher of Righteousness. Third, one must also proceed with caution before equating biblical and Qumran hermeneutics because the community commonly disregarded the original context of a citation. After researching several explicit quotations, Fitzmyer found only seven quotations where the community considered the original context. The rest were modernized (11), accommodated (12), and applied in the new eschaton (10).[85]

First-Century Relevance

Preterists contend that interpreting Revelation's prophecies as concerning the distant future is to make the book irrelevant to the seven churches (Rev 2–3), which were John's original addressees. Because of their prior belief that John's prophecy must have been immediately applicable to John's original audience, preterists dismiss interpretations of Babylon in Rev 17–18 that place the fulfillment of this prophecy in an era other than the first-century. Preston incorporates this perspective in his criticism of a futurist understanding of these chapters. According to Preston, suggesting:

> ...that Revelation simply depicts a yet future time…"At the end of history..."…one has to ask how all of this was relevant, or comforting to John's audience. This idea suggests that John was writing to suffering saints, longing for vindication, and yet, God ignores those urgent pleas to tell them of events and times unrelated to their traumatic situation. This completely undermines the 'occasional' nature of the book.[86]

However, it is quite common throughout the Old Testament prophetic material for God to comfort His people in the present by furnishing them with a vision of the distant future. The Book of Isaiah amply refutes the idea that the prophecy must relate directly to the writer's original audience. Isaiah not only sought to address the needs of his own day (Isa 1–35) but also the needs of a future generation of Jews in the Babylonian Captivity (Isa 40–55). Also, Isaiah's futuristic prophecies as recorded in Isa

---

[85] Joseph Fitzmyer, "The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 7 (1961): 305-33.

[86] Preston, *Who Is This Babylon?* , 116-17.

40–66 were designed to comfort Israel in her present adverse circumstances in 700 B.C. In fact, the messianic predictions found in Isa 53 would not be fulfilled within the lifetimes of Isaiah's original audience but rather would find their fulfillment nearly seven centuries later. This same pattern is seen in other Old Testament prophetic material (Ezek 34–48; Amos 9:11-15; Zech 12–14). Revelation simply follows this Old Testament pattern by providing the persecuted churches (Rev 2–3) with a futuristic vision communicating that God will ultimately conquer all forces oppressing the church at the end of history (Rev 4–22).

Weaknesses With the Preterist Position

Now that the preterist arguments have been responded to, let us conclude by offering four general weaknesses with the preterist position. They include the date of the Apocalypse, unfulfilled Old Testament prophecy regarding Babylon, Babylon's idolatrous description, and Babylon's similarities with Tyre.

Revelation's Late Date

The preterist contends that most of the prophecies found in Revelation were fulfilled in A.D. 70. Obviously, this view is unworkable if it can be established that the book was written after A.D. 70. Thus, the preterist view has the disadvantage of date dependency. In other words, it is possible to be an idealist, historicist, and futurist regardless if the interpreter holds to a Neronian (A.D. 65) or Domitianic date (A.D. 95) for the composition of Revelation. However, the preterist enjoys no similar luxury since any date other than a pre A.D. 70 date for the composition of the book destroys his view. Preterists themselves acknowledge this. According to Gentry, "If the late-date of around A.D. 95–96 is accepted, a wholly different situation would prevail. The events in the mid

and late 60s of the first century would be *absolutely excluded* as possible fulfillments."[87] Such early date dependency is problematic for the preterist interpretation since most New Testament scholars date the composition of the Apocalypse during the reign of Domitian rather than Nero. In fact, past and recent scholarship has adequately responded to both the external and internal arguments that preterists have advanced for the early dating of Revelation.[88]

Unfulfilled Old Testament Prophecy Regarding Babylon

A problem for the preterist interpretation of Babylon relates to unfulfilled Old Testament prophecies concerning Babylon's destruction. Such unfulfilled Old Testament passages include Isaiah 13–14; Jer 50–51; and Zech 5:5-11.

Isaiah 13–14

Isaiah 13–14 contains many elements that communicate futurity.[89] For example, Isa 13 equates Babylon's destruction to the "day of the Lord" (Isa 13:6-9). Because this expression is likely non-technical referring to anytime that God intervenes in history (Exod 32:34), it can sometimes refer to historical events (Amos 5:18, 20; Ezek 13:5; 30:3). However, the term is overwhelmingly employed in eschatological contexts (Isa 2:12; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14; Zech 14:1; Mal 4:5; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10). Isaiah 13:10-13 also refers to cosmic disturbances. Sproul notes how the existence of similar language in the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24:29-

---

[87] Gentry, *The Beast of Revelation*, 111.

[88] J. Ritchie Smith, "The Date of the Apocalypse," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 45 (April–June 1888); Hitchcock, "A Defense of the Domitianic Date of the Book of Revelation"; Robert L. Thomas, "Theonomy and the Dating of Revelation," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 5 (Fall 1994).

[89] Pink, *The Antichrist*, 240-43; Henry Morris, *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 1983), 48; G. H. Lang, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Select Studies* (London: Paternoster, 1948), 300-04; George Hawkins Pember, *The Antichrist, Babylon, and the Coming of the Kingdom* (Miami Springs, FL: Schoettle, 1988), 84-105.

31) poses a problem for the preterist interpretation. He says, "This passage describes the parousia in vivid and graphic images of astronomical perturbations. It speaks of signs in the sky that will be visible. . . . Perhaps no portion of the Olivet Discourse provides more difficulties to the preterist view than this one."[90]

Isaiah 13:11-12 predicts that Babylon's fall would result in man becoming scarcer than gold. Isaiah also predicts that Babylon would experience sudden cataclysmic destruction similar to that suffered by Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa 13:19). In fact, Babylon's destruction would be final, thereby rendering her permanently uninhabitable (Isa 13:20-22). Also, Isa 14 indicates that the world's universal rest and peace (Isa 14:5-8) and Israel's restoration (Isa 14:1-4) will transpire as a consequence of Babylon's destruction. Such national regeneration is typically portrayed in Scripture as a future event (Rom 11:25-27). It encompasses the earth experiencing the full knowledge of God (Hab 2:14) as well as Israel returning to her land (Isa 14:1) and possessing her enemies (Isa 14:2). Because it is difficult to connect these events with the historic fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. (Dan 5), they must be pointing to a future event.

Jeremiah 50–51

Others have noticed a similar pattern in Jer 50–51.[91] For example, Jer 50:3 predicts that an enemy from the north would destroy Babylon and yet the Persians came from the east. In addition, Jer 51:8 predicts that Babylon would be destroyed suddenly and yet Babylon's fall was a prolonged process encompassing many centuries. Furthermore, Jeremiah predicts that Babylon would be completely destroyed (Jer 50:3,

---

[90] R. C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 42.

[91] Charles H. Dyer, "Jeremiah," in *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor, 1985), 1199-200; idem, "The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17–18 (Part 2)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144 (October–December 1987): 443-49; Pink, *The Antichrist*, 243-45; Morris, *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 348; Lang, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Select Studies*, 300-04.

13, 26, 39-40; 51:29, 43, 62) and yet Babylon remained vibrant long after 539 B.C. In fact, the city was influential during the Persian period as Daniel served there administratively (Dan 5:30; 6:1-3).

Moreover, Jer 51:26 predicts that Babylon's destruction would result in even her building materials never being used again and yet ". . . many towns and villages have been built out of the remains of Babylon."[92] Also, Jeremiah predicts that believers would flee Babylon upon her destruction (Jer 50:8; 51:6, 45) and yet "there is no record of the Jews fleeing Babylon when she fell to Medo-Persia."[93] Interestingly, Scripture specifically states that Daniel remained in Babylon after it fell to Persia (Dan 5:28, 30-31; 6:1-3). Finally, Jeremiah predicts the reuniting and national repentance of Israel following Babylon's fall (Jer 50:2, 4-5, 20; 51:50) and yet such a reuniting never took place after Babylon fell. In fact, postexilic Scripture evidences God's continual rebuking of His people. The Old Testament often portrays the reunification of the northern and southern kingdoms (Ezek 37) and the restoration of the nation (Amos 9:11-15; Jer 31) as events that are yet to transpire in the future. Again, because it is difficult to connect these events with the historic fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. (Dan 5), they must be pointing to a future event.

Walvoord summarizes as follows:

> As far as the historic fulfillment is concerned, it is obvious from both Scripture and history that these verses have not been literally fulfilled. The city of Babylon continued to flourish after the Medes conquered it, and though its glory dwindled, especially after the control of the Medes and the Persians ended in 323 B.C., the city continued in some form or substance until A.D. 1000 and did not experience a sudden termination such as anticipated in this prophecy.[94]

---

[92] Lang, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Select Studies*, 304.

[93] Dyer, "The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17–18 (Part 2)," 447.

[94] John F. Walvoord, *The Nations in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 63-64.

Zechariah 5:5-11

Many commentators decline to apply a normal hermeneutic to these chapters instead arguing that they are merely hyperbolic. They contend that Isa 13–14 and Jer 50–51 were "essentially fulfilled" in 539 B.C.[95] However, even granting this premise, the preterist is still unable to escape the implications of unfulfilled Old Testament prophecy regarding Babylon due to the presence of Zech 5:5-11, which also predicts a future prophetic role for Babylon.

In these verses, Zechariah sees a woman named wickedness carried away in an ephah in the last days to the land of Shinar where a temple will be built for her. In order to grasp the meaning of the vision, the following five elements must be understood.[96] First, Zechariah saw a basket. Second, in the basket, Zechariah saw a woman signifying wickedness. Third, Zechariah saw the woman being pushed back into the basket as a heavy lid was placed on top of her. This incarceration of the woman in the basket signifies that God is in control and He will release her only in His time.

Fourth, Zechariah saw the basket being transported to the land of Shinar. The Old Testament repeatedly identifies Shinar or `r['n>vi` as Babylonia, which is the exact same locale where the Tower of Babel as well as Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon once stood (Gen 10:10; 11:2; 14:1, 9; Isa 11:11; Dan 1:2). Fifth, Zechariah was told that the woman one day would be released and set upon the pedestal of a house in Shinar. The Hebrew word for house is `tyIB;`. This is the same word used to describe the temple that Solomon would one day build for God (2 Sam 7:13). Because this part of the vision conjures up religious imagery, it communicates that the woman will be vested with future

---

[95] Homer Heater, "Do the Prophets Teach That Babylonia Will Be Rebuilt in the Eschaton?," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (March 1998); Robert B. Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 53, 213.

[96] Pink, *The Antichrist*, 281; Charles Dyer and Eugene Merrill, *Old Testament Survey*, ed. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Nashville: Word, 2001), 825-26.

religious authority. Putting all of this together, Zechariah's vision teaches that in God's providence, wickedness and religion will once again return to the land of Babylonia.

What is striking about this vision is that it was given in 519 B.C. (Zech 1:7) or twenty years after the historic fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. Thus, the timing of Zech 5:5-11 prevents this prophecy from being interpreted as having already been fulfilled in the same manner in which Isa 13–14 and Jer 50–51 are sometimes understood as "essentially fulfilled" in Babylon's historic fall. How can Zech 5:5-11 be connected with the fall of historic Babylon in 539 B.C. if this prophecy was given 20 years after the fact? According to Newton, "That this event predicted in this remarkable passage remains still unaccomplished, is sufficiently evident from the fact of Zechariah's having prophesied after Babylon had received that blow under which it has gradually waned. Zechariah lived after Babylon had passed into the hands of the Persians . . ."[97]

Futuristic Fulfillment

If these passages remain unfulfilled, a futuristic revived and destroyed Babylon represents the only time in history for these passages to achieve their realization. This perspective becomes evident by noting the similarities between Jer 50–51 and Rev 17–18.[98] For example, both passages associate Babylon with a golden cup (Jer 51:7; Rev 17:3-4; 18:6), dwelling on many waters (Jer 51:13; Rev 17:1), intoxicating the nations (Jer 51:7; Rev 17:2), and having the same name (Jer 50:1; Rev 17:5; 18:10). Moreover, both passages analogize Babylon's destruction to a stone sinking into the Euphrates (Jer 51:63-64; Rev 18:21) and depict Babylon's destruction as sudden (Jer 51:8; Rev 18:8), caused by fire (Jer 51:30; Rev 17:16; 18:8), final (Jer 50:39; Rev 18:21), and deserved

---

[97] Benjamin Willis Newton, *Babylon: Its Future, History, and Doom. With Remarks on the Future of Egypt and Other Eastern Countries*, 3rd ed. (London: Wertheimer, 1890), 64.

[98] Dyer, "The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17–18 (Part 2)," 441-43; Bullinger, *The Apocalypse Or "The Day of the Lord"*, 546; Pink, *The Antichrist*, 287-90; Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary*, 307.

(Jer 51:63-64; Rev 18:21). Furthermore, both passages describe the response to Babylon's destruction in terms of God's people fleeing (Jer 51:6, 45; Rev 18:4) and heaven rejoicing (Jer 51:48; Rev 18:20). Other commentators have also noticed how frequently John in Rev 17–18 draws from the imagery of Jer 50–51.

Regarding Zech 5:5-11, Revelation 17–18 speaks of these same elements when it mentions a woman (17:1), wickedness (17:2), and religion (17:2) in Shinar or the city of Babylon (Rev 17:18; 18:10).[99] Thus, regarding Zech 5:5-11, Pink observes, "The vision or prophecy contains the germ which is afterward expanded and developed in such detail in Rev. 17 and 18."[100] Thus, Seiss observes, " . . . there are Scripture prophecies which I am at a loss to understand except upon the theory that Babylon will be restored, become a commercial centre, and be the last of the world's great centers to go down under the terrific visitations of the day of the Lord."[101]

Injury to Preterism

In sum, if it can be demonstrated that these Old Testament passages have never been completely fulfilled historically but instead await a future fulfillment, then an additional problem is created for the preterist interpretation since it leaves no place for these passages to find their realization. Unlike the preterist, many futurists have no difficulty explaining when these Old Testament prophecies regarding Babylon's fall will be fulfilled since they see either Rev 18 or Rev 17–18 as speaking of a revived Babylon that is destined to be destroyed in the coming Tribulation period. In other words, if Isa 13–14 and Jer 50–51 have not yet been fulfilled, then there is no logical place in the preterist system for these Old Testament prophecies to be realized. This is because the

---

[99] Hitchcock, *The Second Coming of Babylon*, 109.

[100] Pink, *The Antichrist*, 281.

[101] J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: A Series of Special Lectures on the Revelation of Jesus Christ, with Revised Text* (Philadelphia, PA: Approved, 1865; reprint, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1977), 398.

preterist understands Babylon of Rev 17–18 as Jerusalem. Therefore, there is no way for the Old Testament passages regarding Babylon's fall to be fulfilled in preterism unless the meaning of these passages also changes from Babylon to Jerusalem. Because these Old Testament prophecies were originally directed at Babylon (Isa 13:1; Jer 50:1; Zech 5:11), such a proposition damages the stability of meaning of these prophecies in between the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation. All of this is to say that the preterist system is damaged to the extent that it can be shown that the Old Testament passages regarding Babylon's fall have never been fulfilled.

Babylon's Idolatry

Another problem with identifying Babylon of Rev 17–18 as first-century Jerusalem involves John's description of idolatrous Babylon. Such a sin was uncharacteristic of first-century Judaism. Because first-century Jews recognized that idolatry had caused the exile, this realization had the tendency to rid first-century Israel of this particular sin (Rom 2:22). Regarding Jewish idolatry, "The captivity of the people of Israel at the hands of the Babylonians produced a permanent cure for the sin of idolatry. Never again, even to the present time, has Judaism succumbed to idolatry. In the gospels there is virtually nothing about idolatry . . ."[102]

However, in Rev 17–18, John employs five words that are often associated with the technical sin of idolatry when used in other sections of Scripture and also elsewhere within the Apocalypse.[103] They include: δαιμονίων (Rev 18:2; 9:20; 1 Cor 10:19-20), πορνεία (Rev 17:1-2; 2:14, 20; 9:21; Ezek 16:15, 21, 36), φαρμακεί (Rev 18:23; 9:21; 21:8; 22:15; Gal 5:20), βδελυγμα (Rev 17:4-5; 21:8, 27; 22:15), and κάθαρτα (Rev 17:4; 2 Cor 6:16-17; Eph 5:5). Thus, the existence of these five words in

---

[102] Youngblood, Bruce, and Harrison, eds., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 592.

[103] Johnson, "Revelation," 555-56, 66; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 849, 922-23.

Rev 17–18 indicates Babylon's heavy involvement with idolatry. Such a sinful description is inconsistent with a first-century Jerusalem interpretation of these chapters since idolatry was uncharacteristic of first-century Judaism.

Babylon' s Similarities With Tyre

There are some similarities between first-century Jerusalem and Babylon of Rev 17–18 that the preterist appeals to in order to support his Babylon-equals-Jerusalem formula. For example, the preterist points to how the double recompense language of Rev 18:6 is used only of Jerusalem in Scripture (Exod 22:4; Isa 61:7; Jer 16:18; 17:18). He also observes the parallels between Rev 18:22-23 and Jer 25:10, which pertains to Jerusalem's fall. In addition, the preterist observes the similarities between the inscription upon the harlot's forehead and similar descriptions of Old Testament Israel (Exod 28:36-38; Jer 3:3).

However, noting some similarities between Babylon and Jerusalem does not prove the preterist case since John in Rev 17–18 appears to be borrowing imagery and language from past destructions of multiple cities, including Jerusalem, in an attempt to depict the manner of Babylon's fall. Commentators of all persuasions recognize Tyre's prominence in these chapters. According to Prigent, "Rev 17 was obviously inspired by Jer 51; the model for Rev 18, on the other hand, is found in Ezek 27–28."[104] In addition to Tyre, the imagery of many other cities is present in Rev 17–18. Even preterists, like Steve Gregg, observe this reality. He notes:

> The entire chapter is filled with allusions to the Old Testament prophecies against Babylon, Tyre, Sodom, and Jerusalem. The specific details do not need to be pressed as applicable to the present case if we accept the meaning that, in

[104] Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, trans. Wendy Pradels (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 498.

> principle, the judgment of this city is like God's historical judgments upon great cities of the past.[105]

In sum, if it is valid to identify Babylon of Rev 17–18 based upon similar imagery with Old Testament descriptions of Jerusalem as the preterist position contends, then by the same logic Tyre, Assyria, Nineveh, Edom, and Sodom are also equally viable candidates for the identification of Babylon. In fact, there are just as many parallels between Babylon and each of these five cities as there are between Babylon and Old Testament descriptions of Jerusalem.

Conclusion

The first part of the paper represented a response to the arguments that preterists employ in order to identify Babylon as first-century Jerusalem. This first major division contained two parts. First, arguments from within Rev 17–18 were analyzed. Second, arguments from outside Rev 17–18 were scrutinized. The second part of the paper set forth some general weaknesses with the preterist identification of the harlot as first-century Jerusalem.

Thus, it has been demonstrated that the preterist Jerusalem position is fraught with so many difficulties that it remains the least preferable or least probable option in comparison to the remaining competing positions. Because the exegetical, contextual, and geographic details do not support the interpretation that Babylon of Rev 17–18 is first-century Jerusalem, interpreters are obligated to consider other options in their attempt to identify the harlot. For now, it is sufficient to say that Babylon the Great described in these chapters and related passages is not something that has already been manifested back in the first-century. Rather, Babylon is something that is destined to one day arrive on the future world scene.

---

[105] Gregg, ed., *Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary*, 428.

Bibliography

Appian. *Roman History*. Translated by Horace White. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912–1913.

Balyeat, Joseph. *Babylon, the Great City of Revelation*. Servierville, TN: Onward, 1991.

Bass, Ralph E. *Back to the Future: A Study in the Book of Revelation*. Greenville, SC: Living Hope, 2004.

Beagley, Alan James. *The 'Sitz Im Leben' of the Apocalypse with Particular Reference to the Role of the Church's Enemies*. Vol. 50. Beiheft Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche, ed. Erich Gräβer. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987.

Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*. New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Bruce, F. F. "Revelation." In *International Bible Commentary with the New International Version*, ed. F. F. Bruce, 1593-629. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.

Bullinger, E. W. *The Apocalypse Or "The Day of the Lord"*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1909. Reprint, London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1972.

Carrington, Philip. *The Meaning of Revelation*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1931.

Chilton, David. *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*. Tyler, TX: Dominion, 1987.

Chisholm, Robert B. *Handbook on the Prophets*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.

Constable, Thomas L. "Notes on 1 Corinthians." Online: www.soniclight.com. Accessed 27 July 2008.

Dyer, Charles H. "Jeremiah." In *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 11323-1206. Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor, 1985.

_____. *The Rise of Babylon*. rev. ed. Chicago: Moody, 2003.

_____. "The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17–18 (Part 2)." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144 (October–December 1987): 433-49.

Dyer, Charles, and Eugene Merrill. *Old Testament Survey*, ed. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck. Nashville: Word, 2001.

Elliott, E. B. *Horae Apocalypticae; or a Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical; Including Also an Examination of the Chief Prophecies of Daniel*. 4th ed. Vol. 4. London: Seelys, 1851.

Eusebius. *Ecclesiastical History*. Translated by Kirsopp Lake, vol. 1. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. New York: Putnam, 1926.

Fitzmyer, Joseph. "The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament." *New Testament Studies* 7 (1961): 297-333.

Ford, J. Massyngberde. *Revelation*. Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975.

Garland, Tony. *A Testimony of Jesus Christ–Volume 2: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*. Camano Island, WA: Spirit and Truth, 2004.

Gentry, Kenneth L. *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation*. Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989.

_____. *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology*. 2nd and rev. ed. Tyler: TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1997.

_____. "A Preterist View of Revelation." In *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, ed. C. Marvin Pate, 37-92. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

_____. *The Beast of Revelation*. rev. ed. Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2002.

Gregg, Steve, ed. *Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary*. Nashville: Nelson, 1997.

Hanegraaff, Hank. *The Apocalypse Code*. Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2007.

Heater, Homer. "Do the Prophets Teach That Babylonia Will Be Rebuilt in the Eschaton?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (March 1998): 23-43.

Hislop, Alexander. *The Two Babylons; or, the Papal Worship Proved to Be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife*. 2nd American ed. Edinburgh: Wood, 1862. Reprint, New York: Loizeaux, 1959.

Hitchcock, Mark. *The Second Coming of Babylon*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003.

_____. "A Defense of the Domitianic Date of the Book of Revelation." Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2005.

Hitchcock, Mark, and Thomas Ice. *Breaking the Apocalypse Code*. Costa Mesa, CA: Word for Today, 2007.

Ice, Thomas. "The Great Tribulation Is Past: Rebuttal." In *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future? Two Evangelicals Debate the Question*, ed. Thomas Ice and Kenneth L. Gentry, 123-64. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999.

_____. "Has Bible Prophecy Already Been Fulfilled? (Part 2)." *Conservative Theological Journal* 4 (December 2000): 291-327.

Johnson, Alan F. "Revelation." In *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein et al., vol. 12, 399-603. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981.

Lang, G. H. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Select Studies*. London: Paternoster, 1948.

Larkin, Clarence. *The Book of Revelation*. Glenside, PA: Larkin, 1919.

Martínez, Florentino García, ed. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*. Translated by Wilfred G. E. Watson, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Morris, Henry. *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Revelation*. Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 1983.

Murphy, Frederick J. *Early Judaism: The Exile to the Time of Jesus*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002.

Newton, Benjamin Willis. *Babylon: Its Future, History, and Doom. With Remarks on the Future of Egypt and Other Eastern Countries*. 3rd ed. London: Wertheimer, 1890.

Pember, George Hawkins. *The Antichrist, Babylon, and the Coming of the Kingdom*. Miami Springs, FL: Schoettle, 1988.

Pink, Arthur. *The Antichrist*. Swengel, PA: Depot, 1923. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1988.

Preston, Don. *Who Is This Babylon?* rev. ed. Ardmore, OK: JaDon, 2006.

Prigent, Pierre. *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*. Translated by Wendy Pradels. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001.

Russell, J. Stuart. *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*. London: Unwin, 1887. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999.

Schaff, Philip. *History of the Christian Church*. Vol. 1. New York: Scribner, 1910. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.

Seiss, J. A. *The Apocalypse: A Series of Special Lectures on the Revelation of Jesus Christ, with Revised Text*. Philadelphia, PA: Approved, 1865. Reprint, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1977.

Smith, J. Ritchie. "The Date of the Apocalypse." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 45 (April–June 1888): 297-328.

Sproul, R. C. *The Last Days According to Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

Stuart, Moses. *A Commentary on the Apocalypse*. Vol. 2. London: Wiley and Putnam, 1845.

Terry, Milton S. *Biblical Apocalyptics: A Study of the Most Notable Revelations of God and of Christ*. New York: Eaton & Mains, 1898. Reprint, Grand Rapids, Baker, 1988.

Thomas, Robert L. *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary*, ed. Kenneth Barker. Chicago: Moody, 1992.

_____. *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary*. Chicago: Moody, 1995.

_____. *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002.

_____. "Theonomy and the Dating of Revelation." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 5 (Fall 1994): 186-202.

Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. 3rd and rev. ed. Chicago: Moody, 1966. Reprint, Chicago: Moody, 1971.

Walvoord, John F. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary*. Chicago: Moody, 1966.

_____. *The Nations in Prophecy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967.

_____. "Revelation." In *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 925-90. Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 1983.

Woods, Andy. "A Futurist Response to the Preterist Interpretation of Babylon in Revelation 17–18." Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2009.

Youngblood, Ronald F., F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, eds. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. and updated ed. Nashville: Nelson, 1985. Reprint, Nashville: Nelson, 1995.