

Martyr Vindication from Genesis to Revelation

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The introduction to the book of Revelation in this volume will be somewhat different from typical books of this type. Most who read this volume will already be aware that there are two schools of thought as to when Revelation was written: the *early date* is before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and the *late date* is taken to be in the mid-90s of the first century AD.

The approach in this volume will be to develop the theme of martyr vindication in Revelation as the climax of the theme from the first pages of the Bible to the last. From that theme we will understand inescapably that the book was written shortly before AD 70 and Jerusalem's destruction at the hands of the Roman General Titus.

The Bible Doctrine of Martyr Vindication

This essay examines a doctrine displayed in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation; yet, its far-reaching and remarkable consequences have hardly been affirmed or considered. The doctrine, simply stated, is that God takes into account the martyrdom of his faithful ones, and has taken steps to avenge their shed blood. This theme arises very early in the Bible, with a murder in the first family.

The Murder of Abel

In Genesis 4, we have the account of two of Adam's sons, Cain and Abel, making their sacrifices to God, who accepted faithful Abel's offering, but not Cain's. As a result, in 4.8, Cain slew his brother. When God asked Cain of Abel's whereabouts, he infamously lied and answered: "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" God's response (in 4.10) was:

And He said, What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground.

Of course, Abel's blood wasn't literally making any sound whatsoever. God merely pointed out that the unjust pouring out of Abel's blood demanded Cain's punishment. In Gen. 9.5-6, God based his de-

mand for capital punishment on avenging the blood of the one murdered when he said:

5 And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. 6 Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.

In my years of preaching and debating as a young minister, I recall in Spokane, Washington being invited to debate the subject of capital punishment by a highly regarded lady talk show host. Some prominent country-western singer had caused quite a stir in Eastern Washington by leading a protest against capital punishment at the state penitentiary at Walla Walla. Spokane was a very conservative city of about 200,000, and this lady's audience was demanding the radio station management have someone affirming capital punishment come in and debate the subject with her. Since I had an extremely popular live call-in radio program every weekday morning on the same station, the manager asked me to participate in the debate. This manager, a Jewish lady, was a good friend of mine, and we had discussed many Old Testament topics over the years, especially capital punishment, which she detested, although I constantly reminded her that it was in "her part of the Bible." Although she didn't agree with the Bible or me on the subject, she wanted me to defend it on this lady's program.

In the course of the debate, the listening audience was permitted to call in and question both speakers. At one point, someone called in to disagree with my use of this very passage as the basis of capital punishment and said, "Sam, I thought we had progressed beyond the torture stake, and the rack." I responded by saying, "Oh, I'm sorry if I've given anyone the impression that I believed in torturing murderers. God didn't say torture them, he said kill them!"

The lady on the other side of the issue was shocked at my statement and looked at me incredulously, saying, "You're serious about this, aren't you?" I replied, "I've never been more serious in my life!" and went ahead to point out that the basis for capital punishment was that man was created in the image of God. If man were just another animal, it was no big deal if he killed someone, but because God created man in his image, he meant for man to hold his fellow man's life as sacred, and that capital punishment was instituted out of respect for life!

For our purposes here, we merely note the beginning of the concept of avenging innocent blood, and especially that of God's martyrs.

In Mt. 23.29-36, just before Jesus walked out of the temple for the last time in his life, he mentions Abel in this context:

29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, 30 and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. 31 Wherefore ye witness to yourselves, that ye are sons of them that slew the prophets. 32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. 33 Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell? 34 Therefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: some of them shall ye kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: 35 that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar. 36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

Since Jesus mentioned Abel in his teaching concerning the vindication of martyrs, we began our study of this subject where he did, with the martyrdom of faithful Abel.

Martyr Vindication in the Song of Moses

We now want to notice an extremely important chapter with reference to the messiah's judgment of Israel, Deuteronomy 32, the Song of Moses. With the aid of several student friends, I've recently come to the conclusion that Deuteronomy 32 may indeed be the most important chapter of the Bible, yet hardly anyone reads it or appreciates the significance of it. I've taught the entire Old Testament through five or six times, yet previously I've missed the importance of this chapter. It's no exaggeration to say that Deuteronomy 32 is the basis of the teachings of the Old Testament prophets, as well as the teaching of John the Baptist, Jesus, and his apostles throughout the New Testament.

We began our study of God's foretelling of Old Covenant Israel's end from its beginning by noticing a characteristic of the true God versus idols. In Isa. 46:5-7, God compares himself with idols:

5 To whom would you liken Me, And make Me equal and compare Me, That we should be alike? 6 Those who lavish gold from the purse And weigh silver on the scale Hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; They bow down, indeed they worship it. 7 They lift it upon the shoulder and carry it; They set it in its place and it stands there. It does not move from its place. Though one may cry to it, it cannot answer; It cannot deliver him from his distress.

This is an accurate description of man-made gods. They can't talk, they can't walk, and since they can't stand on their own, they have to be nailed down so they won't fall over. In vv9-10, God further says:

9 Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, 10 *Declaring the end from the beginning* And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure;

Notice in particular that the true God is the one who can declare the end of a matter from its beginning. We now want to notice that God declares the end of Old Covenant Israel from its national beginning, particularly in Deuteronomy 32.

Just before Moses' death, after he led the first generation of Jews out of Egypt and through the wilderness of Sinai, he brought them to the border of their promised land. In Deuteronomy 28-30, he pronounces all the blessings Israel will receive if they remain faithful to God, and all the curses they will receive if they are unfaithful. In Dt. 31:19-21, God instructs Moses to write a song, the Song of Moses, and teach it to Israel:

19 Now therefore, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the sons of Israel; put it on their lips, in order that this song may be a witness for Me against the sons of Israel. 20 For when I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and are satisfied and be-

come prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and spurn Me and break My covenant. 21 Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants); for I know their intent which they are developing today, before I have brought them into the land which I swore.

In Dt. 32.5, Moses said, “They have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children, because of their defect; But are a perverse and crooked generation.”

This isn’t referring to the current generation on the verge of entering their promised land, but Israel’s last generation, as we’ll soon see. In Dt. 32.7, Moses said, “Remember the days of old, Consider the years of all generations. Ask your father, and he will inform you, Your elders, and they will tell you.” Again, this wasn’t speaking of Moses’ current generation, for Israel hadn’t even existed for many generations, and the nation as yet had no “days of old”. Moses foretold that would happen to the wicked and perverse generation at Old Covenant Israel’s end.

In Dt. 31.29, Moses told Israel:

For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands.

Moses tells them that punishments from God will befall them “in the latter days,” i.e., in their future, because of their involvement with false gods. This would include a variety of punishments, including the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. However, in Dt. 32.20-21, Moses becomes much more specific, foretelling the very end of the nation of Old Covenant Israel:

20 Then He said, I will hide My face from them, I will see what *their end* shall be; For they are a *perverse generation*, Sons in whom is no faithfulness. 21 They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will

make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation

God now foretells “the end” of Old Covenant Israel, that their last generation will be a perverse generation. Jesus, of course, called his generation of Jews an “unbelieving and perverse generation” in Mt. 16.4 and 17.17, and in the first gospel sermon, Peter called faithful Jews to “save yourselves from this perverse generation” (Ac. 2.40).

We can know that the generation of Jesus and Peter is the one under consideration in Deuteronomy 32 since Paul quotes Dt. 32.21 in Rom. 10.19 as justification for his taking the gospel to the Gentiles in an attempt to provoke the Jews to jealousy. This was in the early 60s AD, shortly before the end of Old Covenant Israel in AD 70.

Continuing in Dt. 32.28-29, we read:

28 They are a nation without sense, there is no discernment in them. 29 If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be! (NIV)

Thus, “the end” of Old Covenant Israel was foretold at their beginning in Sinai, verifying that the true God is faithfully called the one who foretells a matter’s end from its beginning, in this case, sixteen centuries before!

Deuteronomy 32 and Revelation

Dt. 32.30-33 gives an important key to interpreting the book of Revelation:

How could one chase a thousand, And two put ten thousand to flight, Unless their Rock had sold them, And the LORD had given them up? 31 Indeed their rock is not like our Rock, Even our enemies themselves judge this. 32 For their vine is from the vine of Sodom, And from the fields of Gomorrah; Their grapes are grapes of poison, Their clusters, bitter. 33 Their wine is the venom of serpents, And the deadly poison of cobras.

It’s interesting that in the Bible, God doesn’t call any city Sodom (besides the literal Sodom) besides Jerusalem, and it’s surprising how

many times she is called by that name. For example, in Isa. 1.9-10, Jerusalem is called Sodom:

9 Unless the LORD of hosts Had left us a few survivors,
We would be like Sodom, We would be like Gomorrah.
10 Hear the word of the LORD, You rulers of Sodom;
Give ear to the instruction of our God, You people of Gomorrah.

Likewise, Jer. 23.14 is another example of Jerusalem being referred to as Sodom and Gomorrah:

Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing:
The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood;
And they strengthen the hands of evildoers,
So that no one has turned back from his wickedness.
All of them have become to Me like Sodom,
And her inhabitants like Gomorrah.

Please see another example in Ezek. 16.47-48.

In Revelation, we find the theme of two cities: Babylon, the great harlot city which is destroyed, and New Jerusalem, which replaces it as the faithful wife of God. One might suspect that Babylon is Old Covenant Jerusalem since New Jerusalem replaces it, but we won't have to rely on suspicion. In Gal. 4.21ff, Paul gives the allegory of Hagar and Sara. These women represented two covenants (the Mosaic Covenant and Christ's new covenant), two peoples (old and new covenant Israel), and two cities (old and new covenant Jerusalem). Hagar represented "the Jerusalem that now is and is in bondage with her children" (v. 25), "but the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother" (v. 26). This is Paul's version of "the tale of two cities." In Heb. 12.18-23, written to Jewish Christians, the author contrasts two mountains (Sinai and Zion) and two cities (earthly and heavenly or Old and New Covenant Jerusalem). We see the same comparison in Revelation. In Rev. 11.8, we have:

8 And their dead bodies lie in the street of the great
(harlot—SGD) city, which spiritually is called Sodom
and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

If we know where the Lord was crucified, we know the identity of this religious harlot Sodom. It is Old Covenant Jerusalem. Babylon is spoken of again in Rev. 18.24:

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth (*ge*, lit., land—SGD).

Thus, Revelation has the great harlot, responsible for killing the prophets and saints, as the great city Babylon. Interpreters of Revelation speculate whether Babylon is literal Babylon in Iraq, or Rome. Neither of those cities slew God's Old Covenant prophets, but Old Covenant Jerusalem certainly did. In Lk. 13.33-34, Jesus said:

33 Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following: *for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.* 34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not!

Thus, in Revelation, Jerusalem was the harlot city that killed the prophets, and where Jesus was crucified.

Back to Deuteronomy 32

We conclude our side trip into Deuteronomy 32 and Revelation and return to our discussion of just Deuteronomy 32. In Dt. 32.34-36, we have Moses speaking of God's vengeance on Israel:

34 Is it not laid up in store with Me, Sealed up in My treasuries? 35 *Vengeance* is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them. 36 For the LORD will *vindicate* His people, And will have compassion on His servants; When He sees that their strength is gone, And there is none remaining, bond or free.

Notice that vengeance and vindication will take place at the same time. Both groups of people (the righteous and the wicked) will see the same event, the end of Old Covenant Israel (at the hands of the Romans in AD 70) and interpret it entirely differently. The wicked see cruel destruction; the righteous see their salvation from the wicked. This is not unique to their judgment. In the flood of Noah's time, the wicked and righteous again saw the same event entirely differently.

The wicked saw their destruction, while the same flood was the salvation of the righteous as the same water that destroyed the wicked carried the righteous to a new world order after the flood. This passage is alluded to in Hebrews 10:30-31 to describe a first century judgment of Old Covenant Israel.

Jesus speaks of this same vengeance of God on Old Covenant Israel in Lk. 21.20-24, when he says:

But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand. Then let them that are in Judaea flee unto the mountains; and let them that are in the midst of her depart out; and let not them that are in the country enter therein. For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress upon the land, and wrath unto this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

“All things that are written may be fulfilled” would certainly include the prophecy of God’s vengeance on Old Covenant Israel, as well as the vindication of the righteous and the taking of the gospel to the Gentiles.

Martyr Vindication in Isaiah 2-4

In Isa. 2.2, Isaiah foretells Old Covenant Israel’s *last days*:

Now it will come about that In *the last days*, The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it.

The last days are the last days of the Mosaic covenant. The Jews in Bible times (and now, if they don’t believe Jesus is the messiah) recognized two ages, the age of Moses, and the age of the messiah (Mt. 12.31-32, Lk. 20.27-35), and the age of the messiah has no end (Isa. 9.6-7, Lk. 1.33, Eph. 3.21) thus no “end times,” last days, last day, or last hour. The Mosaic age had all of those time elements. Notice all the

occurrences of “in that day” in 2.11-12 (a day of reckoning and a day of Jehovah), 17, 3.7, 18, and 4.1, 2 that link all of chapters 2-4 together. Then, in 2.12, Isaiah says, concerning the day of Jehovah:

For there shall be *a day of Jehovah* of hosts upon all that is proud and haughty, and upon all that is lifted up; and it shall be brought low; (ASV)

So there’s to be a day of Jehovah in Israel’s last days. In 2.19-21, Isaiah says:

19 And men will go into caves of the rocks, And into holes of the ground Before the terror of the LORD, And before the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble. 20 *In that day* men will cast away to the moles and the bats Their idols of silver and their idols of gold, Which they made for themselves to worship, 21 In order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs, Before the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble.

It’s astounding that Jesus quotes these verses in Lk. 23.28-31 and applies Isaiah’s teaching of the Day of Jehovah in Israel’s last days to the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem! Not only that, but the author of Hebrews quotes from them in Heb. 12.26 and gives them the same application. Finally, John quotes them in Rev. 6.16 and also applies them to the upcoming destruction of Babylon the harlot, where Jesus was crucified!

In Isa. 4.2-4, Isaiah says:

2 *In that day* [this is still on the day of the Lord in Old Covenant Israel’s last days–SGD] the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of *the survivors of Israel*. 3 And it will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem. 4 When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and *purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem* from her midst, by the spirit of *judgment* and the spirit of *burning*,

So Isaiah foretold the day of the Lord in Jesus' generation, where Jerusalem would be burned, her bloodguilt would be purged, the martyrs would be vindicated, and only the faithful would escape, just as Jesus himself had foretold in Matthew 24-25. On the spirit of judgment and burning, consider Heb. 10.27.

Martyr Vindication in Matthew 21.33-45 – Parable of the Vineyard

33 Hear another parable: There was a man that was a householder, who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. 34 And when the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive his fruits. 35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them in like manner. 37 But afterward he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. 38 But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance. 39 And they took him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40 *When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come*, what will he do unto those husbandmen? 41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons. 42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner; This was from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes? 43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. 44 And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken to pieces: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust. 45 And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, *they perceived that he spake of them* [emphasis mine—SGD].

Many times throughout the Old Testament, Israel was spoken of as God's vineyard. He specially prepared her, planted her, cared for her, yet in Jesus' time Old Covenant Israel had neglected God's vineyard. When God held them accountable by sending them his servants the prophets, the Jews mistreated and killed them. When God sent his son, they killed him. Jesus told this story and asked the Jews in his audience, "When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" and they judged themselves with their own mouths: "He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons," which is exactly what happened to the wicked Jews of Jesus' generation. The blood of all the martyrs from Abel on was vindicated in the destruction of Jerusalem, just as Jesus had promised.

He spoke of *them*, not just anyone, not us, not some theoretical people, but he spoke of *them*. *They* had killed the prophets. *They* were going to kill the son, Jesus himself. *They* will be miserably destroyed and the vineyard will be given to others, Gentiles.

Martyr Vindication at the Time of the Wedding Banquet – Matthew 22.1-14

1 And Jesus answered and spake again in parables unto them, saying, 2 The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, who made a marriage feast for his son, 3 and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the marriage feast: and they would not come. 4 Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have made ready my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come to the marriage feast. 5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his merchandise; 6 and the rest laid hold on his servants, and treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 *But the king was wroth; and he sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.* 8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they that were bidden were not worthy. 9 Go ye therefore unto the partings of the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage feast. 10 And those servants went out into the highways, and

gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was filled with guests. 11 But when the king came in to behold the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding-garment: 12 and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. 14 For many are called, but few chosen.

Notice that after the king vented his wrath and destroyed their city, he went right on with the wedding. This is what we see in Revelation 18-19. Chapter 18 describes the destruction of the harlot city, Old Covenant Jerusalem (Rev. 11.8 – where their Lord was crucified), and chapter 19 proceeds with the wedding feast, which took place at the destruction of Jerusalem.

Luke 13.33-35

33 Nevertheless I must go on my way to-day and to-morrow and the day following: *for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.* 34 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her!* how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not! 35 Behold, *your house is left unto you desolate:* and I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

We include this passage merely to strengthen the case that Jerusalem was the harlot city that was guilty of slaying the prophets.

Martyr Vindication in the Parable of the Unrelenting Widow – Lk. 18.1-7

1 And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint; 2 saying, There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, and regarded not man: 3 and there was a widow in that

city; and she came oft unto him, saying, *Avenge me of mine adversary.* 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5 yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming. 6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. 7 And *shall not God avenge his elect*, that cry to him day and night, and yet he is longsuffering over them?

So just like an unrighteous judge who had no regard for God nor man would avenge this lady, how much more would a righteous God avenge his elect, especially since he had promised to do so since the very beginning of Old Covenant Israel. He avenged the lady against her adversary.

Martyr Vindication in Mt. 23.29-39

29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, 30 and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the *blood of the prophets.* 31 Wherefore ye witness to yourselves, that ye are sons of them that slew the prophets. 32 *Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.* 33 Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell? 34 Therefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: some of them shall ye kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: 35 *that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar.* 36 Verily I say unto you, *All these things shall come upon this generation.* 37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. 39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see

me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

This text is significant because Jesus gives the time for the vindication of the martyrs. Moses had given it as the time of the perverse and crooked generation of Jews in their last days. Isaiah had said it would be at the day of Jehovah. Jesus says the same thing, “in his generation.”

Martyr Vindication in Luke 23.26-30

26 And when they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, and laid on him the cross, to bear it after Jesus. 27 And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. 28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. 29 For behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts that never gave suck. 30 *Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.*

In these verses, Jesus is quoting directly from Isa. 2.19, where Isaiah had foretold that in Israel's last days, on the day of Jehovah, God's terror would drive his disobedient people to this behavior:

And men shall go into the caves of the rocks, and into the holes of the earth, from before the terror of Jehovah, and from the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake mightily the earth.

Remarkably, the author of Hebrews quotes this same verse in 12.26 and applies it to the imminent destruction of Jerusalem, and John quotes it in Rev. 6.16, again in view of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem.

Martyr Vindication in I Corinthians 15

A very important passage on martyr vindication and the resurrection is found in I Cor. 15.29-34, as Paul deals with the subject of the

resurrection and the practice of some in baptism for the dead. Usually, our focus on the controversies about baptism for the dead detracts our notice from Paul's attention to martyr vindication and the resurrection.

Although we devote over a hundred pages to our discussion of I Corinthians 15 in the author's *Essays on Eschatology: An Introductory Overview to the Study of Last Things* (which the interested reader may want to consult), we want to just briefly mention Paul's teaching on martyr vindication and the resurrection.

Without bogging down on baptism for the dead, we notice first of all some in the church in Corinth were denying the resurrection of some, not all, of the dead. As we show in our major resurrection study, the Corinthians weren't denying the resurrection of Christ, nor their own resurrection. They were denying the resurrection of Old Covenant saints, as part of the major first century church problem, the friction between Jewish and Gentile Christians. This problem permeates nearly every chapter of I Corinthians.

Second, even though there is a practice in our time of baptism for the dead, vicarious baptism, practiced by the Mormons or Latter-Day Saints (which even contradicts their own *Book of Mormon!*), Paul probably isn't referring to a false practice of his day. That would be something like me opposing Roman Catholic teaching on the deity of Christ by saying, "Why, that can't possibly be correct because that would mean that our Jehovah's Witness friends would be wrong!"

Third, when Paul spoke of baptism for the dead, the word he used for "for" was *hyper*, the Greek preposition meaning *upon*, not "for the benefit of." Paul was speaking of baptism based *upon* a particular view of the dead: that they were going to be resurrected! If they weren't going to be, why in the world would someone be baptized based upon that view? It would be the stupidest thing in the world!

Paul and the other apostles taught and practiced baptism because of their view toward the dead, and that is that the dead would be raised. It's entirely possible that the baptism Paul refers to isn't baptism in water, but the apostles being immersed or overwhelmed in suffering. This makes sense because in verses 30-32, Paul delineated the physical suffering first-century preachers endured in behalf of those they were teaching. What would they accomplish if those they were suffering for would not be raised? In addition, Jesus foretold his own baptism in suffering (Lk. 12.50), as well as their suffering in behalf of the gospel (Mt. 10.23, 23.34).

Paul speaks of the suffering he's enduring for his preaching on the resurrection of the dead ones. He quotes from Isa. 22.12-13, where

Isaiah, announcing Judah's forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586 BC says:

12 Therefore in that day the Lord GOD of hosts, called you to weeping, to wailing, To shaving the head, and to wearing sackcloth. 13 Instead, there is gaiety and gladness, Killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep, Eating of meat and drinking of wine: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die."

So the people of Judah were doomed because God called them to repentance, but they refused and instead said, "Since we're going to die, let's eat and drink!" Paul affirms in I Corinthians 15 that that's what all ought to do if there's no resurrection of the dead ones.

Yet Paul didn't really believe that. He believed in the resurrection so much that he was suffering greatly at the hands of disobedient Jews because of his convictions, and was constantly in jeopardy of his life!

Paul refers to this physical persecution in Col. 1.24 in an amazing statement:

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church;

At first glance, it seems that Paul is saying that Christ didn't suffer sufficiently on the cross for the sins of mankind, yet Paul didn't believe or teach such a thing. He's referring to the afflictions that both he and Jesus suffered for the church, and affirms that Christ didn't do all of the suffering that was to take place, but that Paul and the other apostles were going to suffer for the benefit of the church.

While on earth, Jesus had taught in Mt. 23.29ff that his generation of Jews were going to vindicate the blood of all the prophets that had been shed from Abel to Zechariah, as well as for his own blood, and his apostles and prophets, and that it would be accomplished in his generation, at the destruction of Jerusalem. Of course, the blood of Christ and the Old Testament prophets had not been avenged by the middle of the first century, nor had it been by the time Paul wrote Colossians, and it is to that lack that Paul refers in the above passage. Paul refers to this in I Cor. 4.9-13 when he says:

9 For, I think, God hath set forth us the apostles *last of all*, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spec-

tacle unto the world, both to angels and men ... 11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; 12 and we toil, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; 13 being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, even until now.

Until Christ's apostles, prophets, and saints had been vindicated by the punishment of the rebellious Jews, their "cup" of unjustly shed blood would not be vindicated. This would take place at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and it is to this suffering Paul refers in I Cor. 15.29-32. How ridiculous for Paul and the other apostles to suffer so for preaching the gospel if there was no resurrection, for they were preaching it! Truly, if there was no resurrection, Paul and the rest were "of all men most miserable"! Thus in Paul's mind, there was an unbreakable link between the vindication of the apostolic martyrs and the resurrection. We'll have more to say about this in connection with John's teaching on the resurrection in Revelation 20.

The Martyrs of Hebrews 11.32-38

The book of Hebrews has much to say about Old Covenant Israel's last days, but in Heb. 11.32-38, martyrs are particularly referred to in view of the upcoming vengeance on Old Covenant Israel:

32 And what shall I more say? for the time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah; of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens. 35 Women received their dead by a (biological-SGD) resurrection: and others were *tortured*, not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better (better than biological-SGD) resurrection: 36 and others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 they were *stoned*, they were *sawn asunder*, they were tempted, they were *slain with the*

sword: they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth.

Clearly these are martyrs of God. As such, Jesus said they would be avenged in his generation, Mt. 23.33-36. Moses said they would be avenged at Old Covenant Israel's end by God's judgment on a perverse and crooked generation, Dt. 32.35-36. The author of Hebrews quoted those very verses from Moses in Heb. 10.30-31:

30 For we know him that said, *Vengeance belongeth unto me*, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

It is particularly interesting that v30 is quoted directly only from Dt. 32.35, and v31 is quoted only from Dt. 32.36. This is significant because Deuteronomy 32, the song of Moses, deals with the end of Old Covenant Israel.

As a matter of fact, consider Dt. 32.35-36, and notice the similarity of that passage with our current text:

35 Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For *the day of their calamity is near*, And the impending things are hastening upon them. 36 For the LORD will vindicate His people, And will have compassion on His servants; When He sees that their strength is gone, And there is none remaining, bond or free.

This “day of calamity” is “the day” the Christians in Hebrews could see approaching. It was the day when the righteous would be vindicated and the ungodly would be destroyed.

Martyr Vindication in II Thessalonians 1

In I Thes. 2.14, 16, Paul mentions the sufferings of the Thessalonian Christians:

14 For ye, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judaea in Christ Jesus: for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen,

even as they did of the Jews...16 - forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to *fill up their sins* always: but *the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost*.

Of course, the Judean Christians had suffered at the hands of the Jews even to the point of death, and the Thessalonians are suffering the same martyrdom. The Jews were thus “filling up their sins,” just as Jesus had told them in Mt. 23.32ff. Hence, Paul says that God’s wrath *has come* upon them to *the uttermost*, “the end” of Dt. 32.20.

Uttermost here is literally “end,” or “goal.” Because of the persecution that the rebellious last generation Old Covenant Jews are pouring out upon Christians, whether in Judea or in Macedonia, God’s wrath is about to be poured out on them.

When Paul says God’s wrath is come, he uses the perfect tense; literally, God’s wrath *has come*. God’s judgment is so close now, and so certain, that there’s no escape, no turning back.

The Thessalonian martyrs are also referred to in the famous I Thes. 4.14:

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

The phrase “in Jesus” at first glance makes us think that these are Christians, those who were baptized into Christ (Rom. 6.3, Gal. 3.27). However, the preposition translated “in” here is *dia*, meaning *through* Christ, or *because of* Christ. These weren’t dying because of disease or old age, but because of their faith in Christ. They were martyrs because of Christ, and some of them were not Christians, but would be martyred Jewish saints who lived both before and after Christ’s incarnation. Notice Heb. 11.24-26 which illustrates this concept:

24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; 25 choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 accounting the *reproach of Christ* greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward.

The author of Hebrews tells us that when Moses suffered for his faith in God, he was suffering the reproach of Christ, i.e., the same

kind of reproach Christ suffered because of his faithfulness. Likewise, in Heb. 10.32f, we see:

32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were enlightened, ye endured a great conflict of sufferings; 33 partly, being made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, becoming partakers with them that were so used.

So, because of Christ, the Jewish Christians in Hebrews were suffering the same reproaches that Moses did, *the reproaches of Christ*. Moses and other Old Covenant saints weren't Christians, but they were suffering *through* or *because* of Christ. Thus, the dead in Christ in this passage includes faithful Old Covenant saints as well as martyred Christians of the first century. In our chapters on I Corinthians 15, we see that Paul's teaching there was concerned with exactly these same groups. Of course, in Mt. 23.36, Jesus said that all these martyrs would be avenged when he came again in his generation. For further discussion of the eschatology of the Thessalonian letters, please see Appendix 5 of the author's *Essays on Eschatology: An Introductory Overview of the Study of Last Things*. In II Thes. 1.4, Paul speaks of the afflictions of the Thessalonians, including the same martyrs mentioned in I Thessalonians:

4 we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure;

“in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure”

An understanding of the word “afflictions” in Thessalonians will help us understand this passage. The Greek word is *thlipsis*, which means “pressure.” From the beginning of the church in Thessalonica, unbelieving Jews were putting pressure on these young Christians. Paul refers to their afflictions five times in these two letters. In I Thes. 3.4, Paul said, “For verily, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer *affliction*; even as it came to pass, and ye know.” Now, in II Thes. 1.5, we have:

5 which is a manifest token of the *righteous judgment of God*; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

“manifest token of the righteous judgment of God”

Paul says their endurance of this pressure from persecution is an obvious sign of something that’s coming, God’s judgment. It’s manifestly unjust for these godly people to suffer for their faith, and the time is coming when God will right and avenge every unrighted wrong.

6 if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to *recompense affliction to them that afflict you*, 7 and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire,

“if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you”

God’s righteous judgment will recompense, or pay back, pressure to the Jews that are putting pressure on the Thessalonians, and in the next phrase, Paul reveals that something else is going to be paid back.

“and to you that are afflicted rest with us”

It’s very important to notice that the word “rest” here is a noun, not a verb. God is going to pay back *affliction* to the afflictors, their Jewish persecutors, and he’s going to pay back *rest* to the Thessalonians.

The word “rest” here is from the Greek word *anesin*, which means *relief*, relief from the pressure. This word is where the name of the commercial painkiller Anacin comes from, yet the commercials for Roloids say, “How do you spell *relief*?” Thus, God is going to pay back affliction to the Jewish persecutors, and he’s going to pay back *relief* or *rest* to the afflicted Thessalonians. When did Jesus say this payback was going to occur? At his coming, in his generation, Mt. 23.33-36.

If the popular view of the return of Christ, that it’s at least 2000+ years in Paul’s future, is true, the Thessalonians never got their relief! If it was a righteous thing for them to get relief, what would it be if they didn’t get it? Paul isn’t thinking that the Thessalonians will get their relief by dying, but by Jesus coming and executing judgment on the Jews for their persecution of Christians. This coming and judgment is the very one that Jesus spoke of in Mt. 16.27-28, which would occur during the lifetime of his disciples, and in Matthew 24-25, where Jesus taught he would come and judge the Jews in his generation (Mt.

24.34), and at the end of the age (Mt. 24.3). This was the end of the Mosaic age, not the end of the Christian age, which has no end (Isa. 9.6, Lk. 1.33, Eph. 3.20), no last days, or no last day. The Mosaic age had all three of these, and it was coming about 18 years in the future of the Thessalonians.

The fiery nature of Jesus' judgment on Old Covenant Israel had been foretold by Malachi in Mal. 4.1: "For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." For a detailed discussion of this passage, please see "Appendix 1: Imminent Judgment in the Gospels." This was followed up on by John the Baptist in Mt. 3.10-11, where he spoke of the messiah's judgment in terms of "unquenchable fire." Jesus further taught this in Lk. 12.49, where he said he came to "cast fire upon the land," and the author of Hebrews, as we've just seen in Heb. 10.27, spoke of Christians in the vicinity of Jerusalem in the mid 60s AD who could see a day drawing nigh characterized by "a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries."

Martyr Vindication in Revelation

Since Revelation is from Jesus Christ, we shouldn't be surprised that Jesus' teaching in this book agrees with his teaching in the gospels and in the epistles of Jesus' apostles, since all this teaching is from the same source, Jesus.

Revelation 6.9-11

We're now ready to follow our theme of martyr vindication into the topic of this volume, the book of Revelation. We begin with Rev. 6.9:

9 And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:
10 and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not *judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth* (Gr. *ge*, land)? 11 And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they

should *rest yet for a little time*, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course.

This scene is of the utmost importance, for the rest of the book is the answer to the question of these martyrs. They are asking the same question the nagging widow asked in Luke 18: “*When will God avenge me of my adversary? When will you avenge our blood on them that dwell on the land (of Old Covenant Israel)?*” Moses in Deuteronomy 32 said it was the land of Israel that would bear the vengeance for the blood of the saints in Old Covenant Israel’s last days, at her *end*. Isaiah foretold the same thing, saying this vengeance would take place *on the day of Jehovah*. In Matthew 21, Jesus, speaking of the rebellious Jews of his day said, “He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen.” In Matthew 22, Jesus said that the king was wroth, destroyed their city, and went right on with the wedding! In Luke 13, Jesus said it was impossible that a prophet could perish outside Jerusalem, and that the Jewish temple was being left desolate. In Matthew 23, Jesus said that Jerusalem would fill up the measure of her sin and be held responsible for the blood of all the righteous from Abel to Zechariah *in his generation*! In Luke 23, on his way to Golgotha, Jesus told the wailing women to weep for themselves, that they would plead for the mountains to fall on them. The author of Hebrews spoke of the rebellious Jews in Hebrews 10, quoting from Deuteronomy 32, where God said of Old Covenant Israel in her last days, that “vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Revelation 11.18

Speculation abounds about the identity of these two faithful witnesses in this chapter. From verse 3, it is clear they are prophets. They are killed by the beast (v7). Their dead bodies lie in the street of the great city, spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified (v8), while the people that lived on the land rejoiced over their demise. God then resurrects them (v11) and judges their city (v13). Verse 18 describes the vindication of these two martyrs:

And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the

saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth (Gr. *ge*, land—SGD).

It really doesn't matter who these two prophets were or who they may have represented, does it? God knew them and avenged their martyrdom, just as he promised as far back as Deuteronomy 32, Isaiah 2-4, in the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 21-23, and in the apostolic epistles preceding Revelation.

Revelation 16.5ff

In Revelation 16, we have a series of bowls of wrath being poured out on “the land,” presumably the land of Old Covenant Israel, responsible for the deaths of the martyrs we've seen thus far. In vv 5-7, the third angel says as he pours out his bowl:

5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art thou, who art and who wast, thou Holy One, because thou didst thus judge: 6 *for they poured out the blood of the saints and the prophets, and blood hast thou given them to drink: they are worthy.* 7 And I heard the altar saying, Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

That this text is dealing with martyr vindication is obvious, as this angel proclaims God's righteousness in judging the land which was guilty of pouring out the blood of saints and prophets, and that it is thus deserving of having them to drink blood. Verse 7 reveals the altar, presumably the martyrs under the altar of 6.9-11 pronouncing their approval of God's judgments, again in response to their plea. Later verses in this chapter tell of further judgments coming on the great city, Jerusalem (where their Lord was crucified, 11.8).

Revelation 17.5-6

Chapter 17 begins by further describing the great harlot, and John says in 17.5-6:

5 and upon her forehead a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF

THE EARTH. 6 And I saw the woman drunken with the *blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder.

These words certainly describe Jerusalem, as seen in both the Old and New Testaments as the one responsible for the death of these faithful martyrs. The remainder of the chapter describes the judgments coming on the great harlot city (v18) in vindication of God's saints.

Revelation 18.20-21

This chapter begins with the angelic announcement of the fall of the great harlot city, v2:

2 And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, *Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird.*

In verses 9-10, the announcement continues:

9 And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning, 10 standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, *Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.*

Then in vv20-21, we have:

20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and *ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her.* 21 And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall *Babylon, the great city*, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all.

Again, this is clearly a passage concerning the vindication of the martyrs by God, and his judgments on the great harlot city, Jerusalem, as described from Deuteronomy onward.

Finally, in v24, we see that heaven's description of the magnitude of God's judgment on the great harlot city is just as Jesus had foretold it in Mt. 23.29-39:

24 And in her was found the *blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.*

Revelation 19.1-2

We next see heaven's reaction to Babylon's destruction described, verses 1-2:

1 After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God: 2 for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath *judged the great harlot*, her that corrupted the earth with her fornication, and *he hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.*

Later in this chapter (vv8ff), we see the marriage of the Lamb proceeding right on after the destruction of the harlot city, just as Jesus had foretold in Mt. 22.2-10:

2 The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, who made a marriage feast for his son, 3 and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the marriage feast: and they would not come. 4 Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have made ready my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come to the marriage feast. 5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his merchandise; 6 and the rest laid hold on his servants, and treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 *But the king was wroth; and he sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.* 8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they that were bidden were not worthy. 9 Go ye therefore unto the partings of the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage feast. 10 And those servants went out into the highways, and

gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and *the wedding was filled with guests*..

With the destruction of Old Covenant Jerusalem, chapter 21.2 reveals its replacement: New Jerusalem:

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

New Jerusalem was spoken of to the Hebrew Christians in Heb. 12.19-24 shortly before the destruction of Old Covenant Jerusalem:

19 For ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, 19 and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that no word more should be spoken unto them; 20 for they could not endure that which was enjoined, If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; 21 and so fearful was the appearance, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake: 22 but *ye are come unto mount Zion*, and unto the city of the living God, *the heavenly Jerusalem*, and to innumerable hosts of angels, 23 *to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven*, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel.

Notice that the author of Hebrews identifies the new heavenly Jerusalem as the universal church of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion on the Date of Writing of Revelation

From our study of the theme of martyr vindication from Genesis to Revelation, we see that Revelation was written while Old Covenant Jerusalem was still standing, as was its temple. Since that city and temple were completely destroyed by the Roman general Titus in 70AD, the book was certainly written shortly (1.1) before the destruc-

tion of Jerusalem. It fairly bristles with warnings of imminent judgment coming on Old Covenant Israel for its persecution of both Old and New Covenant saints, prophets, and apostles. Since it's obvious from the theme of martyr vindication on Old Covenant Jerusalem that Deuteronomy to Revelation is concerned with persecution of God's saints by Jerusalem, we need not concern ourselves primarily with persecution by Rome, whether it was under Nero for the early date or Domitian for the late date. Given that the book refers several times to the time of tribulation of the saints before Jerusalem's destruction as 1260 days, 42 months, and time (1 year), times (2 years), and half a time (half a year), and that historically, the length of the Roman war with Jerusalem lasted 3-1/2 years, John evidently saw the book in a vision at the time of the war. The terms John used to describe the duration of their tribulation are used only in Revelation and Daniel, where Daniel used them to describe the same tribulation for the same length of time.

Interestingly, Revelation wasn't the last New Testament book to be written. In Rev. 3.10, John speaks of "the fiery trial that is coming" on those saints:

Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the *hour of trial*, that hour *which is to come* upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth (Gr. *ge*, land).

John speaks of the hour of trial that is still future. However, in I Pet. 4.12, Peter refers to the same trial on the same saints (in Asia Minor) in these words:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the *fiery trial among you*, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you:

Since Peter refers to the trial as already occurring, evidently Peter's epistles were written after John wrote Revelation.

A Brief Review of the Late Date Based on Irenaeus' Testimony

We now briefly discuss the major argument for the late date of the writing of Revelation. Those who think the book was written in the 60s during the imperial reign of Nero in Rome tend to view the main sub-

ject to be the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman general Titus in 70 AD. Those viewing the book as written in the 90s during the imperial reign of Domitian tend to think the main subject to be the persecution of Christians by Rome, or the development of Roman Catholicism. The author was raised believing the late date, but now takes the position that Revelation was written at the earlier date. There are two lines of argumentation: Those taking the late date usually rely mostly on external evidence from “church fathers,” while those taking the early date rely mostly on internal evidence from the text of Revelation itself. We will now examine the external evidence for the late date.

The Testimony of Irenaeus for the Late Date of Writing

Apparently, the weightiest external evidence for the late date of writing Revelation is that of Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons (130-202 AD), and later a Roman Catholic saint, who was said to be a student of Polycarp (69-155 AD), who was said to be a disciple of the Apostle John, the universally accepted author of Revelation. Irenaeus related that as a young boy, he heard Polycarp as a young man speak of John and the Revelation, but he didn't write anything about it until fifty years later, in 180 AD, when he wrote in Greek. In 325, Eusebius quoted Irenaeus' statement in Latin, as Irenaeus' Greek testimony had not survived. It is well known that Irenaeus' statement about the time element in Revelation is indeterminate, i.e., it is not clear whether Irenaeus was saying that John was seen in Domitian's reign, or whether John's vision was seen in Domitian's reign. The quotation given by Eusebius is from Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*, Book V, Chapter 30, in paragraph 4. It concerns the identity of the beast of Rev. 13.18, whose number is 666. Irenaeus is discussing the risk of identifying the beast from this number, and declines to do so, lest he choose wrong and thereby teach something the Holy Spirit didn't tell John. Speaking of the beast as Antichrist, a term which doesn't even occur in Revelation, Irenaeus is quoted by Eusebius as saying:

We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision, For [it or he]

was seen not very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign.

First of all, notice that Irenaeus didn't witness the Apostle John's saying or writing anything. This is Eusebius' quotation of Irenaeus 145 years after he wrote it, which itself was 50 years after he claimed to have heard Polycarp. Second, Irenaeus referred to the beast of Revelation 13 as "Antichrist," when John didn't use "Antichrist" in the entire Revelation! Third, it is impossible to determine what Irenaeus said was "seen". Was "it" John or the vision? Grammatically, it can be either one. No man knows for sure. Fourth, Irenaeus was not even discussing when the Revelation was written, yet this is the principal piece of evidence for the late date of Revelation! Notice Burton Coffman's comment on the value of Irenaeus' testimony:

His (Eusebius') quotation (of Irenaeus' statement) does not even mention "the writing" of Revelation, but refers solely to the time when certain unnamed persons are alleged to have *seen* either the *apostle* or the *prophecy*, nobody knows which. This proves *nothing*. Besides that: If he meant the Apocalypse was seen, and if it had been originally composed in quotation, could not have reference to the Greek translation, if indeed it referred to the Revelation at all. There goes the whole case for the latter date," (*Commentary on Revelation*, Burton Coffman, p 4).

There are other problems with excessive reliance on Irenaeus for determining the date of Revelation. At the time Irenaeus wrote of his youthful conversation with Polycarp, he was the Bishop of Lyons, France, and later became a Roman Catholic saint. He upheld what became the Roman Catholic difference between Bishop and Elder, when the New Testament uses the terms interchangeably. For example, in Ac. 20.17-18, Luke says of Paul:

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to him the *elders* of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them...

So Paul is talking to the elders of the church from Ephesus. However, in this conversation, Paul tells these elders in verse 28:

Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you *bishops*, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.

In addition to calling these elders bishops, Paul refers to their role as shepherds when he uses the word “to feed,” the verb form of “shepherd.” Peter also uses the words elder and bishop interchangeably in I Pet. 5.1-2:

The *elders* among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: *Tend* the flock of God which is among you, *exercising the oversight*.

Thus Peter also recognizes that elders are *overseers* or *bishops*, as well as *shepherds*, those who tend sheep. Incidentally, our word “pastor” comes from a Latin translation of this word for shepherd. One wonders why a Hungarian word wasn’t used. Pastor is a term generally used for ministers, but in the New Testament, the term was used of the elders/bishops. Thus, Irenaeus’s distinction between elders and bishops was in error, as it is by Roman Catholicism, which misuses the terms the same way. Not only did Irenaeus make an unscriptural distinction between elder and bishop, but he also advocated the supremacy of the Roman bishop, a doctrine which ultimately led to the papacy. Irenaeus likewise upheld the perpetual virginity of Mary. Thus, he was an early developer of Mariolatry, arguing that since mankind’s death came through a woman (Eve), mankind’s salvation was to take place through a woman, Mary. On Christ, Irenaeus argued that Christ, to be able to understand and sympathize with the trials of the elderly, lived to the age of fifty, and he emphasized the incarnation of Christ to achieve this sympathy, rather than the crucifixion.

Note that most of us non-Catholics don’t believe a single one of these doctrines which led to full-blown Roman Catholicism, yet some are willing to accept without question Irenaeus’ hearsay quotation of Polycarp on the time of the writing of Revelation, when the quotation didn’t even concern the time of writing!

A Few Other Introductory Matters Briefly Considered

Revelation is John's version of the Olivet Discourse

Many readers of the author's previous material on the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24-25 will not be surprised to find that he views Revelation to be dealing with the same subject: the destruction of Jerusalem in avenging the blood of the martyred saints of God, in both the Old and New Testaments. If you're not familiar with the theme of imminent judgment in the New Testament, please see Appendices 1-3 in this volume where that theme is discussed, especially Appendix 2 which sets forth the author's views on the Olivet Discourse. Many times Bible students ask, "How come Matthew, Mark, and Luke all give accounts of the Olivet Discourse, but John doesn't in his gospel?" The answer is that John *does* give his account, not in the fourth gospel, but in Revelation.

Allusions to Old Testament Texts

Farrell Jenkins makes a significant observation about the nature of Revelation's language

This book speaks not the language of Paul, but the Old Testament prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel...The Book of Revelation is the most thoroughly Jewish in its language and imagery of any New Testament book. (Jenkins, Farrell *The Old Testament in The Book of Revelation* (Cogdill Foundation Publications, 1972, p. 22)

Consistent with that observation is that it's been reliably said that Revelation contains between 300-400 allusions (not quotations) to the Old Testament. More than half of those are references to the Old Testament prophets, and half of those are in Ezekiel and Daniel. It should be obvious that the Jewish Christians who were the first readers of this book had a background and understanding of those prophets, while most of us in this century do not. Thus, it behooves students now to develop a background in the prophets. For more discussion of this suggestion, please see Appendix 4, "The Importance of the Old Testament to New Testament Christians." There, you will see that the Old Testament should be seriously studied as it's inspired of God, and neglect-

ing it is ignoring three-fourths of the inspired literature on earth. Christians today should study the Old Testament in order to imitate first century Christians. The Old Testament is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Finally, Christians are commanded to take heed to the Old Testament scriptures. Christians who do so will receive a big payoff in their study of Revelation.

Our Approach in Brief

Since we've seen in this introduction that Revelation was written shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, our aim in this volume will be to understand the book as useful to first century Christians, i.e., concerning "things which must shortly come to pass," as John stated in the first verse of his book.. We will insist on interpreting as they would have, and then accept that interpretation for ourselves, or we won't be interpreting correctly.

This essay is excerpted from *Revelation Realized: Martyr Vindication from Genesis to Revelation* by Samuel G. Dawson, available from Amazon.com