

John's Writings (AD 60-64)

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- Jan. 13, 2013

INTRODUCTION:

A. Indeed, that is what the Preterist view of Bible Prophecy is all about: "we don't believe we're on the eve of destruction." We believe the endtime prophecies were already fulfilled in the first century in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

C. Let's ask God for His guidance in our study here --

Our Heavenly Father, the Ancient of Days. Because you made us, you know us infinitely better than we know ourselves. You understand our hearts and know that we praise you and thank you and exalt you for what you have done throughout history to redeem us from eternal separation from your Holy Presence. We again humble ourselves and ask for your guiding hand upon this nation who has forsaken You and Your Ways. Show us the error of our ways and lead us to repentance so that we will seek you with clean hands and a pure heart. Be with us especially now as we study the history of Your first century saints. Help us understand your Word better and better every day, so that we can apply it to our lives, and teach it to others. It is in the Name of the God-man Jesus, who alone is worthy, that we pray. Amen.

D. If you have benefited from these studies, we would encourage you to become partners with us in this teaching ministry, in order to share in all the good fruit that comes from our work. Those who contribute to International Preterist Association will receive some of our latest and greatest resources as our gift to you. Simply go to our website and click on the left sidebar button entitled "Make a Donation to IPA" where you can make a one-time donation or contribute monthly. Our website address is <www.preterist.org> Or you can go to PayPal and send it that way. Our PayPal address is: <preterist1@preterist.org>

E. In our study last time, we showed why I believe the canonical book of Hebrews was written as a corrective to the non-canonical epistle of Barnabas. We looked at the historical traditions about Barnabas and Mark, to see how these traditions might harmonize with the biblical narrative. We noticed that there was a good fit.

F. This session we will look at when the Apostle John most likely wrote his gospel, the three epistles, and the book of Revelation. These five books of John are the most challenging of all our NT writings to which to assign dates. The only reliable evidence we have for John and his writings come from the Bible, and there is not a lot of that, but what we do have is significant. None of the external traditions about John have any first-century eyewitness support, except from Papias. The rest of it comes from late second century and afterwards.

G. Quick Review of events that occurred during this timeframe (AD 62-64):

Apr 62 – Agrippa II appointed **Ananus II** to the High Priesthood. Agrippa II deprived Joseph Kami of the High Priesthood and gave it to Ananus II.

Apr 62 – Death of Festus - Albinus sent to Judea as procurator

Apr 62 – Before Albinus arrived, Ananus II illegally convened a Sanhedrin to condemn James and some of his companions, then killed James and evidently sent John into exile on Patmos. [*Antiq* 20:200 (20.9.1)] Many of the Jews protested this action, and complained to both Agrippa II and Albinus.

June 62 - John wrote Revelation (predicting the Neronic persecution)

July 62 – Albinus arrived and began to rule over Judea as Procurator. Albinus arrested many of the Sicarii during his rule over Judea (AD 62-63).

July 62 – Agrippa II deprived Ananus II of the High Priesthood (after 3 months)

July 62 – Agrippa II appointed **Jesus b. Damnaeus** to the High Priesthood

Oct 62 - Jesus the Farmer started pronouncing the woes on Jerusalem

Spring 63 - Paul wrote epistle of Hebrews (showing familiarity with Revelation)

Late 63 or Early 64 - Peter wrote first epistle (showing familiarity with Revelation)

Late 64 - Neronic Persecution, when Paul and Peter wrote their last two epistles

Here are the Biblical facts we know about John after Pentecost:

- Throughout the first four chapters of Acts we find John still in Jerusalem and closely associated with Peter.
- In Acts 8, when the gospel spread to the Samaritans, the Jerusalem church sent Peter and John down to Samaria
- According to Gal. 2:9, John was still there in Jerusalem, associated with Peter and James, at the time of the Jerusalem Council in AD 49.
- The next thing we hear about John is that he was exiled (from Palestine evidently) and sent to the island of Patmos off the coast of Turkey. This implies that John stayed in Jerusalem all the way from Pentecost to his exile in AD 62. He would probably have been in his early 50's by the time he was exiled.
- Matt 20 and Mark 10 - Jesus' prediction that James and John would both drink the same cup of martyrdom that Jesus drank, implying that both of them would die before the Second Coming.
- John 21:23 -- a rumor circulated about John that he would not die (meaning that he would remain alive until the Parousia, at which time his body would be changed from mortal to immortal without experiencing physical death, and then be caught up to be with Christ). However, John disputed that rumor and said that Jesus gave him no guarantee that he would live and remain until the Parousia. Jesus only told Peter that it was none of Peter's business what was going to happen to John. The reason John disputed it, is probably because he remembered the prophecy of Jesus about both he and his brother James drinking the cup of martyrdom.

Here are the traditions about John:

- There are some traditions coming from the late second century about what John supposedly did, experienced, and suffered in Ephesus after he was released from Patmos in the mid-90's. They appear to be somewhat far-fetched, since it would

mean that John was in his mid-80's by the time he wrote the book of Revelation in AD 96, and approaching ninety years old by the time he was released to dwell in Ephesus. Those stories about him on foot chasing down a wayward disciple, are hard enough to believe about a fifty-year-old man in AD 63. It is far more difficult to believe he did those things at the ripe old age of 80.

- According to one story, when John entered the bath house on one occasion, he found Cerinthus the heretic inside, and immediately fled the scene (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, iii.3, 4): *"There are also those who heard from him that John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, "Let us flee, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within."*
- The tradition about him not being harmed by being boiled alive in hot oil, are somewhat more credible, since that is the kind of miracle that Mark 16 talks about: "The Apostle **John** was first plunged, unhurt, into boiling **oil**, and thence sent to his island-exile!" This could have happened in Judea before his exile, possibly at the time of his arrest with James. The Jews may have tried to kill him there by these means, and when that failed, they sent him to Patmos.
- If you would like to read a summary of all those traditions, Philip Schaff has them listed in volume one of his eight-volume work entitled, *History of the Christian Church*. All of those later traditions about John may have a germ of truth in them, but their date of occurrence has been mishandled by the late second century writers. This becomes much more evident when we look at the earlier traditions which futurists have ignored and glossed over and tried to sweep under the carpet.
- The earliest tradition we have, and seemingly the most reliable, comes from **Papias**, the early second century Christian writer, who wrote about 50 years before Irenaeus (late second century - 180).
- Papias says that John was killed by the Jews, just like his brother James was.
- Furthermore, Papias backed up his claim by pointing straight at the Biblical statements of Jesus in Matthew 20 and Mark 10.

Matt 20:22-23 --

"drink THE CUP THAT I AM ABOUT TO DRINK"

"MY CUP you [both] shall drink"

Mark 10:38-39 --

"drink THE CUP THAT I DRINK"

"be baptized with THE BAPTISM with which I AM BAPTIZED"

"THE CUP THAT I DRINK you [both] shall drink"

"you [both] shall be baptized with THE BAPTISM with which I AM BAPTIZED"

- Notice what PAPIAS says here about the death of John:

Pap. 5:5 Papias says in his second book that John the Theologian and James his brother were **killed by Jews**.

Pap. 6:3 For Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis, who had seen him with his own eyes, claims in the second book of the Sayings of the Lord that **John was killed**

by Jews, thus clearly fulfilling, together with his brother, Christ's prophecy concerning them and their own confession and agreement about this.

Pap. 6:4 For when the Lord said to them, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?" and they eagerly assented and agreed, he said: "You will drink my cup and will be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized."

Pap. 6:5 And this is to be expected, for it is impossible for God to lie.

Pap. 6:6 [Eusebius said later] Moreover the encyclopedic Origen also affirms in his interpretation of the Gospel according to Matthew that John was martyred, indicating that he had learned this from the successors of the apostles [i.e., probably referring to Papias].

- Papias claimed that John was killed by the Jews, evidently at a time when they still had the ability and opportunity to do so. This would point to the Neronic persecution (AD 64), until it was cut short by the outbreak of the Jewish revolt (AD 66). It would not have been easy for them to do much against Christians after the war began, and especially not after the war ended.
- The Jews had no political or judicial power to kill anyone after 70. It clearly points to a time before 70 when the Jews would have had the authority, opportunity, and means by which to do it. The Neronic persecution fits that description well, since that is when the Jews were in their most powerful position against the Christians.
- As we look at the Biblical evidence in Matthew 20, Mark 10, and John 21, we will notice that it points unambiguously toward the conclusion that Apostle John must have died in the Neronic persecution before the Parousia.
- The death of John before AD 70 would absolutely clinch the pre-70 date of all the Johannine writings. And it would completely negate all the other objections that futurists have raised against the preterist view using John's supposed longevity beyond AD 70.
- I need to note here that I have changed my position regarding the reason why John was no longer around after AD 70. In my rapture book, I took the position that John was not around after AD 70 because he was raptured. Those who were raptured did not experience physical death, but were simply CHANGED into their new immortal bodies as they were caught up to be with Christ in the unseen spiritual realm. Thus, if John was still alive at the time of the Parousia, he would not have died (experienced the death of his physical body). He would simply have been changed and snatched away to be with Christ. However, that is no longer the position I hold in regard to John.
- My settled position now is that John was no longer around after AD 70 because he was killed in the Neronic persecution (AD 64), not because he was raptured. John suffered martyrdom before the Parousia and did not live and remain until the Parousia, nor afterwards. Therefore, he was not raptured. It was the words of Papias and other later church fathers which alerted me to the probability that John suffered martyrdom before the Parousia. Papias pointed to Matthew 20 and Mark 10. These two texts are far more convincing than his tradition, because they come from infallible inspired Scripture.

Date of John's Gospel (AD 60-62)

AD 60-62 – Gospel of John -- Mark may have learned the story about Peter running to the tomb from Peter before Mark went to Rome, and John may have heard that story and decided to tell the rest of the story in his own version of the gospel, which was written while Paul was either in prison in Caesarea, or on his way to Rome.

It was written about the time of Paul's journey to Rome, or shortly afterwards during Paul's first year of imprisonment. Since I think John was sent to Patmos in the Spring of AD 62, I place the writing of his gospel in that two year period between Paul's voyage to Rome (Fall 60) and John's exile to Patmos (April 62). The book of Revelation was evidently written sometime very soon after this, after April 62 and before July 64 when some of the signs predicted in Revelation began to occur (e.g., the Neronic persecution).

The Gospel of John was definitely written before his exile to Patmos. He would have written it at a time when the gospel was still being fervently preached, while there was still a need for such gospel writings, and while it was still safe to send such documents out to the churches (i.e., definitely before the Neronic persecution in AD 64). Eusebius places its writing not long after the other three gospels, because John had seen them and noticed that they did not cover some of the earlier history of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry before John was imprisoned, plus some other details about his role as an eyewitness at the tomb of Jesus on resurrection morning, which the other gospel accounts did not mention.

Both Luke and John seem to draw material from Matthew and Mark. But Luke does not borrow any of the exclusive material in John's gospel. However, there is one parallel between Luke and John which hints at John being influenced by Luke's version of the story (Lk. 24:9-12 and Jn. 20:2-10). So this would suggest that John's gospel was probably written after he had seen Matthew and Mark's less-detailed accounts of that story, and after hearing Peter tell his side of the story to Luke (i.e., during the time Luke was in Jerusalem doing his research while Paul was in prison in nearby Caesarea, AD 58-60, before Luke and Paul went to Rome). While Luke was there in Jerusalem gathering his research for his gospel, he could easily have collaborated with both Peter and John and heard this story from Peter, which had not been recorded in Matthew and Mark. John probably heard Peter's side of the story, and decided tell the rest of the story in his own gospel account. John may have already noticed the briefer accounts in Matthew and Mark, and already planned to write a fuller account from his own perspective. Luke could have known about that, and decided to let John tell his own story. Luke does mention Peter running to the tomb, which neither Matthew or Mark mention. So, Luke was familiar with the story that John was about to tell in his gospel. This would date John as early as the Fall of AD 60, just as Paul was leaving on his voyage to Rome, or as late as early 62 before John was exiled to Patmos.

An analysis of A. T. Robertson's *Harmony of the Gospels* (which includes all four gospels) is what pushed me in this direction, since the gospel of Luke does not show much evidence of drawing its material from the gospel of John. There is only one story which is found both in Luke and John (but not in Matthew or Mark) -- Peter and John running to the empty tomb (Lk. 24:9-12 and Jn. 20:2-10). After analysis, it seems that either of the two writers (Luke and John) could have been influenced by the other. Luke's account does not mention John running to the tomb with Peter. John's account is the fuller account and mentions John's role in this story along with Peter. However, Luke could have learned about this story directly from Peter, independently of the gospel of John. Or, he could have heard about John's side of the story, and intentionally left it out of his gospel, so that John could include it in his own gospel.

I wanted to mention the importance of these kinds of comparison studies of the four gospels. It is very revealing, especially in regard to determining the dates and sequence of writing of each of them. If you are interested in historical reconstruction, this would be a good training exercise for you. Try to date John's writings!

It seems to me that John was aware of Luke's intentions to mention Peter's side of the story without John's role being mentioned, and therefore decided to tell the rest of the story from his own perspective. There is every reason to believe that John, being aware of the sketchy accounts of Matthew and Mark, would want to fill in the details and include his own role in that story. Luke's account of this was obviously not drawn from Matthew or Mark (since they don't include it), so it may have been one of those stories that Luke had heard in his interactions with Peter, and Peter simply failed to mention John's running to the tomb alongside of him. Or, Luke simply decided to let John tell the rest of the story in his own gospel.

Eusebius explains the order of composition of the four gospels, and the reasons behind John's differences (Eusebius *Eccl. Hist.* Bk. 3, Ch. 24, Sect. 6-13).

3Euseb. 24:6 For Matthew, who had at first preached to the Hebrews, when he was about to go to other peoples, committed his Gospel to writing in his native tongue, and thus compensated those whom he was obliged to leave for the loss of his presence.

3Euseb. 24:7 And when Mark and Luke had already published their Gospels, they say that John, who had employed all his time in proclaiming the Gospel orally, finally proceeded to write for the following reason. The three Gospels already mentioned having come into the hands of all and into his own too, they say that he accepted them and bore witness to their truthfulness; but that there was lacking in them an account of the deeds done by Christ at the beginning of his ministry.

3Euseb. 24:8 And this indeed is true. For it is evident that the three evangelists recorded only the deeds done by the Savior for one year after the imprisonment of John the Baptist, and indicated this in the beginning of their account.

3Euseb. 24:9 For Matthew, after the forty days' fast and the temptation which followed it, indicates the chronology of his work when he says: "Now when he heard that John was delivered up he withdrew from Judea into Galilee."

3Euseb. 24:10 Mark likewise says: "Now after that John was delivered up Jesus came into Galilee." And Luke, before commencing his account of the deeds of Jesus,

similarly marks the time, when he says that Herod, “adding to all the evil deeds which he had done, shut up John in prison.”

3Euseb. 24:11 They say, therefore, that the apostle John, being asked to do it for this reason, gave in his Gospel an account of the period which had been omitted by the earlier evangelists, and of the deeds done by the Savior during that period; that is, of those which were done before the imprisonment of the Baptist. And this is indicated by him, they say, in the following words: “This beginning of miracles did Jesus”; and again when he refers to the Baptist, in the midst of the deeds of Jesus, as still baptizing in Aenon near Salim; where he states the matter clearly in the words: “For John was not yet cast into prison.”

3Euseb. 24:12 John accordingly, in his Gospel, records the deeds of Christ which were performed before the Baptist was cast into prison, but the other three evangelists mention the events which happened after that time.

3Euseb. 24:13 One who understands this can no longer think that the Gospels are at variance with one another, inasmuch as the Gospel according to John contains the first acts of Christ, while the others give an account of the latter part of his life. And the genealogy of our Savior according to the flesh John quite naturally omitted, because it had been already given by Matthew and Luke, and began with the doctrine of his divinity, which had, as it were, been reserved for him, as their superior, by the divine Spirit.

This means that John’s gospel could have been written just before or about the same time as Luke’s (i.e., about AD 60 when Paul was preparing to go to Rome, or had already left). The upper limit on the composition of John’s gospel has to be AD 62, when I believe John was arrested and exiled to Patmos. His gospel would have been finished before the exile (AD 62), while the book of Revelation was obviously written during the exile (late 62).

One other quick note about the **authorship of the fourth gospel**, that we will not have time to cover here: Some of you may not be aware of it, but there are some Christians who believe the fourth gospel was not written by the Apostle John. They think it was written by **Lazarus**. However, by comparing all four gospels and their historical narratives about the Last Supper, the trial and crucifixion, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus, it is easy to see that the author could not have been Lazarus. I have written a four-page PDF which provides the evidence to prove that John was the author of the fourth gospel. If you would like to have that PDF, simply email me and request it. The title of it is "Lazarus NOT the Author." Those of you who are already on my PDF list will automatically receive it.

Date of Revelation (AD 62)

Summer 62 -- Book of Revelation -- This is the easiest one of all of John's writings to date, since it is connected with his exile to Patmos which most likely occurred in the Spring of AD 62 when Ananus II "arrested James and some of his companions" according to Josephus. John wrote it right after he arrived on the island of Patmos before his release. It is quite possible that he was released a few months after he arrived, since Ananus II was deposed from the High Priesthood soon after he had

killed James and exiled John. This expulsion of Ananus II from the High Priesthood, because of his illegal actions against James and John, would have been legal grounds for getting John released from Patmos. However, as long as Ananus II was still alive (until AD 68), John could not have returned to Jerusalem. But this would not have prevented John from being released from Patmos to live in nearby Ephesus, as long as he remained outside Palestine.

The Apocalypse was most likely written sometime between John's arrival on Patmos in the late Spring or early Summer of 62 and the Neronian persecution in late 64 when he was most likely killed. My best guess is that Revelation was written in late 62 soon after John had arrived on Patmos (Summer 62), nine months before Paul was released from his first imprisonment (Spring 63). That would explain how both Peter and Paul were seemingly familiar with the contents of the Apocalypse when they wrote their epistles (1 Peter and Hebrews) in mid-AD 63.

An AD 62 date for the Apocalypse would also mean that the seven churches had received their warning to repent by late 62 or early 63, over a year before Paul was arrested the second time and wrote his second epistle to Timothy (AD 64), in which he stated that "all who are in Asia [i.e., evidently including the seven churches] had turned away from him" (2 Tim. 1:15). It appears that John's warning to the seven churches in Asia (AD 62) went mostly unheeded.

It is no surprise, therefore, that those churches were devastated in the Neronian persecution. They were close enough to Rome, so that word from Rome about the Neronian persecution (in late AD 64) would have reached them quickly, and the magistrates of those seven cities would have been compelled to round up their Christians and kill them. The non-Christian Jews would have informed the Roman authorities and made sure that the Christians were eliminated.

Some of the Christians in those seven churches may have apostatized, and went back to Judaism (if they were Jewish) or to paganism. It was probably these apostates that Paul made reference to in Second Timothy. Those few who kept the faith would have been killed about the same time Paul, John, and Peter were killed in the Neronian persecution (late AD 64). Two years after Paul complained about the Asian Christians turning away from him, Vespasian brought his troops from Greece (in AD 66) across the Hellespont and traveled the trade route through Asia (where the seven churches were) on his way to Antioch. Any Jews (including Jewish Christians who had apostatized and returned to the synagogue) that Vespasian would have encountered along the way in Asia would have been killed or enslaved, assuming that the non-Jewish residents of those cities had spared them up to that point. But there is every reason to believe that by the time Vespasian came through there, the non-Jews would have already killed or evicted their Jewish residents, including any apostate Christians who had defected back to the synagogue.

Since most of the NT writings (especially Acts) were already written before John was exiled, it is not surprising that they do not mention anything about John being on the island of Patmos, probably also for security reasons. It wasn't safe to be associated with Roman prisoners, especially after the Neronian persecution broke out in the summer of AD 64. So if any of the NT writings were written after John was exiled to Patmos, they would be putting themselves at risk by mentioning anything about his exile and thus connecting themselves with a condemned man.

One objection to the early date of the book of Revelation focuses on Polycarp's statement that the church in Smyrna (Asia) was not acquainted with apostle Paul at the time Paul wrote his second letter to Corinth (August 57) in which he bragged about the generous contributions of the Macedonians (AD 57). Late-daters of the book of Revelation use this statement of Polycarp to suggest that the church in Smyrna was not even in existence until after AD 70. But that is not what Polycarp says. He simply said that the church in Smyrna (which was obviously in existence at that time) was not founded by Paul and therefore not personally acquainted with him. Like several other churches (e.g., Laodicea, Colossae, Cyprus, Cyrene, Antioch, and others), the church in Smyrna had been started by someone other than Paul. But they were certainly in existence at the time Paul wrote to the Corinthians (August 57). Paul was probably not wanting to intrude on someone else's ministry (cf. 2 Cor. 10:13-16; Rom. 15:18-28), or simply had not had the opportunity to visit them yet. There is also the possibility that Apostle John (or some of his disciples) might have had something to do with the founding of the Smyrna church, since Polycarp claims to have been taught by some of John's disciples. Or it could have been founded by some of the Jews from Asia who were converted on the first Pentecost (see Acts 2:9). We do not know who founded the church at Smyrna, but we do know that it was in existence before Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians (August 57). See Ken Gentry's discussion of this late-date objection in his book, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, pp. 322-326.

It is also possible that Apostle John had visited the churches of Asia after Paul was arrested and sent to Rome in AD 60 (or earlier). John might then have been arrested there in Ephesus and sent in exile to nearby Patmos. This would explain a lot of the traditions we have about the various activities of John in Ephesus. It would not change the date of the book of Revelation, since it had to be written before Paul released the book of Hebrews in early AD 63, and before Peter wrote his two epistles in AD 63-64. This places the writing of the Apocalypse in AD 62 or before.

One of the most compelling arguments for the early date is found in the idea that John suffered martyrdom in the Neronian persecution (AD 64) before the Parousia (AD 66). If he died in AD 64, then the book of Revelation must have been written before his death in AD 64. In Matthew 20:20-23 and Mark 10:35-40, the story is recorded about the mother of the two sons of Zebedee (James and John) asking Jesus to place her two sons on His right and left when He came into his Kingdom Glory. Jesus asked **both** of them if they were able to drink the cup of martyrdom that he was about to drink. They **both** replied that they were able. Then Jesus said to **both** of them (James and John) that they would **both** drink the cup of martyrdom. This means **both** James and John would die before Christ returned. We know that James was killed by Herod Agrippa I in AD 44 (Acts 12:2). But when was John killed? In the last chapter of John's gospel he negates the rumor that was circulating about his remaining alive until the rapture and thus escaping the experience of physical death (John 21:20-23). He evidently remembered what Jesus had said to him (Matt. 20 and Mk. 10) and the death of his brother James (Acts 12:2), so he negates the rumor that he would remain alive until Christ returned to receive them to Himself (John 14:3). If we place the Parousia in AD 66 when His angelic armies were seen in the skies above Israel, it means John would have died sometime between his exile to Patmos (AD 62) and the

Parousia (AD 66). Can we be more precise? I think we can. The island of Patmos was a Roman penal colony. Since John was placed under Roman guard on Patmos in AD 62, he could not have been released until either Annas II died (Feb 68) or Nero died (June 68). Both of those dates would have been long after the Neronic persecution (AD 64) and the Parousia (AD 66). So in order for John to have died before the Parousia like Jesus said he would, it seems most likely that he would have been killed by his Roman captors on the island of Patmos (or in Ephesus, if he had been released from Patmos), soon after Nero began the persecution in July or August 64. Paul was probably arrested in Troas on his way to Nicopolis for the winter (Fall of AD 64). Because Paul was a Roman citizen, he would have been taken to Rome for beheading. However, John was not a Roman citizen, and would have been killed right there in Patmos or Ephesus, wherever he was at the time the news came from Rome about the Neronic persecution. That means news of the Neronic persecution had reached the coast of Turkey by the Fall of AD 64. If John was killed on the island of Patmos during the Neronic persecution, his body may have been taken back to Ephesus for burial, which was less than fifty miles from the coast of Turkey. That may be the source of the confused tradition that John lived in Ephesus. There are also traditions that suggest Mary the mother of Jesus, whom Jesus charged John to care for (at the Cross) may have moved to Ephesus to be near John while he was on Patmos. If he was released from Patmos, that would explain why he settled in Ephesus afterwards. So if John died in the Neronic persecution in late 64, the book of Revelation must have been written before that, some time between late AD 62 and late 64. I place it in mid-to-late AD 62).

Regarding John's release from exile on Patmos, there are a couple of possibilities. First, since Ananus II, the High Priest who probably exiled him (in April 62), was removed from office shortly afterwards (July 62), it is certainly possible that Agrippa II or Albinus may have released John from Patmos. It is also possible that after Paul was released (March 63) through the help of Apollos and Zenas the lawyer, that they were then sent to Patmos to secure John's release.

Another argument for the early date of Revelation is Peter's mention of "Babylon" in 1 Pet. 5:13, which implies that Peter had read the book of Revelation before he wrote his first epistle in AD 63-64. The same may be implied by Paul's references to the Heavenly City, New Jerusalem, and unshakable new heavens and earth in his epistle to the Hebrews which was written just before he was released from his first Roman imprisonment (March AD 63). These references to Babylon and the New Jerusalem do not prove that Paul and Peter had seen the book of Revelation by the time they wrote in March 63 and April 64 respectively, but they do suggest at the very least that these things were known to Paul and Peter by this time, either by direct revelation to them at the same time John had received it, or by reading the book of Revelation. If Paul was aware of the book of Revelation when he wrote Hebrews, then that would allow for the writing of Revelation as early as late AD 62 a few months after John arrived on Patmos. If Paul and Peter merely received an independent revelation of these things at the same time John did, then that would allow the writing of Revelation anytime before mid-63. In any case, it had to have been written before the Neronian persecution broke out in late AD 64, when Peter, Paul and John would have been killed.

These references to Babylon and the New Heavens and Earth do not prove that Paul and Peter had seen the book of Revelation by the time they wrote their epistles in AD 63-64, but they do suggest at the very least that these things were known to Paul and Peter by this time, either by direct revelation to them at the same time John had received it, or by reading the book of Revelation. What are the chances that these things could be mentioned in three separate epistles, using the same kind of description as we find in Revelation, without Peter and Paul having read or known about the statements in Revelation, and without them having already been revealed to John? And if Peter and Paul had already received independent revelations about this before AD 70, why would John need to have it all revealed to him again after AD 70? Why didn't Paul and Peter just give us all the details in their epistles? The obvious answer to that is because John had already given those details in the book of Revelation which was written before Paul and Peter wrote. Paul and Peter had seen the Apocalypse and did not need to give the details. By alluding to it in their three epistles, they were showing not only that they were aware of John's Apocalypse, but were in full agreement with it. It was Peter's way of putting his stamp of canonical approval on the Apocalypse.

Notice also the similarity between Paul's statements in Heb. 13:13-14 ("Let us go out to Him outside the camp") and John's statements in Rev. 18:4 ("Come out of her my people"). Paul was evidently aware of the warning in Revelation to get out of Jerusalem before the End came "in a very little while" (Heb. 10:37). It is no coincidence that Paul says this right after he had discussed several other ideas that appear to have been likewise drawn from the book of Revelation (Heb. ch. 12). This again implies that Revelation was written and in circulation before Paul wrote his epistle to the Hebrew Christians (i.e., before March AD 63).

Here we have three separate witnesses to the material that is found in Revelation, all three of which were written in AD 63-64 (well over six years before the destruction of Jerusalem). If Paul was aware of the book of Revelation when he wrote Hebrews, then that would allow for the writing of Revelation as early as late AD 62 a few months after John arrived on Patmos. If Paul and Peter merely received an independent revelation of these things at the same time John did, then that would allow the writing of Revelation anytime before the Neronian persecution broke out in late AD 64, when Peter, Paul and John would have been killed. The book of Revelation predicts the Neronic persecution and all the martyrs that went to heaven as a result of that "great tribulation" (Rev. 7:14). This for sure dates the book before the Neronic persecution in late AD 64.

Many have asked me about the **seven churches of Asia** that are mentioned in Rev. 2-3. What happened to them? Since the book of Revelation (written in AD 62) warned them to repent, or else they would be destroyed soon, it seems that they must have been destroyed soon after the book was written. The event which caused their candlesticks to be removed was probably the Neronic persecution (AD 64), which evidently spread quickly to the cities on the Mediterranean rim. This indeed occurred not long after the book was written. This again points to the book of Revelation being written and in circulation before the outbreak of the Neronic persecution in late AD 64. We will deal more with this when we get to **Sept AD 64** ("**What happened to the seven churches of Asia?**").

Now we need to look at when the three epistles of John were written (AD 61 or AD 63).

Date of John's Three Epistles (AD 63)

- **1 John -- Two possible dates:** (1) Written from Jerusalem before he was exiled to Patmos (AD 61), or (2) Written from Ephesus after he was released from Patmos (AD 63). This book opens up much like his gospel, clearly directed against the Gnostics who were teaching Docetism and Dualism. There is a subtle hint in **1 Jn 2:19** that can be interpreted either way for the pre-exile or post-exile dates. John talks about some antichrists who had gone out from "them" (the church where John was). This certainly could apply to the church in Jerusalem. But it could also apply to the church in Ephesus. We know that Gnostics were in Ephesus, and that they were spreading their Gnostic teaching all over the area. This kind of strong language against the Gnostics would easily fit a residence of John right there in Ephesus, because it betrays a first-hand knowledge of what was going on in Ephesus and the other nearby cities of the Lycos valley. But John could have heard about the situation in Ephesus while he was still in Jerusalem, and could have written to those churches from his residence in Jerusalem. The whole anti-Gnostic tone of the letter implies it was sent TO a whole group of churches, possibly including Greece, Macedonia, Turkey, Cyprus and Syria. John would not be writing these things ONLY to the churches in Asia Minor if he was living right there in the area. He would have simply visited those nearby churches, or had their leaders come visit him in Ephesus. So, if John wrote this letter from Ephesus after he was released from imprisonment on Patmos, it would have been written as a general encyclical for all the churches in Greece, Macedonia, Turkey, Cyprus, and Syria. And the same can be said about the letter if it was written from Jerusalem before his exile. It most likely was a general encyclical that would have been circulated among all the churches that were affected by the Hellenistic Gnosticism that was rampant throughout all those areas. **1 Jn 4:3** says that the spirit of antichrist, which they had heard was coming, was now active in the world. Note John's reference to the fact that they had already been warned about the coming of these antichrists. This raises the question about when and where and how they had been warned about them. Was this warning in a previous letter to them? Or is John referring to the book of Revelation as that warning? These antichrists had gone out from the church wherever John was, and were now out in the world deceiving and working against the true teachings about Christ, denying His Messiahship, Deity, Incarnation and the need to be sanctified and godly. Furthermore, in **1 Jn 5:19-21** he says that "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" and that they should guard themselves from idols. This idea of the spirit of antichrist now being out in the world is another clue to the time of writing. I am not sure this would have been the situation before John was exiled. The warning about idol worship is similar to what he had said in the book of Revelation, and just as intense as those expressions in the Apocalypse. The activity of the evil one is intense. *The world is passing away, it is the last hour, Christ was soon to appear.* Again, this echoes the intense language we find in the book of Revelation, suggesting that 1 John could have been written after John's release from Patmos in early 63,

after he had already written the book of Revelation. But it might also fit the situation while John was still in Jerusalem, right before he was sent into exile in the Spring of 62. If it was written before his exile, it gives us some great commentary on what John says to the seven churches in the book of Revelation. Comparing these two descriptions of the condition of the churches in Asia Minor at the time of writing both the Apocalypse and his first epistle, would probably give us some further clues as to the time of writing for this epistle of First John. It is really hard to tell for sure which of the two scenarios is correct. So, I will simply give the two possible dates and leave the question open to further study.

- **2 John -- Two possible dates:** (1) Written from Jerusalem before he was exiled to Patmos (AD 61), or (2) Written from Ephesus after he was released from Patmos (AD 63). This is difficult to date, just like the first epistle, and for virtually the same reasons. However, there are a couple of statements in the epistle which tend to make more sense if it was written from Ephesus AFTER his release from Patmos. Notice **2 Jn 4** where he says that he was "very glad to FIND some of them walking in truth." This implies that John had visited them recently, or that someone had visited them and reported to him about their condition, and that as a result of this, he had "found" some of them walking in the truth. This previous personal visit idea is further augmented by his statement in **2 Jn 12** that he "hoped to come to them and speak face to face," evidently sometime soon. This would fit a scenario in Ephesus, after his release from Patmos, better than a writing from Jerusalem before his exile to Patmos. The letter seems to be a general encyclical written to the whole church ("the elect lady" -- i.e. the Bride of Christ, the Church) and all her children (2 Jn 1). Still, there is no proof here that it was written after his release. All this language could still be applied to a writing from Jerusalem before his exile. Since this epistle is somewhat obscure in its references to its intended recipients, it suggests that it was written at a time when the persecution was heating up, when such encoded messages would have been necessary.
- **3 John -- Two possible dates:** (1) Written from Jerusalem before he was exiled to Patmos (AD 61), or (2) Written from Ephesus after he was released from Patmos (AD 63). It is possible to date this epistle before John's exile to Patmos, but it is just as plausible to date it after his release from Patmos. There are several complicating factors here, which should give us clarity, but instead make it more difficult to nail down. **3 John 1** -- The letter is addressed to Gaius. Is this the same Gaius who lived in Corinth (Rom. 16:23), or the co-worker of Paul that came from Derbe and Macedonia (Acts 19:29; 20:4), or another Gaius altogether? We do not know for sure. However, this Gaius was evidently loosely connected with a church whose leader (Diotrephes) had refused to support the traveling evangelists that John had sent through that area. John urges Gaius to support the traveling evangelists who were bringing this letter to him (**3 Jn 5-8**), and not to follow the bad example of Diotrephes (**3 Jn 9-11**) who had refused to support those traveling missionaries and excommunicated any of the church members who did support them. **3 John 12** -- John recommends Demetrius to Gaius, suggesting perhaps that Demetrius may have been one of the messengers carrying this letter. Evidently Demetrius was previously

known to the church there, as well as by Gaius, but for some reason needed John's recommendation and endorsement to make him acceptable to Gaius and the church there. Evidently John felt that since they already knew Demetrius, that John's endorsement would carry further weight in getting them to support such traveling missionaries. John says (3 Jn 13-14) that he had a lot more to write to them, but that he would save that for a personal visit "shortly." Reading between the lines, it seems as though this letter was a warning to Gaius and perhaps Diotrephes, that they needed to change their ways, because John was coming there personally (and "shortly") to set matters straight if they had not already been corrected by the time he got there. All three of the names mentioned in this epistle (Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius) are Greek names, suggesting that this church was in Greece, Macedonia, or Turkey. And the fact that John was close enough to them that he could come visit them "shortly," also points to the probability that John was in Ephesus at the time of writing. This does not fit a Jerusalem place of origin as well as it does Ephesus. And the state of the church under Diotrephes, which obviously had a dictatorial type of leader, instead of being led by a group of elders, more easily fits a time after his exile when the churches of Asia had so many problems (as also was mentioned in the book of Revelation). It does not seem as likely that John would have been addressing these problems in the Greek churches before his exile, especially telling them that he was going to visit them shortly and straighten them out! This condition of the church, and his warning that he was intending to visit them soon, fits a post-Patmos scenario in Ephesus much better. Evidently it was written at a time when it was still safe for evangelists to do mission trips, obviously before the Neronian persecution.

- Thus, using this argumentation from 3 John, and working backwards into 2 John, it appears more likely that 2 John also was written by John in Ephesus AFTER he had been released from exile on Patmos. The same might be true for 1 John as well. However, to be safe, until further analysis clarifies it better, it would be wise to leave open the possibility that 1 John (at least) might have been written from Jerusalem BEFORE John was sent into exile. If I had to decide right now, at this stage in my studies, I would probably date all three epistles AFTER John was released from Patmos (AD 63) and before he was killed in the Neronian persecution in AD 64.

More info about the Three Epistles of John

AD 61-63 – Epistles of 1, 2, 3 John. Because of John's exile under Ananus II, who was still alive until AD 68, he would not have been allowed to return to Palestine, even if he had been freed from Patmos. It is most likely that he would have taken up residence in nearby Ephesus, if he was released from Patmos. And there are subtle hints in Paul's epistle to Titus (in AD 63) that **Zenas** the lawyer and **Apollos** the orator may have traveled to Patmos to secure John's release, at which time **John** would have taken up residence in nearby **Ephesus** (the first of the seven churches to which his Apocalypse was addressed).

John says in 1 John that "it is the Last Hour" (2:18), "the world is passing away" (2:17), "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (5:19), and "the spirit of the antichrist...is already in the world" (4:3). Because of this strong imminency language

here in 1 John, it seems quite likely that these three epistles were written just as the great tribulation (AD 62-66) was beginning to heat up, but before it got so bad that they could no longer travel safely (AD 64-65) or send letters to the scattered churches (which would have been the case after the Neronic persecution broke out in Summer of 64). The other NT epistles which use this same kind of intense imminency language were all written in this same time frame (AD 62-64).

- Here are some websites and other resources which support these early dates:
 1. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating The New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) gives reason to think that most of the Gospels were well in circulation by the time Paul was writing to the Corinthians (AD 57).
 2. John W. Wenham, *Redating Matthew, Mark & Luke: A Fresh Assault on the Synoptic Problem*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991.)
 3. Carelinks Ministries website: Article: "Paul's Use of the Gospels" accessed on 5/19/12 at the following website link:
http://www.aletheiacollege.net/bl/14-6-1Paul_Use_Of_The_Gospels.htm
 4. See the following website also:
http://www.pleaseconvinceme.com/index/Are_There_Early_Eyewitness_Accounts_of_Jesus

Well, that will do it for this session. Next time we will deal with the activities of Apostle Paul after his release from his first Roman imprisonment.

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