

Revelation

This book is very different than the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles or the Epistles. It begins by identifying the writer, his source and the purpose of the book. The Apostle John wrote at God's direction to inform Christians of things to come that would affect them. No doubt these early Christians knew and understood his imagery. All Christians for all ages are encouraged to read the book.

1. Letters to Christians Meeting as Churches
2. Scroll with Seven Seals
3. Seven Trumpets and a Little Scroll
4. Beast of Earth and Sea
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[Revelation of Jesus Christ to His Apostle John](#)

Background to Revelation

John the Apostle

Domitian was a believer in prophetic omens and insisted on calling himself a god. In about A.D. 86 a temple to Domitian was built in Ephesus. John's opposition to emperor worship, in addition to his continued preaching of the Gospel of Christ, ultimately reached the ear of Domitian and prompted him to take action. In A.D. 94 the elderly John the Apostle was exiled to the island of Patmos. (drivethruhistoryadventures.com/john-exiled-to-patmos)

The apostle John was later freed, possibly due to old age, and he returned to what is now Turkey. He died as an old man sometime after A.D. 98. (gotquestions.org/apostle-John-die.html)

With Eusebius and others, we are obliged to place the Apostle's banishment to Patmos in the reign of the Emperor Domitian (81-96). After Domitian's death the Apostle returned to Ephesus during the reign of Trajan, and at Ephesus he died about A.D. 100 at a great age. (Church History III.13.1) (puritanboard.com/threads/apostle-john-polycarp-and-patmos.79254/)

Jesus of Nazareth

Jesus, as described in the New Testament, was most likely crucified on A.D. Friday April 3, 33. The latest investigation, reported in the journal "International Geology Review," focused on earthquake activity at the Dead Sea, located 13 miles from Jerusalem. Matthew 27, mentions that an earthquake coincided with the crucifixion: "And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open." (livescience.com/20605-jesus-crucifixion.html)

Saul of Tarsus – Paul

"While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he fell asleep, (died). And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.

"On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison." (Acts 7:59-8:3)

The exact details of St. Paul's death are unknown, but tradition holds that he was beheaded in Rome and thus died as a martyr for his faith. His death was perhaps part of the executions of Christians ordered by the Roman emperor Nero following the great fire in the city in 64 A.D. (britannica.com/biography/Saint-Paul-the-Apostle)

Nero (54–68)

With the murder of the emperor Gaius (Caligula), in A.D. 41 Claudius became emperor (41-54). Since the Jews were continually making disturbances at the instigations of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome. So writes the Roman historian Suetonius about events in Rome around A.D. 52. “Chrestus” may have been a thorn in the side of Roman politicians anxious to be rid of him and his cohorts. Or “Chrestus” may be the way uninformed bureaucrats pronounced the name Christus about which Jews argued. Such arguments between Jews and Christians were not unknown; e.g., in Ephesus. (Acts 19)

Claudius likely and inadvertently was the first emperor to persecute Christians (who were perceived as a Jewish sect) —for, it seems, disturbing the peace. The plotting Agrippina, managed to convince her husband, Claudius, to adopt her son Nero and put him, ahead of Claudius’ own son, first in line for the throne. Maternal concern not satisfied, she then murdered Claudius, and Nero ruled the world at age 17, ruling from A.D. 54 to A.D. 68 when the Senate sentenced him to death for treason.

Nero, a man with light blue eyes, thick neck, protruding stomach, and spindly legs, was a crazed and cruel emperor, a pleasure-driven man who ruled the world by whim and fear. He eventually had his mother stabbed to death for treason and his wife Octavia beheaded for adultery. He then had Octavia’s head displayed for his mistress, Poppaea, whom years later he kicked to death when she was pregnant.

During the night of July 18, A.D. 64, fire broke out in the merchant area of the city of Rome. Fanned by summer winds, the flames quickly spread through the dry, wooden structures of the Imperial City. Soon the fire took on a life of its own consuming all in its path for six days and seven nights. When the conflagration finally ran its course, it left seventy percent of the city in smoldering ruins.

Rumors soon arose accusing the Emperor Nero of ordering the torching of the city and standing on the summit of the Palatine playing his lyre as flames devoured the world around him.

These rumors have never been confirmed. In fact, Nero rushed to Rome from his palace in Antium (Anzio) and ran about the city all that first night without his guards directing efforts to quell the blaze. But the rumors persisted and the Emperor looked for a scapegoat. He found it in the Christians, at that time a rather obscure religious sect with a small following in the city. To appease the masses, Nero literally had his victims fed to the lions during giant spectacles held in the city's remaining amphitheater.

From the ashes of the fire rose a more spectacular Rome. A city made of marble and stone with wide streets, pedestrian arcades and ample supplies of water to quell any future blaze. The debris from the fire was used to fill the malaria-ridden marshes that had plagued the city for generations.

The historian Tacitus wrote:

“Now started the most terrible and destructive fire which Rome had ever experienced. It began in the Circus, where it adjoins the Palatine and Caelian hills. Breaking out in shops selling inflammable goods, and fanned by the wind, the conflagration instantly grew and swept the whole length of the Circus. There were no walled mansions or temples, or any other obstructions, which could arrest it. First, the fire swept violently over the level spaces. Then it climbed the hills - but returned to ravage the lower ground again. It outstripped every counter-measure. The ancient city's narrow winding

streets and irregular blocks encouraged its progress.

“Terrified, shrieking women, helpless old and young, people intent on their own safety, people unselfishly supporting invalids or waiting for them, fugitives and lingerers alike - all heightened the confusion. When people looked back, menacing flames sprang up before them or outflanked them. When they escaped to a neighboring quarter, the fire followed - even districts believed remote proved to be involved.

“Finally, with no idea where or what to flee, they crowded on to the country roads, or lay in the fields. Some who had lost everything - even their food for the day - could have escaped, but preferred to die. So did others, who had failed to rescue their loved ones. Nobody dared fight the flames. Attempts to do so were prevented by menacing gangs. Torches, too, were openly thrown in, by men crying that they acted under orders. Perhaps they had received orders. Or they may just have wanted to plunder unhampered.

“Nero was at Antium. He returned to the city only when the fire was approaching the mansion, he had built to link the Gardens of Maecenas to the Palatine.

“By the sixth day enormous demolitions had confronted the raging flames with bare ground and open sky, and the fire was finally stamped out at the foot of the Esquiline Hill. But before panic had subsided, or hope revived, flames broke out again in the more open regions of the city. Here there were fewer casualties; but the destruction of temples and pleasure arcades was even worse. This new conflagration caused additional ill-feeling for people believed that Nero was ambitious to found a new city to be called after himself.”

[“The Burning of Rome, A.D. 64,” Eyewitness to History, - eyewitness-to-history.com (1999). References: Duruy, Victor, History of Rome vol. V (1883); Grant, Michael (translator), Tacitus, The Annals of Imperial Rome, (1989)]

Nero tried to pin the blame for that fire on the city’s small Christian community (regarded as a distinct, dissident group of Jews), and so, appropriately, he burned many of them alive. Peter and Paul were said to have been martyred as a result. But the rumors persisted that Nero had sung his own poem “The Sack of Troy” (he did not “fiddle”) while enjoying the bright spectacle he had ignited. That business about singing was not unreasonable, for Nero had for years made a fool of himself by publicly playing the lyre and singing before, literally, command performances.

(christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/persecution-in-early-church-gallery)

Christians were first, and horribly, targeted for persecution as a group by the emperor Nero in A.D. 64. A colossal fire broke out at Rome, and destroyed much of the city. Rumors abounded that Nero himself was responsible. He certainly took advantage of the resulting devastation of the city, building a lavish private palace on part of the site of the fire. Perhaps to divert attention from the rumors, Nero ordered that Christians should be rounded up and killed. Some were torn apart by dogs, others burnt alive as human torches. (bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/christianityromanempire_article_01.shtml#one)

In the fall of A.D. 66 the Jews combined in revolt, expelled the Romans from Jerusalem, and overwhelmed in the pass of Beth-Horon a Roman punitive force under Gallus, the imperial legate in Syria. A revolutionary government was then set up and extended its influence throughout the whole country. In response, the Emperor Nero dispatched an army under the generalship of Vespasian to restore order. He was joined by Titus, and together the Roman armies entered Galilee. In 9 June 68, Emperor Nero reportedly committed suicide and plunged Rome into a year of civil war.

Vespasian (A.D. 69–79)

By the year A.D. 68, resistance in the northern part of the province (area of Galilee) had been eradicated

and the Romans turned their full attention to the subjugation of Jerusalem. That same year, the Emperor Nero died by his own hand, creating a power vacuum in Rome. In the resultant chaos, Vespasian was declared Emperor and returned to the Imperial City. It fell to his son, Titus, to lead the remaining army in the assault on Jerusalem.

Titus (A.D. 79–81)

Titus with the Roman legions surrounded Jerusalem and began to slowly squeeze the life out of the Jewish stronghold. By the year A.D. 70 the attackers had breached Jerusalem's outer walls and began a systematic ransacking of the city. The assault culminated in the burning and destruction of the Temple that served as the center of Judaism.

In victory, the Romans slaughtered thousands. Of those spared from death: thousands were enslaved and sent to toil in the mines of Egypt, others were dispersed to arenas throughout the Empire to be butchered for the amusement of the public. The Temple's sacred relics were taken to Rome where they were displayed in celebration of the victory.

The rebellion sputtered on for another three years and was finally extinguished in A.D. 73 with the fall of the various pockets of resistance including the stronghold at Masada.

Domitian (A.D. 81–96)

The bulk of traditional sources date the book (Revelation) to the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (A.D. 81–96), which evidence tends to confirm. [Stuckenbruck 2003](#), pp. 1535–1536 (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Revelation)

The historian Pliny called Domitian the beast from hell who sat in its den, licking blood. In the Book of Revelation, John of the Apocalypse may have referred to Domitian when he described a beast from the abyss who blasphemes heaven and drinks the blood of the saints.

Suetonius (another historian), who hated Domitian, had to admit that “he took such care to exercise restraint over the city officials and provincial governors that at no time were these more honest or just.”

But there was something wrong with Domitian. He enjoyed catching flies and stabbing them with a pen. He liked to watch gladiatorial fights between women and dwarfs. And during his reign he was so suspicious of plots against his life, the number of imperial spies and informers proliferated, as did the number of casualties among suspect Roman officials.

Domitian was the first emperor to have himself officially titled in Rome as “God the Lord.” He insisted that other people hail his greatness with acclamations like “Lord of the earth,” “Invincible,” “Glory,” “Holy,” and “Thou Alone.”

When he ordered people to give him divine honors, Jews, and no doubt Christians, balked. The resulting persecution of Jews is well-documented; that of Christians is not. However, the beast that the author of Revelation describes, as well as the events in the book, are perhaps best interpreted as hidden allusions to the rule of Domitian. In addition, Flavius Clemens, consul in A.D. 95, and his wife, Flavia Domitilla, were executed and exiled, respectively, by Domitian’s orders; many historians suspect this was because they were Christians.

Trajan (A.D. 98–117)

According to Pliny the Second, who saw thousands of Christians being put to death daily, moved with pity wrote Trajan, certifying that these people did nothing against the Roman law worthy of death.

Nothing was done in their defense.

Comment: If John was released from Patmos during Trajan's reign, then the events "must soon take place" in Revelation would begin sometime after Domitian's death.

Ignatius of Antioch (c. A.D. 35-110) during the rule of Domitian, Ignatius as bishop ruled over the church in Antioch, wrote and taught contrary to the teachings of the New Testament; e.g.,

a.) In Like Manner let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the Sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles. Apart from these, there is no Church" (*Ignatius to the Thrallians* III).

b.) Christians are not to do anything without "the Bishop's" approval. (*Ignatius to the Thrallians* II).

Polycarp (c. A.D. 69-ca155)

Within this same period of time Polycarp attempted to convince the Bishop of Rome, Anicetus, to celebrate Easter.

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (A.D. 161– 180)

Although he had noble principles, Marcus Aurelius persecuted the Christians for fear they would destroy the state. It was during this time period that: Polycarp of Smyrna was martyred.

Septimius Severus (A.D. 193 – 211)

Severus, having recovered from a severe fit of sickness thru a Christian, favored Christians in general: But because of the prejudice and fury of the multitude against them and their alarming growth it caused the pagans to panic. The persecutions started. Tertullian, who lived during this time period, informs us that if the Christians had collectively withdrawn themselves from the Roman territories, the empire would have greatly depopulated.

Maximus (A.D. 235–238)

In some provinces everything was done to exterminate all Christians. Numberless Christians were slain without trial and buried indiscriminately in heaps sometimes fifty or sixty being cast into a pit together, without the least decency.

Decius (A.D. 249–251)

This persecution was brought on because of Decius's hatred for his predecessor Phillip, a Christian and partly by his jealousy concerning the amazing increase of Christianity. Heathen temples began to be forsaken, and the Christian churches grew.

Valerian (A.D. 253–260)

The martyrs that fell during this time period were innumerable and their tortures were various and painful. Neither rank, gender, nor age were regarded.

Aurelian (A.D. 270–275)

Aurelian strengthened the position of the Sun god Sol Invictus as the main divinity of the Roman pantheon. His intention was to give to all the peoples of the Empire, civilian or soldiers, easterners or westerners, a single god they could believe in without betraying their own gods. ... During his short rule, Aurelian seemed to follow the principle of "one faith, one empire", which would not be made official until the Edict of Thessalonica. He appears with the title *deus et dominus natus* ("God and born ruler"). ... He was recorded by Christian historians as having organized persecutions.
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurelian

Diocletian (A.D. 284– 305)

The Diocletianic persecution was the last and most severe persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. In A.D. 303, the Emperors Diocletian, Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius issued a series of edicts rescinding Christians' legal rights and demanding that they comply with traditional religious practices. Later edicts targeted the clergy and demanded universal sacrifice, ordering all inhabitants to sacrifice to the gods. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletianic_Persecution

Maximian (A.D. 285 to 305)

He shared the latter title with his co-emperor and superior, Diocletian, whose political brain complemented Maximian's military brawn.

Constantius I (A.D. 293 to 306)

A Roman emperor who ruled as *Caesar* and as *Augustus* and was the junior colleague of the *Augustus* Maximian under the Tetrarchy. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Roman_emperors#The_Dominate

Galerius (A.D. 305 to 311)

He campaigned across the Danube against the Carpi, defeating them in A.D. 297 and A.D. 300. Although he was a staunch opponent of Christianity, he issued an Edict of Toleration in A.D. 311.

Comment: Diocletian and these three emperors were related by blood or marriage.

Land of the Goths Invaded by the Huns

The Huns were a group of Eurasian nomads, appearing from east of the Volga, (river in Russia). The **Huns** attacked the **Visigoths** (the western tribe of **Goths**) around A.D. 376.

In the aftermath of this event, several groups of Goths came under Hunnic domination, while others migrated further west or sought refuge inside the Roman Empire. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goths

An unmanageable numbers of Goths and other non-Roman people, fleeing from the Huns, entered the Empire by crossing the Danube. At the Battle of Adrianople in A.D. 378 they inflicted a devastating defeat upon the Romans.

Attila the Hun (434–453)

Atilla was the ruler of the Huns from A.D. 434 until his death in March A.D. 453. He was also the leader of a tribal empire in Central and Eastern Europe consisting of Huns, Ostrogoths, Alans and Bulgars, among others,.

Italy had suffered from a terrible famine in A.D. 451 and her crops were faring little better in A.D. 452. Attila's devastating invasion of the plains of northern Italy this year did not improve the harvest. To advance on Rome would have required supplies which were not available in Italy, and taking the city would not have improved Attila's supply situation. Therefore, it was more profitable for Attila to conclude peace and retreat to his homeland. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attila

The Western Roman Empire officially ended 4 September A.D. 476, when Emperor Romulus Augustulus was deposed by the Germanic King Odoacer. google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=end+of+the+roman+empire

Summary of Background for Revelation

The Apostle John was around 26 years old, probably 6 years younger than Peter, when the Apostles on Pentecost Day began teaching the Gospel of Christ. Not long afterwards Stephen was stoned to death with Saul of Tarsus consenting. As a result, many Christians left Jerusalem and Judea.

Christ called Paul to be His apostle to the Gentiles. He suffered greatly at the hands of the Jews and Pagan Gentiles. He wrote several letters to encourage faithfulness. Many believe Nero had Paul executed

following the burning of Rome which occurred in A.D. 64, the same year the Jerusalem Jews began their rebellion against Rome. The Jews apparently holding power in Jerusalem from A.D. 66 till April A.D. 70 when a few days before Passover, Titus began his siege that continued for five months. It ended when the Romans burned the temple with all the genealogical records. No longer could the Jews identify who could be their legitimate High Priest. ([google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=destruction+of+Jerusalem](https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=destruction+of+Jerusalem))

About 30 years after the destruction of Jerusalem and Paul's last letter to the churches in Asia Minor John wrote Revelation to the Churches in Asia.

Recap:

- a. Paganism with its Imperial cult was the religion of the empire.
- b. Diocletian consider himself a god as did others following him.
- c. Christians recognized the emperor as the supreme ruler of the empire, but not God.
- d. Pagan priest and Roman officials considered Christians to be rebellious subject to be punished. Therefore, Diocletian banished John to Patmos.
- e. Christians in the seven churches of Asia were probably mostly former pagans who had not completely rejected and discarded all their pagan practices.
- f. There were chief shepherds (bishops) in the churches who dominated their teachings and practices.
- g. Persecution continued to increase with each new emperor until Diocletian – considered the worst.
- h. God is patient waiting for the conversion of more pagans and the repentance of wayward Christians.

John delivers God's message of things that "must soon take place" or "shortly come to pass" - sometime after A.D. 100.

Revelation Chart

Seven Seals
(6:1 - 8:6)

Seven Trumpets
(8:7 - 11:18)

Seven Mystic Figures
(11:19 - 14:20)

Seven Bowls
(15:1-16:21)

Woman (11:19-12:2)

Dragon (12:3-4)

	"1000 years"	<u>End of History</u> Satan loosed a little season and then destroyed (20:7-10)	<u>Beyond History</u> New heaven and new earth for the righteous (21:1-8)
Man Child (12:5-6)			
Michael (12:7-17)			
Beast of the Sea (13:1-10; cf. 11:17)	Beast and False Prophet overthrown (19:11-21)	Last enemies destroyed in connection with general resurrection and final judgment.	Bride of the Lamb (the Holy City) descending from heaven (21:9-22:5)
Beast of the Earth (13:11-18)			
Lamb on Mount Zion (14:1-5)			
Interlude: Angelic Messages (14:6-20)			

Announcement of God's judgment (vs. 6-7)

Announcement of Babylon's fall (v.8) Babylon destroyed (17:1 - 16:21)

Warning of wrath on worshippers of Beast (vs. 9-12) Satan bound, saints reign with Christ (20:1-6)

Blessedness of dead who die in the Lord (v.13)

Call for harvesting the earth (vs. 14-16)

Call for gathering the grapes of wrath (vs. 17-20)

Letters to Christians Meeting as Churches

Setting: Because of his proclaiming the Word of Christ the apostle John had been banished to the Isle of Patmos by Roman officials. Patmos is treeless and rocky about 10 miles long and 6 miles wide.

Text: Revelation 1 – 3

Key Point: God is telling His Children I know all the good and bad you have done and are doing. Repent before it is too late. The righteous will be tested but be faithful. I will repay everyone according to their deeds.

Word Study:

1:10 In the Spirit – Under the influence of the Holy Spirit

1:13 Son of Man – Jesus often referred to himself as Son of Man (no “a” or “the” is in the Greek text) and verse 18 states He is the one speaking.

1:18 Hades – the place of departed souls.

2:6 Practice of the Nicolaitians – The Nicolaitanes taught the community of wives that adultery and fornication were things indifferent, that eating meats offered to idols was quite lawful; (from Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Biblesoft)

2:10 Point of death – even if it means your death

2:14 Teaching of Balaam – a man who loved the wages of unrighteousness, ... a person cumbered with superstition, covetousness and even wickedness, ... of a teacher of the church who attempts to advance the cause of God by advocating an unholy alliance with the ungodly and worldly, and so conforming the life of the church to the spirit of the flesh. (International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, by Biblesoft)

Scroll with Seven Seals

Setting: John is physically on the Isle of Patmos but in the Spirit at the very throne of God.

Text: Revelation 4 – 11

Word Study:

8:11 Wormwood – The genus is named Artemisia from Artemis, the Greek name for Diana and means bitter. It is also metaphorical for bitter sorrow. (Fausset's Bible Dictionary, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1998 by Biblesoft)

9:1 Abyss or bottomless pit – The word is equivalent to Hades, the abode of the dead and denotes the abode of evil spirits, but not the place of final punishment (International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft)

9:11 Abaddon – as a proper name given to the angel-prince of the infernal regions, the minister of death and author of havoc on earth, and is rendered in Greek by Apolluoon Destroyer (Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

Seven Trumpets and a Little Scroll

Setting: John is physically on the Isle of Patmos but in the Spirit at the very throne of God.

Text: Revelation 12

Key Point: When Jesus returned to Heaven as the Christ, Satan was cast out while salvation, power, the Kingdom of God and Authority of Christ entered. Satan then waged warfare against those who obey Christ's commands and kept the testimony of the Apostles as given by the Spirit.

Word Study:

12:3 Dragon – The ancient serpent, Satan or Devil according to verse 8. His other features indicate he is using others to do his bidding.

Beasts of Earth and Sea

Setting: John is physically on the Isle of Patmos but in the Spirit at the very throne of God.

Text: Revelation 13 – 17

Key Point: The beasts were given power apparently by Satan. The beast of the Sea, the Imperial power of Rome, could make war while the beast of the Earth, Roman Pagan priest with its emperor worship, built images or idols and forced people to worship the image. It is noted during this period of time the Roman Empire ruled the world and considerable historical evidence that Emperor worship was required.

Fall of Babylon

Setting: John is physically on the Isle of Patmos but in the Spirit at the very throne of God.

Text: Revelation 18 – 19:4

Key Point: God brings punishment on nations and peoples who are an abomination to Him.

Judgment

Setting: John is physically on the Isle of Patmos but in the Spirit at the very throne of God.

Text: Revelation 19:5 – 20

Key Point: Everyone whether great or small by earthly standards will stand before God's throne to be judged by what he has done as written in the books.

Word Study:

19:20 Lake of burning sulfur – A living punishment never to cease with complete removal from present environment

New Jerusalem

Setting: John is physically on the Isle of Patmos but in the Spirit at the very throne of God.

Text: Revelation 21 – 22

Key Point: Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life.