

## REVELATION

### Introduction

By the end of the first century A.D. all cities in Asia had temples for the worship of Rome and her emperors. Johns summarizes the influence of emperor worship on Asia Minor, concluding: "There is little question that the province of Asia was the world leader in the imperial cult" (1998:154-57). Pilgrim summarizes the case in even stronger language: "Asia Minor was a veritable hotbed for the imperial cult" (1999:148; see Barclay 1960:1.22-24 and Worth.

Christians were compelled to worship the emperor several decades after Revelation was written is documented in a letter from Pliny the Younger to Caesar Trajan, who evidently executed Christians and forced those who denied being Christians to invoke the heathen gods and offer worship, wine, and frankincense before a statue of the Caesar (*Letter* 10.96; see also *Mart. Pol.* 8).

Because Christians were becoming more affluent due to the trade that was prevalent throughout the empire, it may have been their materialism and expectation of wealth, more than outright persecution, that seduced Christians to worship the emperor. (Kraybill, 1996:117

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 95, and his wife, Flavia Domitilla, were executed and exiled, respectively, by Domitian's orders; many historians suspect this was because they were Christians. [anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Emperors\\_and\\_Emperor\\_Worship](http://anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Emperors_and_Emperor_Worship)

### The Voice's Message

The voice identified Himself to John as the alpha and omega, the first and last, the living one who once was dead but now alive holding the keys to death and abode of dead, Hades. He, Christ, revealed to John a message for Christians near the end of the first century what must soon take place (come to pass quickly (YLT)) to let His people know that regardless of their earthly circumstances He was in Control. The Christian community knew the meaning of the imagery used in what was being revealed but, not the Romans. (Rev 1)

### Body of Christians in Seven Cities of Asia

#### Ephesus

You have left your first love - you have fallen; repent do the first works or I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand.

#### Smyrna

I know your works, tribulation, and poverty. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.

### Pergamos

You have those who cause others to worship idols by eating things sacrificed to idols, and who encourage the sexual immorality of paganism

### Thyatira

You allow a prophetess (probably a “pagan Christian”), to teach and seduce others to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols as worship to them. Hold fast what you have till I come as I will give to each one of you according to your works.

### Sardis

You think you are alive but your works show you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen those about ready to die. I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know the hour I come.

### Philadelphia

You have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

### Laodiceia

Your works are neither cold nor hot which exposes how ungrateful you are. Repent, return and be zealous

Comment: These churches represent the types of Christian assemblies;

1. Some had returned to their former way of life while still assembling as if faithful – they had departed from Christ.
2. Strong in faith.
3. Worship had become meaningless just a ritual.
4. Believing how you live is not material so enjoy yourself.
5. Some had ceased to exist as a body of Christians.
6. Faithful amid strong persecution.
7. You do nothing. You are just a social gathering.

### God’s Throne Room

Surrounding God’s throne were

- 24 thrones with elders in white and gold crowns.
- In the center were four living creatures.
- These symbolic air-breathing creatures and elders were constantly praising, giving honor and glory to God represented by
  - Lion – king of the wilderness
  - Ox – mightiest of domesticated animals
  - Man – given to rule on the earth
  - Eagle – master of the airways

In God’s right hand was a scroll that only the lamb of God, Jesus the Christ who offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice for man could open.

### The Scroll with Seven Seals

As the seal was opened their action appears to be in the future – things that must shortly come to pass.

First seal - White horse - rider with a bow and crown – rode out for conquest and to conquer.

Second seal- Red horse – rider with a great sword to take peace from the earth.

Third seal -Black horse – rider with pair of scales to weigh life’s necessities – famine to occur.

Fourth seal -Pale horse – rider named death and hades with power to kill by sword, famine and plague.

Fifth seal - Souls of righteous slain for the word of God and their testimony asking when their death would be avenged.

Sixth seal - A sudden change of governments and mighty men of the known world.

Comment: Before the seventh seal could be opened God identified multitudes of His people to protect those not slain during the persecution. They give praises, honor, and glory to God and shouting salvation belongs to God and the Lamb.

Seventh seal -

First trumpet - natural events; e.g., weather-related storm – hail, fire probably from lightening destroying food source

Second trumpet – natural events – volcano eruption near sea disrupting commerce and fishing industry

Third trumpet – natural events – water contaminated (possibly dead animals from the first trumpet.)

Fourth trumpet –possibly upheaval of civil government and woes were pronounced upon the inhabitants of the earth

Fifth trumpet and first woe – beyond the terrestrial – a non-human being fell to earth, given power and the key to an immeasurable burning prison (abyss or bottomless pit) from which came creatures to harm for a period of time those who did not have God’s seal, people not belonging to God.

Sixth trumpet and second woe

Released four messengers, armies, of death but earth’s inhabitants refused to change from pagan practices of murder (possibly infant sacrifices), sorceries, whoredoms, or thefts.

A mighty angel from heaven with an open scroll declared there will be no more delay! But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

- Open scroll (word of God when consumed) sweet by Christians and bitter to enemies of Christ.
- Measuring rod – count the worshippers in God’s temple (His abode) but not those not therein. Jews had a court for gentiles who were not allowed to enter their temple area.
- Two witnesses – the olive tree and the lampstand, light (word of God) and source (Spirit of God) for the proclamation of the Gospel by men.
- Beast from the abyss to which Satan was given the key. So, the beast was Satan’s agent to do attack, do harm, and to kill God’s Children.

Seventh trumpet

Loud voice declaring "The kingdom of the world (the kingdom the Old Covenant having been fulfilled) has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, (Christ's New Covenant) and He shall reign forever and ever."

After the 7<sup>th</sup> seal is opened there was a period of silence in Heaven (the time for waiting is over – God begins His avenging of those who oppose Him and His people). Seven angels with seven trumpets appear ready for action. In 1<sup>st</sup> century Rome the trumpet announced some major happening and troop movements.) There is no timetable as to when these disasters were to occur against the Roman Empire and its Imperial cult's Emperor worship.

Comment: Christ now reigns from heaven over his Kingdom, His Church.

God's temple in heaven was opened. The Ark of the Covenant representing the covenant with Israel is now in Heaven and a new covenant is beginning.

Birth of a ruler over a new kingdom. Satan used a powerful dragon, the Roman Emperors, in an attempt to destroy the new kingdom. Satan was cast out of heaven and allowed to do his dastardly deeds among all the people on earth.

The loud voice again proclaims "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ.

Beast of Sea with the same imagery as the red dragon, individual Emperors who persecuted Christians greatly.

Beast of earth were those who exercised the authority of the first beast to force emperor worship (the Imperial cult of emperor worship). In an attempt to annihilate God's children, Christ's church, non-Christians receive an identification mark in order to acquire the necessities of life.

Time for God's Judgment Against Rome

The Lamb of God appears with the sound of rushing water and a loud peel of thunder. An angel flying in midair having the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth — to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

The wrath of God begins to be poured out with destruction everywhere – plagues of all kinds, storms, earthquakes and fire. The power of Rome and the Imperial cult to persecute is gone. Satan is no longer in heaven to bring acquisitions against God's children but is cast down to earth to deceive till the end of time – a long time represented as 1000 years.

End of Time on Earth

- Satan is thrown into the abyss.
- First heaven and first earth pass away.
- Earth will melt with fervent heat. (2 Peter 3:12)
- All people stand before God who will judge according to their works, actions in life.

- The end of Satan's power over man. Souls in Hades not having their name written in the Book of Life are to stand in Judgment. However, the righteous in Paradise went with Christ when He ascended to Heaven following His resurrection. This is discussed in ["thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/Body Soul Spirit.html"](http://thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/Body Soul Spirit.html)

Another personal opinion on Revelation is presented in [thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/RevelationWright/A-Revelation.htm](http://thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/RevelationWright/A-Revelation.htm)

A short "Unorthodox opinion is also available on the BibleWay website.

#### Key Points from Revelation

- Because of the Gospel, John was banished to the Isle of Patmos.
- John wrote about things shortly to come to pass to Christians who were undergoing persecution and were aware of much of the imagery and therefore able to understand.
- Christians were persecuted almost everywhere but more heavily in Asia where emperor worship was concentrated.
- Faithfulness is rewarded with eternal life with God.
- Satan was defeated cast down from heaven till the end of time and allowed to deceive.
- Everyone is answerable for how they live their life.
- God is and has always been in control of all His creation.

Question - What was the message God wanted to convey through John to the Christians undergoing persecution from the Jews, Pagans and Romans?