

1

Apocalyptic Literature

~250 BC

- Involves a vision of a future or supernatural world, during which secrets are revealed
- The secrets involve the transition from the current age to a future age, followed by divine judgment on all
- Written to a people in despair: the only hope for the present is for God to destroy it
- The visions contain complex symbols and special numbers
- Typically includes a monumental war between God and evil

Apocalyptic writings are distinct from prophecy:

- there is never hope for the present age
- the arrival of the new age includes a judgment of the dead
- the worldview is dualistic (good and evil)

2

Apocalyptic Literature Beyond Revelation

Daniel

Matthew 24

Ezekiel 38-39

Mark 13

Isaiah 24-27 ("Isaiah Apocalypse")

Luke 21

Zechariah 12-14

Joel 2-3



3

Who was "John"?

- Most likely not the apostle, nor the writer of the Gospel of John
- A Jewish Christian who wrote Greek poorly
- A pastor/prophet to the churches in Asia Minor
- An exile on the island of Patmos
- Most likely wrote Revelation during the reign of Domitian (81-96)
- Wrote to people *in his time* about issues *of his time*



4

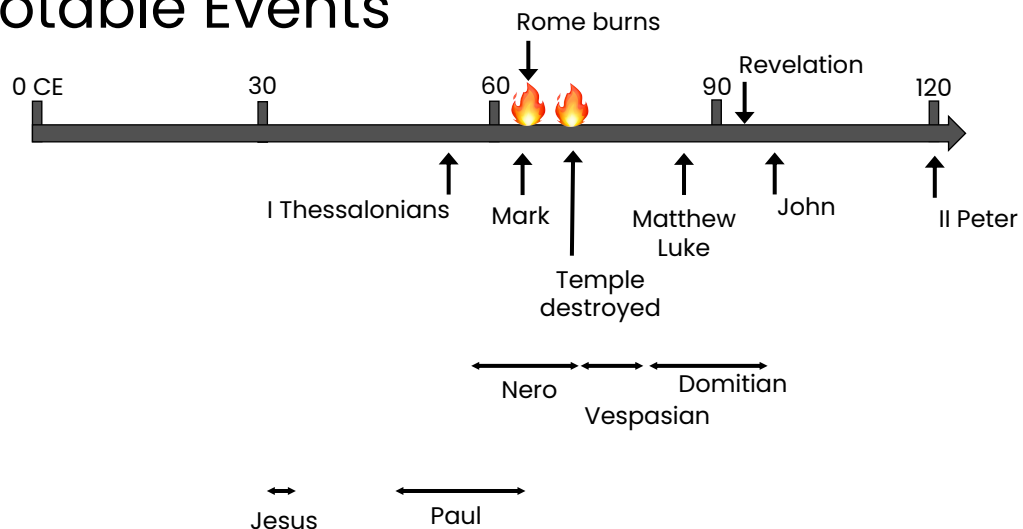
Our Friends in Rome

- 14-37 Tiberius
- 37-41 Caligula
- 41-54 Claudius
- **54-68 Nero**
- 69 Galba
- 69 Otho
- 69 Vitellius
- **69-79 Vespasian**
- 79-81 Titus
- **81-96 Domitian**



5

Notable Events



6

Structure of Revelation

Revelation 1-3: Letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor

Revelation 4-5: Visions of the Heavenly Court

Revelation 6-8: The Seven Seals

Revelation 8-11: The Seven Trumpets

Revelation 12-14: Visions of the Dragon, the Beasts, and the Lamb

Revelation 15-16: The Seven Bowls

Revelation 17-19: The Fall of Babylon

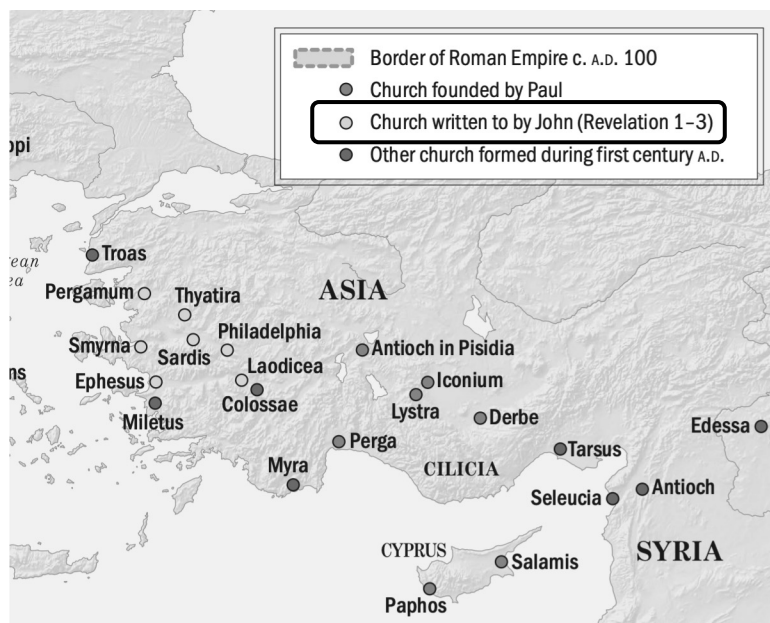
Revelation 19-20: The Victory of Christ

Revelation 21-22: The New Jerusalem



7

The Seven Churches



8

The Seven Letters

Ephesus: Recover the love you had at first

Smyrna: Be faithful through affliction and poverty

Pergamum: Reject idolatry

Thyatira: Reject false and idolatrous teachers

Sardis: Be truly Christian, not in name only

Philadelphia: Be faithful through persecution



Laodicea: Don't be lukewarm Christians!

9



Symbolism in Revelation



- Apocalyptic literature was meant to offer encouragement to a people in crisis. Therefore...

- Symbols in apocalyptic literature likely had known meanings to the people of that time (meanings that are often obscure to us)

- Symbols usually represent people or institutions contemporary with the writers (not in the far future, like the 21st Century)

- Symbols may have been used as a secret code to prevent outsiders from understanding the message

10

Vision of the Throne: Ezekiel

As for the appearance of their faces: the four had the face of a human being, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle; such were their faces.

-- Ezekiel 1:10-11a

Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle.

-- Revelation 4:6b-7



11

The Seven Seals

The Lamb (Jesus) is given a scroll with seven seals:

The Four Horsemen

1. White – conquest
2. Red – war
3. Black – famine
4. Green – pestilence and death

5. The Martyrs

6. Calamity on the earth



12

The Multitude of the Righteous

144,000 will be sealed, or protected from judgment

12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel (12 x 12,000)

144,000 = completed completion (12 x 12)

All Israel will be saved, plus...

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.

--Revelation 7:9



13

The Seventh Seal

The opening of the last seal brings not a reading of the scroll, but another group of 7: trumpets!

Each trumpet brings a plague

Like the plagues against Egypt, the plagues signal the impending rescue of God's people

Like Pharaoh, the unrighteous did not repent, despite the plagues

The seventh trumpet reveals the opening of God's heavenly temple, and the end of the first part of the book of Revelation



14

The Beast from the Sea

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads; and on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads were blasphemous names.

--Revelation 13:1

So he carried me away in the spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet...and on her forehead was written a name, a mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth's abominations."

--Revelation 17:3-4a, 5

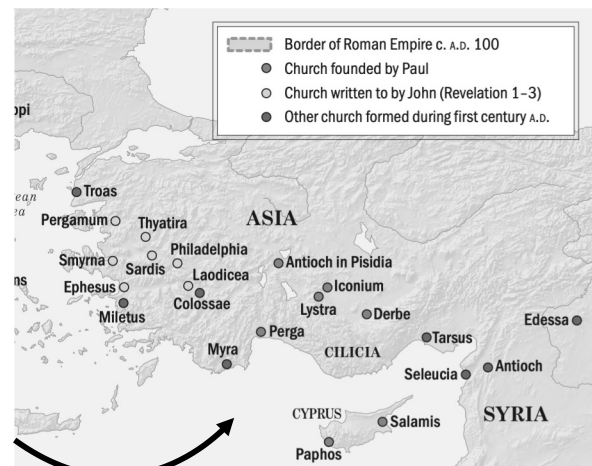
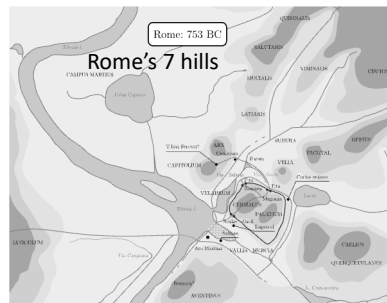


15

The Beast from the Sea: Rome

This calls for a mind that has wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; also, they are seven kings, of whom five have fallen, one is living, and the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain only a little while.

--Revelation 17:9-10



Romans

PaddyFH, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

16

The Beast from the Earth

Then I saw another beast that rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed....

Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell who does not have the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six. [or 616]

--Revelation 13:11-12,16-18



17

Gematria

MMXX = 2020

VIVID = 512



18

The Beast from the Earth: Nero

In Hebrew

Neron Caesar = 666

In Latin

Nero Caesar = 616



19

The Final Victory of Christ

Babylon (Rome) will fall

The beast (Nero) will be cast into fire

The current world will pass away

God will dwell with the faithful in a restored Eden: the new Jerusalem



20

The Timeless Message

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.

--Revelation 11:15

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

--Matthew 28:18b-20

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

--Romans 8:38-39

